

# The Mariners' Lifeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MARINERS' WELFARE SOCIETY (ABN 86 000 008 122)  
Founded 1863 as the Sydney Sailors' Home. Volume 19. No 2. December 2020.



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

For all of us, 2020 has been an extraordinary year. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic globally has been profound with an enormous toll in lives lost and human suffering. While we in Australia have fortunately not been as severely affected as other parts of the world, there has been no escaping the impact of the virus.



*David Parmeter,  
Chairman of the  
Australian Mariners  
Welfare Society*

That is certainly true of the work of Australian Mariners Welfare Society. While some of our activities have been curtailed, the fundamental importance of what AMWS does in supporting the welfare of seafarers has never been more apparent.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the welfare of seafarers and their families. Stringent limitations on international travel have made crew changes extremely difficult. As a result, seafarers have had to endure excessive periods at sea and away from families, or have been unable to join their vessels and earn a living. AMWS joined the chorus of concern expressed by industry and maritime welfare organisations over this intolerable situation. While this is a global problem, the crisis has been compounded in Australia by different States imposing their own rules. A powerful illustration of just how this crisis has impacted on seafarers

is contained in the excellent article written by one of our Councillors, Captain

Conrad Saldanha, which appears in this edition. It tells the story of one Chief Officer and the incredible efforts required to get him home to Myanmar.

At the same time, restrictions on shore leave for crews and access to vessels means the vital work of the seafarer welfare organisations has been impeded. Despite this, all concerned have risen to the challenge magnificently, and are doing everything possible to assist seafarers. A wonderful example of this occurred with the extended stay of the cruise vessel "Ruby Princess" in Port Kembla earlier in the year. Concerned citizens from the Illawarra community, led by the local Mission to Seafarers, rallied around the crew and provided

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Founded in 1865  
as the Sydney  
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AMWS still provides  
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ex-seafarers.

those on board with some very welcome practical support and human kindness.

As an organisation founded in 1865 as the Sydney Sailor's Home, AMWS still provides subsidised home unit accommodation for ex-seafarers of modest means, although the demand for this service has declined in recent years. It is sad to note that one of the individuals AMWS supported in this way, John Cleaver, passed away this year. John had been in poor health and had moved to a retirement facility in the Hunter Valley prior to his passing. Vale John.

There were changes to the AMWS Council in 2020. My great friend and mentor Alan Tait stood down as Chair, although he continues as a Councillor. Alan's efforts for AMWS and seafarer welfare has been immense and I am deeply honoured to follow him as Chair of the organisation. Captain Chris Green is now Deputy Chair.

Two long serving Councillors in Malcolm Longstaff and Simon Liddy retired in 2020. Both have made outstanding contributions over many years. Malcolm took a particular interest in the history of AMWS and his work ensured our remarkable story was recorded, while Simon and his firm provided pro bono legal support and sound advice. On behalf of everyone involved with AMWS, I thank them for their service and wish them well. In that regard I am delighted to welcome two new Councillors in Captain Jeanine Drummond and Anthony Highfield. We look forward to their contribution in the years to come.

To all the Councillors and our Company Secretary Stan Moriarty, I say thank you for your ongoing support and commitment. And to everyone involved in the seafarer welfare community and readers of this publication, I wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a safe 2021.

*David Parmeter*  
*Chairman*



## **COVID 19 - A SEAFARER'S ORDEAL FROM SYDNEY TO YANGON**

*Captain Conrad Saldanha,*  
*AMWS Councillor & Shipping Manager – LPG, Origin Energy.*

**O**n the 24th October 2020, and six months over his normal tour of duty on board the ship, Chief Officer Tin Min Myint was finally united with his family in Myanmar (formerly Burma). What was a routine crew changeover in the past turned out to be an ordeal due to every imaginable roadblock.

C/O Tin Min Myint joined the vessel *JS Jaguar* on 6th January, 2020, on a three-month contractual tenure with expected sign off in/around first week of April 2020. The ship was on a Pacific Island run, delivering liquified petroleum

gas (LPG) from Australia. In April, the ship's schedule was changed to Australian coastal trading. During his entire stint in Australia, Tin Min could not set foot on shore for even ten minutes.

On 11th March, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the Covid-19 virus a global pandemic. This declaration had an enormous impact on the crew movements, due to lockdowns and multiple travel restrictions imposed by many governments worldwide, thus leading to delays and uncertainties in crew reliefs.

In the words of Santosh Khosla, the Chief Personnel Officer of Evergas, *"Our efforts to sign off C/O Myint started around 20th March, and we finally succeeded in disembarking him from JS Jaguar on 20th October, after over seven months of continuous follow up with local agents, multiple travel agents, visa issuing authorities and relevant embassies."*



C/O Myint, second from right, still smiling, stated *"There was several attempts for crew change but all withdrawn for various reasons, such as restriction of Covid-19 PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test requirement, restriction of quarantine requirement, visa and flight restrictions, state health rules, etc. I understand the above requirements were really needed globally for each and every one's health and safety concern. But the problem is all above requirements were not globally uniform or stable for long enough."*

Catherine Hindley, crewing agent from Wave Shipping, had been working all the angles to co-ordinate and safely return Tin Min to his home in Yangon (formerly Rangoon). Working from home, very often late into the night, she would relay local state, port and health requirements to the travel agency and principals in Denmark and Europe, and after trying multiple airline connections via various intermediary airports, finally managed to get the relief Chief Officer into Brisbane on 20th September. Two days later Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, went into lockdown and international flight ban was extended to the end of October. Covid cases in Myanmar had surged to over 10,000, and there were hundreds of deaths reported.

The joining Chief Officer had to get a visitor's visa, in addition to transit visa and maritime crew visa, and had to quarantine before leaving his home country, tested for travel, quarantined again upon his arrival in Australia, after a Covid safe plan for his transit was approved by Maritime Safety and Health in Queensland. All of this had to be done with a variable ship schedule, rules changing every week, airline cancellations at last minute, arrival numbers restricted, mandatory quarantine periods and very limited interstate travel.

To get Tin Min home proved even more difficult. The Myanmar international

borders were closed, and he was constantly registered on the Embassy Relief Flights. But unfortunately, when the Name List was released, he was not included. Catherine was in constant contact with the Myanmar Embassy in Australia, the local Australian Border Force (Customs) and Queensland and NSW Authorities to ensure his stay in Australia was not affected by outstaying his visas. Her dogged persistence to overcome objections, refusals and denials of permits allowed a better than slim chance of getting Tin Min home.

Finally, after many combinations of airline routes and flights were matched against dates, border restrictions and travel plans, there was a flight available from Sydney to Yangon, including a charter flight leg. However, the ship was delivering cargo in Brisbane, and the NSW Maritime Crew Restrictions, covering interstate travel for mariners, restricted him from flying from Brisbane to Sydney where Tin Min could board the necessary flights that would eventually deliver him to Yangon. Different rules for different states; relief plans changed from plan "M" to plan "N"

The Ship Charterers, Origin Energy, changed the ship's schedule, and rerouted the ship to call at Port Botany on the 13th October to allow Tin Min to disembark in Sydney for a flight scheduled on the 20th October. The flights were routed via Singapore and Seoul, and then on to Yangon.

Wave Shipping assisted the Principals, Evergas, in applying to the NSW Health Authorities for an exemption to sign off Tin Min, and then allow him to proceed from *JS Jaguar* to the NSW Police Hotel, and then to Sydney Airport to catch his flight on the 23rd October, 2020. This exemption was granted.

Tin Min finally got home on 24th October. Catherine Hindley could breathe a sigh of relief, and her tireless work in seeing Tim Min safely home was acknowledged by all parties.

Below is a snapshot of the timeline depicting the various delays caused due to unavailability of flights, changes in visa requirements due to mandatory quarantine periods, and other last-minute changes in local requirements restricting crew travel arrangements.

**04-Jan-20** • CO Tin Min Myint signs ON the *JS Jaguar*

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**20-Mar-20** • Relief planned for Apr'20  
• Started facing travel restrictions and prohibition on entry and exit in many countries to avoid risk of contracting/constricting the virus.

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**27-Mar-20** • Information received that all ports in Australia, Fiji/Tonga were under lockdown and crew changes prohibited until end of April 2020.

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Rules changing every week. To get Tin Min home proved difficult.

- 04-May-20**
  - Still no green signal on carrying out crew changes as most of the countries were under lockdown.
  - Not possible to arrange any reliever.

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- 23-June-20**
  - Crew change planned for Brisbane (29-Jun-20).
  - Received update regarding airport closure in Yangon until 31st July 2020.

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- 06-Aug-20**
  - Relief planning initiated for options at Gladstone (26-08-20); Brisbane (29-08-20); Brisbane (03-09-20).
  - Due to limited flight options into Brisbane, no seats were available for relief CO to arrive into Australia.
  - Slow process of 'Visitor Visa' issuance, further delaying the relief plan.

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- 14-Sep-20**
  - Relief Co 'Visitor Visa' issued and received flight confirmation. He finally joins the vessel at Brisbane on 20-09-20.
  - Unfortunately still no relief flights available for CO Tin Min to Yangon due to ongoing restrictions in Myanmar.

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- 16-Oct-20**
  - After continuous follow up, received landing approval from Myanmar Authorities and seat confirmation on a 'Relief Chartered Flight' to Yangon.

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- 20-Oct-20**
  - CO Tin Min Myint signs OFF from *JS Jaguar*.

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Although more than 95% of goods are imported or exported by merchant ships to keep this country going even during lockdowns, the Australian Federal and State Governments do not recognise seafarers as 'Key Workers', and have so far failed to introduce uniform protocols to assist them.

This story relates to one seafarer's efforts to return to his home, and the hurdles that had to be overcome to bring his relieving Chief Officer to Australia. It is estimated that there are up to 400,000 seafarers still affected by the pandemic around the world, either onboard ships or at home awaiting to relieve those still onboard.



## A PILOT IN THE PORT OF NEWCASTLE

*Ian Sneddon.*



*I'm sometimes asked 'what does a check pilot do?'*

*Ian Sneddon is senior pilot having joined the Port Authority over 21 years ago, and has completed 5,000 harbour movements.*

*In the following article, Ian sheds light on his career, and provides insights to training pilots in 2020 in the Port of Newcastle, NSW.*

It goes without saying that safety is at the core of everything we pilots do.

It's 0200 hrs as we clear the breakwater heading out to an inbound 289.9m ship. If it were a mere 10 cm longer it would be booked for daylight entry. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

The Helicopter is not flying tonight due to low clouds and rain. The short choppy seas fed by a 20 knot South Easterly make unpleasant progress through the black night. The incoming white caps reflect from the sweeping arc of Nobby's light. The boat is pitching and rolling, and as we hit a bigger wave the cutter Master brings the throttles back. A heavy sea spray hits the glass and the wipers spring into action. I look out the starboard window and see the lights of the quiet Newcastle suburb of Merewether with its inhabitants asleep. I should be so lucky on this cold morning.

But this is what I signed up for over 21 years ago, and I wouldn't change it for anything, because I'm a Newcastle Pilot.

In December 1977, I gained a Cadetship with Eastern & Australian Steamship Company. During my cadetship I had opportunities, as an exchange cadet, to sail on a few Howard Smith ships. After two and a half years, I completed my 2nd Mates and applied to Howard Smith Shipping for a position of Deck Officer. Former AMWS Chairman, Captain Alan Tait, interviewed me and after a few minutes said 'Well, you've got a job with us!' I joined their new ship *Howard Smith* on the Sydney to Ube (Japan) run. During my 14 years, I rose through the ranks to Master. My first command was *Era*, a 95,000 tanker on coastal and overseas voyages.

Another highlight was a posting as Master on the *SeaCat Tasmania*, a 73m catamaran capable of 45 knots. As Master, I ran the vessel across Bass Strait from Port Welshpool (Victoria) to Georgetown (near Launceston) in Tasmania. At the end of the summer of 1993, I sailed *SeaCat Tasmania* to England, and remained in command for HoverSpeed as she crossed the English Channel servicing the regular runs between Dover and Calais, and Folkstone and Boulogne.

Following the demise of Howard Smith, I joined Dilman Tankers as Master, running around Fiji, N'ukalofa, New Caledonia, then finally on *Wallarah* running from a colliery at Catherine Hill Bay, just south of Newcastle, to the port of Newcastle, self-discharging coal at Dyke 6. This command gave me a valuable

pilot exemption for the Port of Newcastle, and the best chance to apply for a pilot's job. I had already achieved exemptions for Port Welshpool, Georgetown, Dover, Calais, Folkstone, Boulogne and Fremantle. It took me nearly nine years to get into Newcastle pilotage with the organization that is now known as the Port Authority of New South Wales.

Tonight a trainee pilot is joining me for a 'check' or audit on his piloting and shiphandling standard. It takes a trainee up to three years to attain an unlimited status.

A cold Antarctic wind gust greets me as I step outside the cabin. The vessel tonight has a combination ladder arrangement, consisting of a rope ladder of about 6 metres, then a step across to a gangway, before ascending another 8 metres or so. These types of arrangements are necessary when the freeboard is greater than 9 meters. After a visual assessment and a hefty tug from the deckhand, the ladder 'appears' in order. With my safety line now detached, my strobe light flashing, and adorned with my Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), I'm kitted for the ascent. Although routine we never dismiss the potential danger. Unfortunately too many pilots around the world never make it to the deck.



*Pilot Ian Sneddon fully kitted for a helicopter transfer*

During my time as a Pilot I've seen plenty of dodgy ladders, and it's pleasing the condition of ladders has improved. If we are not comfortable with the conditions at night, we delay entry until daylight using the helicopter. The increased ladder frequency has produced more demands on physical fitness strength, shoulder, back, etc. An element that we are becoming more aware of is the acceleration forces of wide beam ships rolling in seaway when climbing ladders. This dynamic increases the demands on one's fitness.

In terms of safety, our new jackets have better material, strobe lights, auto inflation, auto-activated Emergency Position Indicating Beacon (EPIRB). All is OK and we are on the ship's deck. I afford myself a short 'recovery' before a 90 m walk to the accommodation block and another 6 deck climb to the bridge. It's an extra effort to keep up with my younger companion.

Arriving on the bridge in this Covid era, the face mask goes on, the hand sanitiser is applied. The usual friendly welcome has disappeared, and the ship's crew is uneasy with my presence. Whereas before Covid, I would be close to the team to brief the team with the MPX (Master/pilot exchange) and the passage plan, now we are reciting it to those in earshot (observing safe distance), with the Master only approaching me to scribble a signature before retreating behind the radar. I don't blame them for this attitude as I could be the source of infection entering their ship. And if an infection took hold after the ship sailed on a long passage, where would they go? It may be that not too many countries would be inviting this situation. So it's the disposable mask to mitigate the potential

risk of infection. For me that brings in new problems of exhalation fogging my glasses. It's certainly unpleasant when the 'visibility' drops to 500m approaching the breakwater! The more rigid mask-type brings problems of raising my focal point through glasses, so that I need to adjust my stance.

My trainee Pilot completes the paper formality, and we proceed inwards, making tug arrangements and conducting the pilotage to the berth. It's a tricky pilotage, with a strong ebb, four tugs, 180deg swing and a 2400m astern transit road to the berth.



*Leaving the port of Newcastle*

Upon securing the vessel at Kooragang 9, I get the opportunity to discuss his performance. I give the trainee Pilot some feedback and coaching on his performance which can be a challenge at times. My attitude is firm but fair. What I try to convey is that I'm giving the benefit of hard-learned experiences.

Happily, on this occasion, I can deliver good news. The full debriefing is done back at the Pilot Station, where I can expand on elements that I see can be improved. It's also a time to discuss options of tug vector, main engine, rudder during the manoeuvre. The check pilotage assessment covers fifty identified points. Some are termed 'critical actions' that must be done 100% correct to be considered competent.

Trainees need to complete a set number of proven competencies before progression to the next level. The Marine Pilot Development Program (MPDP) is a very demanding process that everyone is pleased to put behind them.

Now I do the paperwork for my next pilotage and set out to do it all again. At the end of my shift, I can return to my home. Spare a thought for the international crews who are stuck on the ships for months beyond their contract. I'm told some 350,000 seafarers worldwide are overdue for repatriation.

Newcastle is a technicality demanding and high cognitive workload pilotage. It goes without saying that safety is at the core of everything we pilots do. Some of the demands are exchange traffic at the entrance, cross channel tidal streams, narrow channels and tight swing areas. Throw in ships up to 300m departing with 1.4m under keel clearance (UKC), an unforgiving swell – it's never boring!

*Ian Sneddon,  
Check Pilot, Newcastle,  
Port Authority of New South Wales.*



## AMWS SCHOLARSHIPS CONTINUE DESPITE COVID-19

*Llew Russell AM, AMWS Councillor & Chairman of the Scholarship Committee.*

It is trite to say that COVID19 has provided many challenges on many fronts but one bright spark, hopefully among many, has been the AMWS scholarship scheme. As mentioned in the last edition of the newsletter, AMWS was very pleased to be able to offer three rather than the normal two scholarships to the Australian Maritime College because of the outstanding quality of the candidates for semester 1.

For semester 2, the Society was able to offer a scholarship of \$3000 to Matt who fulfilled the criteria of being the child of an ex-seafarer and was of low to moderate financial means. His application was most impressive, and below is a brief summary of a letter of appreciation that Matt sent to the Society:

*"I very much appreciate the scholarship which will lighten the burden of study related expenses including travelling from my home in north Queensland to Tasmania. I am passionate about supporting the Australian maritime industry and being an exemplary figure to inspire others to seek a similar career path.*

*Short term I wish to complete the deck watchkeepers component of the Bachelor of Applied Science (Nautical Science) course enabling me to rise to the rank of second officer. Longer term, I am striving to advance and become a Master class 1, unlimited.*

*I hope that one day, when my career is established, I am in a position to support other students and repay this kind gesture."*

In addition, whilst understandably, the sail training vessels were not able to continue under COVID 19 restrictions, we recently received advice from the "ONE & All" in Port Adelaide that they are planning a voyage next January having the required approval from the State Government because it is outdoor training and there are small groups on board. They have some applications from students with the required maritime connections for AMWS scholarships. Another light on the horizon.

Councillor Captain Tony Cousins is undertaking an audit of the training vessels operational standards in order to manage the Society's OH&S liability as sponsors of sail trainees including their COVID Safe plan. In relation to the "One & All" this could also involve sailing on the vessel to observe onboard practices as they apply to the Safety Management System in particular. Once State borders reopen, it is planned to approach other sail training institutions.

The Society looks forward to being able to once again provide a more comprehensive scholarship programme.

Once State borders reopen, it is planned to approach other sail training institutions.



# AMWS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SEAFARERS' WELFARE

by *Martin Orchard* – AMWS Councillor & Editor.

The Covid-19 virus continues along its relentless path of suffering and disruption to the lives of seafarers and the maritime industry around the world. Today, the spotlight on seafarers' welfare has never been more focused, and the importance of the AMWS' commitment, along with other maritime welfare agencies around the world, to this cause has never been more illuminated.

The Australian Mariners' Welfare Society's principal activities continue to be:

- Provision of subsidised home unit accommodation for ex-seafarers of modest means.
- Annual grants to the Mission to Seafarers and the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) in recognition of their offering a home away from home for visiting mariners at 39 centres in ports around Australia.
- Project grants to assist with the upkeep of the above centres, including IT and transport.
- Offering maritime scholarships and tall ship training experience.
- Representation on the Australian Seafarers' Welfare Council whose role is to ensure the provision of appropriate welfare services for all seafarers visiting Australian ports.
- Membership of the Sydney Port Welfare Committee.

During 2019, the AMWS expenses for grants, donations, scholarships and sponsorships totalled over A\$192,000.

In 2020 to date, the AMWS has:

- increased their contribution towards the Stations' cost of tyres for their buses, as well as contributing towards 50% of their annual registration and CTP insurance for up to four buses per Station.
- provided annual grants to the Mission to Seafarers (MtS) and Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris).
- provided grants to MtS' and Stella Maris' Stations around the Australian coast to enable the Stations to upgrade their facilities, so that they provide a necessary degree of comfort for visiting seafarers. The Stations were located at the following ports:  
Darwin / Port Giles / Geraldton / Gladstone / Devonport / Newcastle / Brisbane / Melbourne / Sydney.
- provided Maritime Scholarships to three students studying at the Australian Maritime College (AMC) in Launceston to assist in their studies during Semester 1 in 2020, and a further student in Semester 2. Read the article by Llew Russell on this subject that appears in this edition of the newsletter.

Today, the spotlight on seafarers' welfare has never been more focused.

So far in 2020, the AMWS has contributed almost A\$134,000.

The AMWS Council is committed to continuing its important role of providing comfort and hope to all seafarers who visit the Australian coast, particularly during these difficult times of uncertainty and anxiety. The Council will give the appropriate degree of consideration and compassion to all requests of financial assistance where mariners' welfare is involved.



## MISSION TO SEAFARERS MELBOURNE – OPEN TO EVERYONE.

*Sue Dight, Chief Manager, Mission to Seafarers Victoria Inc.*

We have all been released from lockdown after so many months of doing the right thing. Imagine if your lockdown was coming up to 17 months, and you have no idea when you might see your home or family again.



*Sue Dight*

Globally, there are up to 400,000 Seafarers in this situation right now; crews of men and women who deliver everything for us; including the coffee beans that make Melbourne such a special place to be.

Australian Maritime laws help prevent Seafarers' isolation most of the time, by detaining and banning ships, but if you're too scared to speak up, what happens then? To help with this issue, our Mission in Melbourne provides the crew with someone to speak to in confidence. It might be via Whatsapp, or Facebook, or text messaging. But whatever the time, day or night, we have one of our

team on standby to help. Our service entitled 'Internationally Chat to a Chaplain' has received hundreds of calls for assistance.

Shore leave provides crew members a few hours to rest and relax away from their dangerous and constant work; think sinking ships, bad weather and pirates (who carry AK47's, not parrots on their shoulders). There has been no shore leave in Melbourne since the start of this pandemic, and there will be none for the foreseeable future, whilst there are still international border restrictions in place. De-escalation of the spread of the virus in Australia is great for us but, without great screening in international centres where crews are on-signing, there will be no relaxation at the borders. This makes crew changes almost impossible.

The Melbourne Mission (and many others) have been taking care of the Seafarers by shopping for them (there is no 'click and collect' in the middle of the ocean), by arranging for families to receive their pay (so they don't go hungry at home), and by making sure they have books, beanies and a few treats (thanks to donations by Good360.org.au, Rotary Prahran, and our supporters, such as the CWA for beanies). We do this so they have treats, chocolates, essentials – vitamins, emergency glasses and medications, socks and underwear, and entertainment

– games, for their mental and physical wellbeing. A delivery of fast food or doughnuts lifts the whole crew's spirits. We know in their kind notes that every effort we make is appreciated.

The care packs that crews receive are just a small token to show the seafarers that we value their work; they are thought about, and Missions around Australia have had some generous donors, but have also contributed with over \$385,000 spent on care packs distributed between March and August this year. We anticipate over 20,000, including Christmas packs, will be distributed by the end of the year.

The care packs are just a small token to show the seafarers that we value their work.

Missions around Australia are funded many ways, and our Annual Maritime Art Prize fund raiser went online this year, – <https://gallery.missiontoseafarers.com.au/>. Special congratulations to Rodney Forbes who took out the overall prize, and paintings are still available for sale. They make a fabulous gift for retirements, promotions, and to remind yourself of time at sea.

However, even though the Seafarers can't visit the historic Melbourne Mission right now, you certainly can! You can grab a beer, wine or coffee, and sit in the best beer garden in the city, or in our Spanish-styled courtyard, to enjoy the freedoms we have once again, and support Seafarers' welfare at the same time.

Do contact your local Mission – what can I do to help? It might surprise you where that call could lead to.

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*Mission to Seafarers, Melbourne.*

## PIRACY AT SEA

*Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor.*

Michael Howlett, Director of The International Maritime Bureau (IMB), states that *'Crews are facing exceptional pressures due to Covid-19, and the risk of violent piracy or armed robbery is an extra stress.'*

The IMB is a specialised department of the International Chamber of Commerce responsible for the fighting of crimes related to maritime trades and transportation.

The IMB reports that during the first nine months of 2020, a 40% increase in the number of kidnappings reported in the Gulf of Guinea, off the coast of West Africa, compared to the corresponding period in 2019. The kidnappings were reported off the coasts of Nigeria, Benin, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Ghana.

ReCAAP is the regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia, and is based in Singapore. Australia is one of the Contracting Parties to the ReCAAP Agreement.

ReCAAP reports 75 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asian waters during the period January to September 2020, compared to 54 incidents during the same period in 2019 – a 39% increase.

The 2020 incidents occurred in the seas bordering Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, South China Sea and Singapore Strait. However, in 2020 there were improvements at ports/anchorages in China and Malaysia compared with the same period in 2019.

Of particular concern to ReCAAP is the continued increase of incidents on board ships while underway in the Singapore Strait during January to September 2020, with 22 incidents compared to 15 incidents during the same period in 2019.

The Straits Times of Singapore has since reported that in the span of 2-3 hours between the night of 25th October and morning of 26th October, armed pirates stormed three bulk carriers in the eastbound lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) of the Singapore Strait. No crew member of these vessels was harmed, and nothing was stolen. ReCAAP reports that these incidents bring the tally to six during October, the highest monthly figure so far in 2020. The perpetrators of these incidents were not arrested. ReCAAP has advised all vessels 'to exercise utmost vigilance, adopt extra precautionary measures and report all incidents immediately to the nearest coastal state', and have urged law enforcement agencies to enhance surveillance, increase patrols and respond promptly to incidents reported by ships in order to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators.

The Australian Mariners' Welfare Society continues to view these incidents with concern, and supports the measures being urged to eliminate piracy from the

Exercise utmost vigilance, adopt extra precautionary measures and report all incidents immediately.

seas, providing safety and protection to seafarers as they go about their task of transporting cargoes along the world's trade lanes.



## THE 'MERCHANT NAVY' CLASS LOCOMOTIVES OF THE SOUTHERN REGION OF BRITISH RAILWAYS

*Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor.*

A total of 30 steam locomotives of the 'Merchant Navy' class were built between 1941-1949 to service the Southern Region of the British Rail network between the London rail termini of Victoria and Waterloo Stations and the South Coast towns of Dover, Folkestone, Southampton, Exeter, Bournemouth and Weymouth.



Initially, the construction of the 'Merchant Navy' class was used as a successful publicity exercise by the Southern Region to highlight the names of the Merchant Navy shipping lines that were serviced by Southampton Docks. But the locomotives' names were later regarded as a memorial to the Merchant Navy's seamen who fought at sea during World War II to keep Britain supplied with essential goods, particularly during the Battle of the Atlantic against the German U-boat menace.

*'Merchant Navy' class 'Clan Line'*

The 'Merchant Navy' class of locomotives were named after the following shipping lines:

Channel Packet	General Steam Navigation	New Zealand Line
Union Castle	United States Lines	Holland America Line
Royal Mail	Blue Funnel	Holland-Afrika Line
Cunard White Star	Nederland Line	East Asiatic Company
Canadian Pacific	Rotterdam Lloyd	Brocklebank Line
Peninsular & Oriental	Elders Fyffes	Lampart & Holt Line
Aberdeen Commonwealth	Belgian Marine	Port Line
Orient Line	British India Line	Clan Line
Shaw Savill	French Line CGT	Ellerman Lines
Blue Star	Bibby Line	Elder Dempster Lines

These locomotives were designed by Oliver Bulleid who was born in Invercargill, New Zealand, in 1882, and was the British Southern Region's Chief Mechanical Engineer from 1937 to 1949. (Bulleid's Great-Nephew, Nick Bulleid, resides in NSW, and is regarded as one of Australia's leading wine experts. The author of this article sung with Nick for a number of years in a Sydney-based choir!).

With the dawn of the 1960s, British Rail decided it was time to 'modernise' and

replace steam locomotives with diesel and diesel-electric units. The 'Merchant Navy' class of steam locomotives were condemned to the scrap-heap, and progressively withdrawn from active service on the Southern Region network between 1964 to 1967.

Fortunately, some of the Merchant Navy class locomotives escaped destruction and were bought by either private individuals or private railway companies.

Of the locomotives saved, six have names of shipping lines which served the Australian coast for many years:

Peninsular & Oriental S.N. Co

Shaw Savill

Blue Star

Port Line

Ellerman Lines

British India Line

'Ellerman Lines' is now on static display in the National Railway Museum in York. The five other locomotives are stored in the hands of private interests and are being overhauled, or awaiting overhaul.

The 'Merchant Navy' class were powerful and majestic-looking locomotives, and popular with the British travelling public and young 'train-spotters' in the era when steam locomotives reigned supreme all those years ago.

Today, the 'Merchant Navy' class of locomotives have been recreated for OO-gauge model railways. Port Line in London offered the Author his first job after leaving school, and he travelled to Sydney on the Port Line's 'Port Auckland' in 1969. The Author's OO-gauge model of 'Port Line' is photographed below.

