

My friend Malcolm Longstaff

My name is Alan Tait. A seafarer by trade I am now an aging Ancient Mariner having been involved with ships and the sea my entire working life along with their legacies in my retired years

May I firstly express my personal condolences to Maggie & Alister & Sarah and families

Although Malcolm and I had a common interest our paths didn't cross until we had retired and looked to pay back the fortunes that our industry did share, be it in a small way

We first met in 2007 when the Council of AMWS asked Malcolm to assist Jan Bowen to complete her work on our book "The Sydney Sailors Home". As a result, we were fortunate that he ultimately joined the Council back in 2008, some 12 years ago

Whilst I thought I was a pretty good Manager that knew a bit about everything it wasn't long before I realised Malcolm brought a unique style to our Council that was worth its weight & I as its Chairman was able to reap its benefit

And I did!

Our organization had had a name change from SSH to AMWS and with our History Book we needed airplay to what is a select audience. Malcolm provided that catalyst and quickly struck the right tempo as editor of our Newsletter

Seafarers are not renowned for their spelling and grammar. Reader's remarks about the standards of my reports being so clear, precise and to the point, was readily accepted by me without explaining the full sequence of events that lead to their issue. A secret pact with my friend.

He was able to identify and have us recognise important milestones which provided perpetuity such as the plaque that now takes pride of place outside the SSH building at the Rocks aptly named "Home away from Home". Malcolm was like a dog with a bone making sure we got to the right people and they understood the importance of recognising the contribution seafarers made to our history. It was so good!

His advice and recommendations were measured and pertinent. Always quietly spoken, his work ethics were beyond reproach. He brought his many years of organizational skills to the table and my colleagues did recognise them

Maggie will tell you of our numerous trips to Hornsby where a number of retired seafarers lived in the organizations comfortable one bedroom home units. He was always available to lend a helping hand. This included rolling up his sleeves to go through records that badly needed culling. As you can imagine it was done with a shortage of willing volunteers, led by myself

It reminded me of the story that when I asked my boss how long one keeps this very large ring of keys entrusted to the Chief Officer of the ship when I have no idea what they opened. His very sound advice being "You keep them till just after you leave the ship".

The analogy is there, be it slim.

I was fascinated by his stories covering the travel industry. The one that comes to mind is the London to Sydney Centenary of Federation Air Race in a Twin-Engine Cessna.

His working life brought him together with many and varied people be they on the land, on the sea in the air or in a court of law through his involvement with Law & Theatre.

Might I say what a lovely lady is his Princess. She has remained strong throughout his ailing health. Always there, he has been blessed to have her by his side for some 56 years. When I say by his side, his work did require periods of being away from home and this was accepted by her, as sharing his life. I am sure. I say this because in our short but numerous sojourns to Hornsby she let him out the door with a wave and a see u soon.

Of course, I will miss our regular cups of coffee joined by our good friend Graham Lightfoot where we would reminisce on what good jobs we did when running the ships.

I got to see him a couple of times whilst he was at Southern Cross Care. You know he was even organising his own funeral during those visits. This included asking me to speak! Lucid to the end I was in awe of his calm strength. A sign of a brave man

At this very moment, I am sure he would say peace and good will to everyone and express his strong support of the Queen's message that in these unprecedented times, be ready to give each other a hug, when permitted to do so, of course

Malcolm Longstaff was a true gentleman

I wished I had known him a lot sooner.