



AMWS E-News October 2023

"Welcome to the October 2023 Edition of the AMWS E-News" - Chairman, Mr David Parmeter

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of the AMWS electronic newsletter. There are a number of interesting stories in this month's newsletter, but there are two articles in particular I want to bring to your attention.....

[View David's comments for October here >>](#)



33rd Annual Commemoration at the National Merchant Navy War Memorial. Canberra, 22nd October 2023.

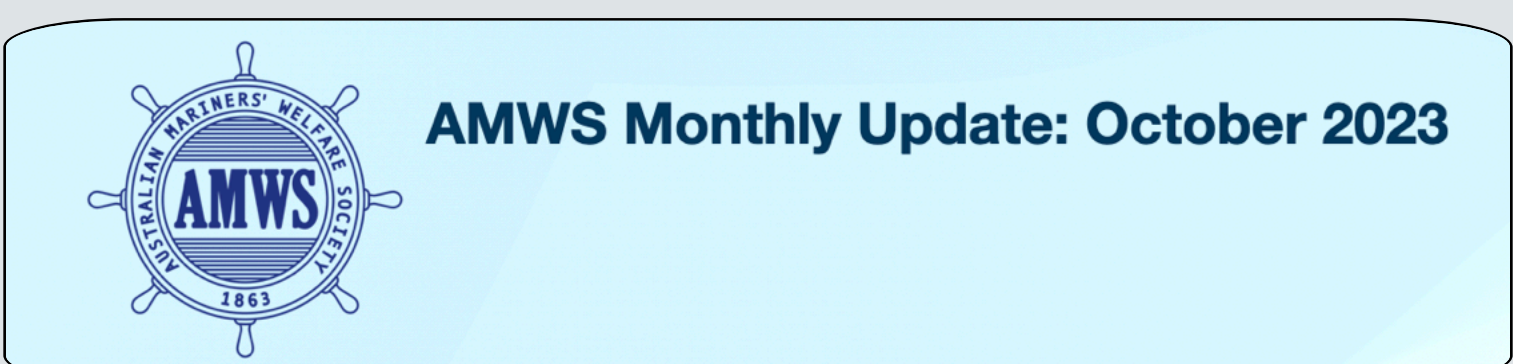
The 33rd Annual Commemoration at the National Merchant Navy War Memorial in Canberra was held on 22nd October 2023. I attended and laid a wreath on behalf of AMWS.

The Commemoration is organised by the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund (MNMWF) with support from fraternal industry groups. The success of the event is a credit to everyone involved. Special mention should be made of the contribution of the Canberra Brass Band and Lake Burley Griffin Sea Scouts.

Despite cold and blustery conditions the Commemoration was extremely well attended with representatives from the diplomatic corps, RAN and the maritime community. The officiating clergy, Sister Mary Leahy and Rev Tay Un are well known to AMWS. The Address was delivered by the Guest of Honour, Mr Matt Anderson, Director of the Australian War Memorial. The Act of Remembrance was led by Mr Don Kennedy the Veterans Advisor to MNWMF. Don served in the Merchant Navy during World War 2 and is an inspiring person to meet.

In a significant development Mr David Field announced he will soon be retiring as Chair of MNWMF and will be succeeded by his Deputy, Mr Sean Barrett. David has been an outstanding Chair of MNWMF and led the campaign to erect plaques at the Memorial that state the names of all known Australian merchant seafarers who died in the First and Second World Wars. Everyone in the maritime community owes David a debt of gratitude of his outstanding service to this important cause.

David Parmeter, AMWS Chairman.



Tall Ships: Two new tall ship sail training candidates have been selected to undertake voyages in the next few months on the STS Young Endeavour. The first, Yasmin, via the Jim Israel Scholarship, will participate in a December 2023 sailing. The second, Hayden, will undertake his voyage in January 2024.

AMWS wishes both "youthies" all the best for their voyages to come.

Grants to Welfare providers. Via a AMWS grant, the Mission to Seafarers Gladstone have been provided with a new technology high speed printer. Again via a routine AMWS grant, the Mission to Seafarers Geraldton bus has had extensive rust repairs actioned.

Our thanks to Councillor Graham Lightfoot for providing the above details for the October 2023 update; Ed.

Australian Seafarers Welfare Council. The next meeting of ASWC is scheduled for 25th October 2023.



50 Years Since Sinking of the Blythe Star: Hobart Plaque Unveiled. MUA Press release, 19th October 2023

After half a century has passed, the descendants of the families and the lone surviving crew member of the Blythe Star gathered in Hobart. They convened to unveil a commemorative plaque that pays tribute to the tragic sinking of the Blythe Star. This poignant ceremony took place merely six months after the remarkable revelation of the ship's resting place on the seafloor of the South Pacific Ocean, located off the South West Cape of Tasmania, thanks to the discovery made by CSIRO earlier this year.

The significance of this plaque, initially intended to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the ship's demise, acquired an entirely new and profound meaning with the shocking rediscovery of the Blythe Star.

The Blythe Star, a 44-meter motor vessel (MV), served as a coastal freighter that mysteriously vanished from the waters near Tasmania nearly five decades ago. On the fateful day of October 13, 1973, while en route from Hobart to King Island, the vessel suddenly capsized and sank off the southwestern coast of Tasmania. Astonishingly, all 10 crew members managed to escape the sinking vessel by taking refuge in an inflatable life raft.

Tragically, the passage of time witnessed the loss of three of these crew members—namely, 2nd Engineer John 'Jack' Sloan, Chief Engineer John Eagles, and Chief Officer Ken Jones. Their untimely demise occurred before the survivors could find help, and they were ultimately rescued 12 days later on October 24, 1973.

[Read the Full MUA Press Release Here >>](#)



"Addressing the Maritime Sector's Recruitment and Retention Crisis. Seafarer wellbeing in a changing world". ISWAN Free Zoom Seminar, 16th November.

ISWAN's Chief Executive, Simon Grainge, has highlighted a critical structural issue facing the maritime sector: the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis. The sector is grappling with a severe shortage of skilled seafarers, and the officer availability gap has widened to an estimated 9% of the global pool in 2023. The causes, consequences, and potential solutions to this crisis closely resemble those identified in 2008, indicating a long-standing issue.

While some factors contributing to the shortage are systemic and persistent, recent global events have added an existential dimension to the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has made many seafarers reluctant to endure prolonged separations from their loved ones.

[Find out more >>](#)



ITF recovers almost US\$120 million in unpaid wages for seafarers over last three years. ITF Seafarers 27th September 2023

Inspectors from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have revealed that they successfully recovered \$118,529,663 in unpaid wages owed to seafarers between 2020 and 2022, with more than \$36 million being returned to seafarers in 2022 alone. ITF inspectors play a crucial role by boarding vessels to educate seafarers about their rights, identify any breaches of crew contracts, national laws, or international conventions, and collaborate with authorities to ensure that these rights are upheld. The ITF operates through inspectors in 111 ports across 56 countries. In 2022, seafarers reported 2,199 cases of contract breaches to the ITF, with non-payment of wages being the most common issue. David Heindel, ITF Seafarers' Section Chair, expressed pride in the recovery of nearly \$120 million but lamented the necessity of addressing wage underpayments. He highlighted the ITF's commitment to assisting seafarers in securing their rights.

In 2022, ITF's inspectors conducted 8,667 ship inspections worldwide, with 1,878 initiated in response to seafarers' appeals for help. Additionally, 3,771 inspections were part of routine and responsive checks to ensure that ships registered under Flags of Convenience (FOC) adhered to international standards.

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The Beacon:
Monthly Section Illuminating Interesting Activities, Trends, and Developments within the Australian Maritime Industry



Wreck of the Montevideo Maru, WW2 Prisoner Transport Ship, Discovered. Silent World Foundation, Sydney 2023

With an unwavering dedication, boundless curiosity, and a deep-seated passion for unearthing the untold stories of Australia's past, the Silentworld Foundation, bolstered by a substantial team of experts, embarked on a mission to locate the wreckage of the Montevideo Maru.

This humanitarian endeavor was driven by the noble objective of discovering the final resting place of roughly 1,080 military personnel and civilians hailing from 14 nations, the majority of whom were Australian soldiers. The tragic sinking of this vessel, which transpired 80 years ago, remains one of the most heart-wrenching maritime catastrophes in Australian history.

The quest to find this sunken relic unfolded through a remarkable collaboration between Sydney's Silentworld Foundation and the Dutch enterprise Fugro, renowned specialists in deep-sea surveying. This undertaking received invaluable support from the Department of Defence.

The expedition set sail on April 6 in the West Philippine Sea, situated 110 kilometers northwest of Luzon. In an astonishingly brief span of 12 days, by April 18, a momentous breakthrough was achieved. State-of-the-art technology, including an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) equipped with advanced sonar capabilities, played a pivotal role in this remarkable discovery.

[Read the full Silent World Press Release here >>](#)



The AMWS Vision

"To ensure all seafarers and their dependents, irrespective of nationality, gender, or beliefs, are treated with dignity, respect, and compassion".

Interested in this AMWS vision and want to know more?

[Consider becoming an AMWS member >>](#)

