March 1999
No. 74

Quarterly Newsletter

⚓ The Australian Association for Maritime History

Publisher of *The Great Circle*
Special "Girt by sea" issue

Message from the AAMH President

As the last AAMH newsletter indicated there has been a change with the AAMH Executive Committee moving to South Australia for a five year term. This is the first time that South Australia has taken on the responsibility of the AAMH Executive and we hope to be able to represent the interests of our members and the association as well as some of our predecessors have.

I wish to thank the outgoing Executive Committee, which was based in Western Australia under the past President Dr Malcolm Tull, for their valuable efforts over the last five years. The financial situation of the Association is very strong and membership numbers are solid - it is a very fine legacy for the new Executive.

Publications

Members will be aware that the publication of *The Great Circle* has fallen behind schedule. Members can rest assured that the new Executive and the current and future editors of *The Great Circle* are working towards having the publication schedule back on track as soon as possible. We are hoping to have Volume 20 Numbers 1 and 2 (the 1998 volumes) out during the first half of 1999.

Paul Weaver has kindly agreed to continue as the AAMH newsletter editor, at least until the end of 1999, and the new Executive would like to thank him for his ongoing efforts on behalf of the membership. The newsletter is a valuable and regular service for members but it always needs material - notifications of new books, information from the newspaper, what's on at the various maritime museums, questions and answers. Members should direct their contributions directly to: Dr Paul Weaver, AAMH Newsletter Editor. 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra. WA 6157

The Executive Committee

The AAMH 1998 Annual General Meeting was held at the South Australian Maritime Museum on Saturday 31 October 1998. Malcolm Tull's President's report appeared in the last edition of the Newsletter. At the AGM *The Great Circle* Editor Graydon Henning was granted life

membership of AAMH in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the Association over many years - Congratulations Graydon!

Subsequently, the new Executive Committee met at the SA Maritime Museum on Thursday 10 December 1998 to make progress on the business of changing over the Association's accounts and other arrangements. The Committee will meet throughout the year and members are invited to send any material which they want to be considered by the Executive Committee to the new Secretary: Ms Marie Boland Secretary - AAMH do SA Maritime Museum Lipson Street Port Adelaide. Phone (08) 8207 6255 fax (08) 8207 6266 email man time@history. sa.gov.au **Mark Staniforth**

State representitives of the AAMH

The following members are your state representatives of the AAMH.
NSW: John Bach Ph 02 4959 4403 Cynthia Hunter Ph 02 4988 6401; Tasmania: Barry Lewarn Ph 03 260711; NT: David Carment Ph 08 8946 6764; Victoria: John Anderson Ph 03 9850 8201; ACT: Simon Ville Ph 06 2493 581; SA: Gerald Donaghy Ph 08 8342 2857 John Ling Ph .....; WA: Malcolm Tull Ph 08 9332 6220; Peter Ridgway Ph 08 9222 7521; Paul Weaver Ph 08 9339 6593; Qld: Vacant.

Membership subscriptions run from 1 January to 31 December. Send them to, Mr Terry Arnott, Treasurer AAMH, C/- Heritage South Australia, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide, South Australia. 5001. Rates: Student, A$25; Individual, A$30; Corporate/Institutional A$40.

Extra thanks to Malcolm Tull and family

The AAMH Newsletter editor would like to extend a special thanks to Dr Malcolm Tull and his family for their unheralded role as Newsletter posties over the years. Aside from his other duties when he was president, Malcolm arranged the printing, stapling, labelling and posting of them, and his family assisted with the onerous task. Not only that, but they are continuing to do it. It is a big job and we thank them all.

Research in progress

Capt. Phillip Evans seeks any information on *Petrel* which sailed from Bristol to Melbourne in 1849. His address is 91 Eton Rd, Lindfield, NSW. 2070. Ph 02 9416 1896. Philip is one of our new members and is involved with the Maritime Studies Dept. at Northern Beaches College, Brookvale.

Prof. Frank Broeze is gathering information about Dutch submariners who operated in WA during WW2. Veterans, friends, hosts, or families with any information are invited to contact him at Dept of History, University of Western Australia, Nedlands. 6907. Ph: 08 9380 2139. email: fjab@arts.uwa.edu.au

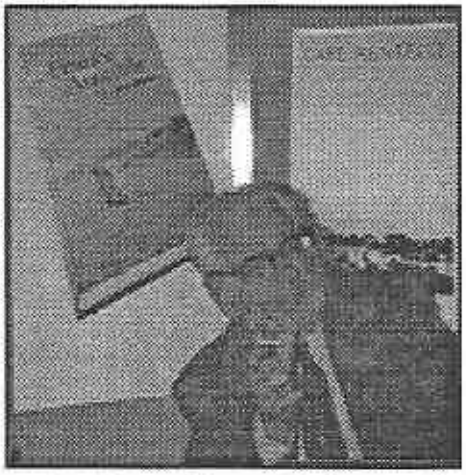
Mr Mark Staniforth. A small poster display on the Abandoned ships of Port Adelaide has been put up in the Guest Gallery at the Port Adelaide Visitor Information Centre. It features the research conducted by Flinders University honours students Nathan Richards and Shirley Matthews over the past two years. Photographs of some of the ships abandoned at Garden Island have been located but more are needed. Can anyone provide leads about images of the following? Steamers: *Enterprise*, built 1868. *Ullock*, built 1875. *Stanley*, built 1876. *Moe (ex-Zoe)*, built 1876. *Glaucus*, built 1878. Barques: *Santiago*, built 1856. *Sunbeam*, built 1857. Ferry / excursion: *Success*, built 1916. Ketches: *Thomas & Annie*, built 1874. *Lady Daly*, built 1876. Hopper Barge: *Sarnia*, built 1878. If anyone can help, please contact Mark at The Department of Archaeology, Flinders University of South Australia, Phone 8201 5195 or Fax 8201 3845.

Mr Bob Nicholls is preparing a full length study of the breastwork monitor *Cerberus* for publication in about a year's time. The work, of about 50,000 words, will concentrate on the background to the design and the technical aspects of the ship rather than her rather mundane career after she arrived in Melbourne. He writes "At this stage I will be looking at private publication as this is a somewhat niche topic for any mainstream publisher and I can also retain control over the book's contents. Assisting me through their specialist contributions will be experts in the fields of contemporary marine engineering (Liverpool UK), boilers, (Scotland) gunnery (Adelaide), pumping and flooding (California), while the illustrations are coming from an expert in Huntsville, Alabama. Other illustrations are from all over, but few will be, I regret, new to Australian naval historians. Federal and State archival institutions have been consulted but little of interest other than the post Australian arrival career of this important ship has emerged. Any help that members can give will be most welcome." 122 Merrigang St. Bowral NSW. 2576. Email: bobnich@acenet.com.au

Footnote: Readers may recall that one of Bob's recent books, *Statesmen & Sailors* was reviewed in *The Great Circle* Vol 18 No 2. He was also responsible for the historical research and analysis for *Flying Stations; A Story ofAustralian Naval Aviation* published by Allen & Unwin last year. Bob has a few remaining copies of *Statesmen and Sailors* for sale.

France Australe reprinted

A revised edition of Professor Leslie R. Marchant's classic 1982 book *FranceAustrale* was launched by the WA State Premier at the Alexandra/Battye Library 8 December 1998. The original book was seminal in exposing to a wider public the rich history of the sustained French exploration of the western half of the continent prior to British colonisation. The author has subsequently updated the text and added several new illustrations and maps. During his introduction Professor Marchant said his scholarly research in foreign and Australian archives had taken many decades, and that in addition to this he had visited the places where Frenchmen had purportedly landed. However, upon consideration of the navigational methods of the time he discovered that persons since have made many interpretive errors about these places and landmarks. His contradictory findings had at times offended other historians. He commented that his original research had contributed to the recovery last year of a sealed bottle and French coins on Dirk Hartog Island left in 1792 by French explorer/navigator Francis St Alouarn on *Le Gross Ventre*. First editions of *FranceAustrale* are scarce and can bring $A200. The 91 high quality illustrations in the new edition come at a cost so it retails at $80 plus postage. The book is available from quality bookshops or Muirs Old and Rare Books, 69 Broadway, Nedlands. WA. 6009. Ph: (618) 9386 5842. Email: books@muirbooks.com. Muirs also have a very nice illustrated brochure about the book if you ask.



An old man of the sea - Professor Leslie Marchant. Photo: P. Weaver

Exhibitions at the SA Maritime Museum

The Crust of the Wave - A History of Food on Ships 1850-1950. January 1999 onwards. The exhibition examines people's experiences of eating on board ships from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, with a focus on ships coming to Australian during the three main waves of immigration: The 1850s, the 1910s and the 1950s. A special program for children, including food sampling will be available through the Easter holiday period.
Model Makers. March 1999 onwards. A new permanent exhibition featuring models and model makers. Demonstrations will be given by model-makers on a regular basis.
The Last of the Windjammers. 14 April - 4 July 1999. An exhibition celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the last grain race from South Australia to Britain. The exhibition has been developed by the Alands Maritime Museum in association with the Australian National Maritime Museum. Apart from Sydney, where it is at present, the South Australian Maritime Museum is its only other Australian destination. From Port Adelaide, it departs for the USA.
The Catch of the Day. Late June 1999 onwards. A new permanent exhibition demonstrating the history and importance of the commercial fishing industry in South Australia.
The Museum is located at 126 Lipson Street, Port Adelaide. Ph: (08) 8207 6255; Fax: (08) 8207 6266; Email: martirne~history.sa.gov.au

Maritime labour and change

Sea Change is a wide-ranging set of reflections on maritime labour history stimulated by Rown Cahill's work with the Seamens' Union of Australia in the early 1970s, and his association with its leader E.V.Elliott. The theme of the anotated 36 page booklet is that a period of maritime political history eclipsed with the death of Elliott in 1985; its political message is that the kind of politics and approach to unionism associated with Elliott and the SUA may be needed again. Rowan Cahill was co-author of *The Seamens' Union of Australia* 1872- 1972, and has worked for the trade union movement as a rank and file activist, delegate, and publicist. His work has been published in a wide range of socialist, radical and academic publications. *Sea Change* is available from the author for $7 including postage. His address is Lot 4 Tulloona Ave. Bowral. NSW. 2576.

Titanic *Titanic* exhibition

We've had the videos, then the movie, the books, the toys and then the legal battle in America by interlopers over rights to take tourists down in a surplus Russian sub. It seems there is no end in sight to the burgeoning *Titanic* industry. Now comes the *Titanic* travelling exhibition which will go to every major city in Australia then throughout Asia Having been to Adelaide and Fremantle it is now lo the eastern seaboard. Not a lot of original material from the Titanic but quite a bit relating to other White Star vessels of the period, plus there are reproduction costumes etc from the movie etc. Mainstream media loved it, and the associated glitz.

Free WA dive book has lots of shipwreck info

Four WA government agencies have jointly produced a new, free booklet *Diver Below, diving in Western Australia* to promote safe and responsible behaviour in WA's burgeoning diving community. Lots of colour, nice photos and a six page list of WA shipwrecks providing details of the vessels' construction, voyage, cargo, the precise location on the appropriate chart and the date the wrecks were gazetted. For further information contact the WA Maritime Museum, Cliff Street Fremantle. 6160 or most WA dive shops. Alternatively the newsletter editor can grab a copy for any Oz member in exchange for five 45 cent stamps.

HMAS *Sydney* inquiry - a personal opinion from Ian Nicholson

As a naval communicator, I provide my comments after studying most if not all the available evidence, including the voluminous "Submissions" to the Inquiry and the Hansard transcripts of the public sessions:

It is considered that communications, codes, callsigns and procedures, etc, provide a "key" to what probably happened during the encounter. Many of the public submissions contribute little to solving the critical issue of initial contact between the two ships, and some just add to the controversy. A few, having generally accepted the German version of events, are unfairly critical of Captain Burnett. Others continue to accuse successive Governments of a "cover-up", and some of the many who concentrate on location of the wrecks, naively believe that close inspection of *Sydney* will solve the mystery, although some of their motives seem to be commercially inspired. Late submissions to the committee by many of the "main players" (authors and researchers) degenerated into an unedifying slanging match between themselves.

However, some people have put considerable effort into their research and have come up with logical and constructive points, but the general level of nautical knowledge is abysmal, particularly in the field of communications at the time, many

assuming that there was instant contact with anyone and everyone. Apart from other considerations dictating against the theory of a Japanese submarine being involved in the action, communications would have been quite inadequate and unacceptable for surface ship-submarine co-operation (eg, no common codes, no underwater link, and reliance on vulnerable HF radio which could so easily compromise the operation).

One reason that accusations of a "cover-up" continue is because of several reports of signals from *Sydney*, including calls for assistance, being heard in various locations on the night of the action. These are all of a dubious nature. The consensus of reliable evidence indicates that there were no radio transmissions from either *Sydney* or *Kormoran* (apart from the latter's false QQQQ signal on local 500 kcs). The late Writer Mason's claim of hearing that *Sydney* was in trouble is unbelievable. He had no access to HMAS*Harman's* radio receiving rooms. Responsible operators who were there swear that nothing was received, and other ship-shore operators guarding the same frequencies in Darwin, Singapore, Ceylon, etc, heard nothing. It is a scurrilous smear on the Navy and the RAN Communication Branch to suggest that vital signals were suppressed for no apparent reason thereby delaying a search for *Sydney* for over 3 days. The best light one can put on Mason's claim is that he was confused with talk of considerable communication activity in *Hanrman* a few days later when concerted efforts were made to contact *Sydney*, or when the search was mounted.

While the diehards may still not accept it, the clear indications are that *Sydney* made no signals. No enemy report (required if Capt. Burnett considered he was confronting a German raider or supply ship). No check on the*Straat Malakka* (if in any doubt about her identity or current position). The conclusion is that *Sydney* was completely satisfied with the "*Straat Malakka*" and not just with her disguise (including her use of false international signal letters and the Dutch ensign). She had somehow come through the most testing examination. Why else did *Sydney* fall out from "action stations" leaving her secondary armament and torpedo tubes unmanned; cancel the Walrus aircraft flight; have off-watch personnel relaxing on the upper deck, etc; and close to point-blank range?

The only logical explanation is that Captain Detmers had produced one of the "trump cards" of the war, which was to cost Australia dearly. In response to *Sydney's* ultimate challenge it appears that *Kormoran* cooly answered with the required elements of *Straat Malakka's* secret callsign! Impossible some will say, and certainly unthinkable at the time. But revelations in recent years about compromised codes, captured cyphers and Germany's early successes in the fields of intelligence and cryptanalysis indicate that such a coup was quite within the realms of possibility, even probability.

No less an authority than Britain's official naval historian, Captain S.W. Roskill RN conceded in later life that not only had the Germans been reading our merchant ship codes in 1941, but also had gained knowledge of some secret callsigns. They did not need them all, just one or two in each theatre of war so that raiders, etc, could then adopt the identity of a ship with a compromised secret callsign. It is now unlikely that the circumstances of the German intelligence coup will ever be known, nor could it be disproved of course. Probably only Comander Detmers and his communicator were privy to the secret and it would have been vital but simple to withhold the information from the rest of the crew. (Incidentally, while the *Kormoran* had a specialist communications officer, the *Sydney* did not. The navigator doubled up in that capacity, which is the practice in small ships but hardly satisfactory.

Brief mention is now made of one of the Sub-Committee's other terms of reference, the body on Christmas Island. Here the Department of Navy may have been guilty of a "cover-up", but I suggest that if it was the case, it was probably done for the very best intentions. A detailed study of the carley float and corpse appearing off Christmas Island indicates that they were probably from the *Sydney*, prevailing winds and currents in that period fit the circumstances, and there is no other damaged or lost ship the float and body could realistically have come from. Captain George Oldham, Director of Naval Intelligence in the early post-war years would surely have come to the same conclusion, but observing that some of the technical details of the float and the overalls on the corpse did not fit standard RAN patterns, and believing (at the time) that the person could never be identified, he made his report inconclusive, and considered on balance that the man was not from the *Sydney*. Such a decision clearly spared the feelings of hundreds of *Sydney's* next-ofkin and was a worthy deed rather than a dishonest one. **Ian Nicholson,** Yaroomba, Qld.

End Secrecy on HMAS *Sydney* group unhappy with conduct of inquiry

Spokesman for the ESOS group John Doohan has criticised the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry for the way in which public hearings were conducted. He said especially that too little time was allowed for evidence to be presented and cited the example of the Perth hearings where proceedings were rushed through so that committee members could catch an early Friday afternoon plane back to Canberra. Mr Doohan and his members have been at the forefront for many years in pushing for a full disclosure of all matters relating to the sinking of HMAS *Sydney*.

HMAS *Sydney* inquiry resumes

On the recommendation of The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, The Minister for Defence Hon. John Moore has authorised the resumption of the inquiry into the 1941 loss of HMAS *Sydney* under the same terms of reference. Twenty four volumes of material including Hansard typescripts have been published so far. The final report is expected to be available at the end of March, 1999.

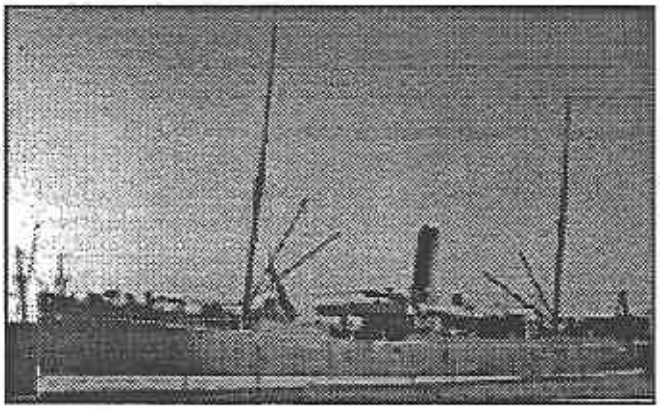
Kwinana, a pretty maiden remembered

Although it is 77 years since the steamship SS *Kwinana* was struck from the register of the now defunct WA State Shipping Service, its memory is perpetuated in the name of the thriving industrial town of Kwinana. Other ships with a WA historical connection such as *Rockingham, Baldavis, Calista, Medina, Orelia, Parmelia* and *Success* have been commemorated in the names of nearby areas.

Kwinana first entered service as the SS *Darius* in 1892. The 2425 tonne vessel was built by W. Doxford and Sons Ltd. of Sunderland, England and was engaged in the Indian horse trade until purchased by the WA Government in 1912. It was renamed *Kwinana*, which is an Aboriginal word thought to mean "pretty maiden." By the end of its first year's service it had made 12 voyages to WA northern ports, carrying 7000 tonnes of general cargo, timber and coal. On the return voyages that year it carried 19,383 tonnes of live Kimberley cattle, with the largest consignment comprising 780 head. The ship also voyaged further afield, making trips to New Zealand and South Africa loaded with hardwood timber, and to China with a cargo of sandalwood.

Kwinana served Western Australia well, and by December 1920 had made 96 voyages from Fremantle, a period of more than eight years. The last voyage commenced on December 23, 1920 when it sailed from Fremantle bound for Wyndham under the command of Captain W.S. Wyles. The following morning the chief engineer reported smoke billowing from the coal bunkers. The hoses were run out, seemingly bringing the fire under control. However, it flared again on Christmas Day between Geraldton and Carnarvon, causing an emergency diversion to Carnarvon. It arrived there in the early morning of Boxing Day with the siren sounding incessantly to draw attention to its plight. The ship was burning fiercely. Its crew quarters were destroyed and the bridge and galley seriously damaged before the blaze was extinguished.
The tug *Wyola* arrived from Fremantle a few days later to take it in tow but on December 30 a decision was made to let the ship return under its own power. The *Kwinana's* crew objected and refused to sail because they felt it was no longer seaworthy. A negotiated compromise was eventually reached with the WA Government. Half of the crew would steam the ship to Fremantle, provided a bonus was paid and they were escorted. After several months and a clean-up at Carnarvon, *Kwinana* sailed south with the small coastal freighter SS *Kurnalpi* in company.

They reached Fremantle without incident on March 28,1921 with the *Kwinana* carrying its last cargo, 1408 tonnes of Abrolhos-guano fertiliser which it had picked up at Geraldton. After discharging this, it was tied-up at North Wharf for the next nine months awaiting a decision on its future. Surveys revealed that repairs were economically unviable and an announcement was made that the vessel was "of no further use".



SS *Kwinana*
Fremantle Port Authority photo

Kwinana was towed out of Fremantle Harbour by *Albatross* on December 9, 1921, to a mooring at Careening Bay on nearby Garden Island, where all salvageable fittings were removed pending the sale of the rust-streaked, burnt-out hull for scrap. It swung on the mooring until May 30, 1922 when it came adrift during a gale and was blown across Cockburn Sound, beaching on the mainland slightly north of Rockingham. In those days the area was a desolate piece of coastline and the potential cost of refloating the ship was not considered worthwhile. The wreck was eventually sold for 25 pounds but little was salvaged.

As the weather took its toll, the deterioration was hastened in WWII when the Army used the ship for explosives training. It became increasingly unsafe in the postwar period and eventually a fence was erected for the public's safety. In the 1960s the ship was cut down to the waterline and the remainder, partly buried in sand, was filled with concrete and rocks by the Fremantle Port Authority. A deteriorating section of the stern is still visible in 1999, and the shape of the vessel is outlined by a concrete breakwater which has been built over the site. It is only a matter of time before the last remains of *Kwinana*, like the numerous shipwrecks which once littered Cockburn Sound, vanishes forever. **Vic Jeffery,** Navy Public Affairs Officer (WA)

Two hundred years on for Flinders and Bass

The 200th anniversary of the 1798-9 of the *Norfolk* through Bass Strait has provoked a flurry of activity, especially and understandably in Tasmania. The undoubted centrepiece has been the re-enactment voyage of the *Norfolk* replica under the command of Bern Cuthbertson. This has been a triumph both as a considerable feat in itself and also as an exercise in public relations. The weather certainly ensured that this would be no easy voyage and a little radio silence after a rough spell on the voyage up to Sydney produced some anxiety until the vessel was located, but there has been much more to it than that.

Everywhere the *Norfolk* has called, she has attracted numerous visitors, unbounded admiration and abundant attention from the media. History and especially maritime history has never looked better. As on the voyage of Flinders and Bass two

hundred years earlier, most of November was spent in Port Dalrymple and the Tamar River leading up to Launceston. Among many other functions, on Friday 6 November the Governor of Tasmania, His Excellency Sir Guy Green, unveiled a commemorative plaque at the Low Head Pilot Station museum of the Port of Launceston Authority and next day there was a splendid parade of sail, lead by the *Norfolk*, across Port Dalrymple to Inspection Head where the governor unveiled yet another plaque. Perhaps there were not quite the number of vessels as on Sydney Harbour on Boxing Day, but as Flinders said, it is much more picturesque.

To add a bit of weight to the weekend, the George Town and District Historical Society organised an excellent conference with papers by Paul Brunton from the Mitchell Library, Commodore Bob Willis RAN, the national hydrographer, Bern Cuthbertson and Campbell Macknight from the University of Tasmania. (Recordings are available on four CD-ROMs from the society's secretary, Ms Diane Phillips, P0 Box 288, George Town, Tas. 7253 at A$50.) More traditional forms of publication were represented by Professor Macknight's new book, *Low Head to Launceston*, which reproduces the original accounts of the 1798 visit, as well as those of several other early visitors to the Tamar. (Obtainable from the Historical Survey of Northern Tasmania, P0 Box 692, Launceston, Tas. 7250, $20 includes postage.)

Particularly notable has been the consistent support and extensive coverage of events by the Launceston *Examiner*. Daily extracts from Flinders' account have been published alongside the latest on contemporary events and on 30 October a major supplement provided an overview of both the original voyage and the re-enactment. Their website at www.examiner.com.au is well worth a visit.

Other events included Paul Brunton's lectures and floor talks on the Flinders and Bass letters and other materials he had brought down from Sydney for display in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. In an adjacent room, Bea Maddock's remarkable work, *Terra Spiritus... With a Darker Shade of Pale*, was on exhibition. This is a view, from the seaward, of the whole Tasmanian coast and must rate as the best example of maritime art for many a year. If it travels, go a very long way to see it!

Just so that all this activity is not forgotten, there is a strong whisper that the replica of the *Norfolk* may be preserved in a new, specially built museum on a prime site in George Town, along with much other nautical material. It will provide yet another reason for mainlanders to venture a ride on the new catamaran service from Melbourne to George Town. **Campbell Macknight,** Launceston.

HMAS *Westralia* aftermath

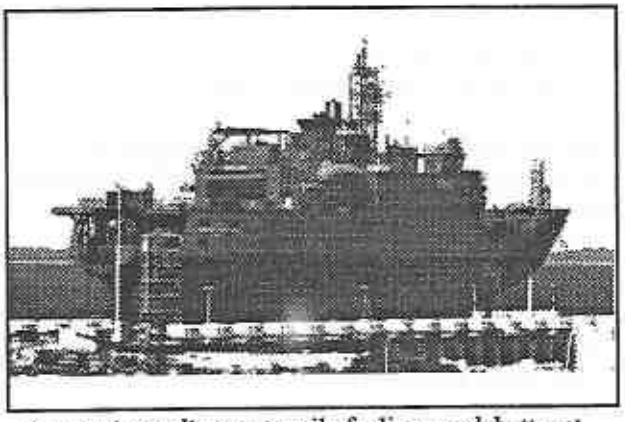
On 17 December the RAN released details of the findings of their inquiry into the tragic May 5 engine room fire on HMAS *Westralia* last year which resulted in the accidental death of four crew members. As expected, the investigation found many deficiencies and irregularities in the lead up to the fire and the RAN shouldered much of the blame for these. Interestingly it was stated that no junior officer would be made a scapegoat. The tragedy also triggered a safety audit throughout the navy which discovered several hundred safety breaches in a variety of matters. *Westralia* is to be repaired, hopefully by the end of this year. Importantly the machinery space is to have improved access and exits. Another problem which emerged in the inquiry was beards interfering with respirators sealing around the face. However, this poses a dilemma, beards also protect against the elements. It remains to be seen if beards are banned, or better respirators are designed.

Aurora Australis - cooling heels under heat

Over the past few years Australia has utilised the bright orange P&O icebreaker *Aurora Australis* to maintain a significant portion of its presence in Antarctica. In early summer each year some seventy or so intrepid souls head south from Hobart to relieve their counterparts on the frozen continent. These plans were thwarted in December last year when the stubby little ship got stuck in pack ice and sustained damage to a hydraulic pipe associated with it's variable pitch main-propeller. Japanese icebreaker *Shiras* helped haul it free for a slow trip to Fremantle for repairs, escorted by a South African tug *John Ross*. The expeditioners were then sent home for an unscheduled Christmas break while *Aurora Australis* was slipped for a week at Henderson in Cockburn Sound. This is not the first time *Shiras* has resued an Australian Antarctic expedition. In October 1998 chartered Norwegian ship *Nella Dan* became stuck in pack ice for 47 days with an Australian expedition on board. An initial rescue attempt undertaken by another icebreaker *Icebird* was aborted, but several Australians were air-lifted off. *Shiras* eventually came to the rescue and freed *Nella Dan* in December that year. The event was an embarrassment for Australia because it highlighted the inadequacy of its Antarctic capability. The then Minister for Science Barry Jones said Australia should try to avoid relying on other nations to divert from their scientific programs to help out. He said Australia's research effort lagged behind other nations and this was to a large degree because of deficiencies in logistical equipment.

Shiras has been a regular visitor to Fremantle over many years on its annual expeditions south. Past expeditions have carried quite large rockets for experimental work down there. The select ship's crew and communications people are drawn from the Japanese Defence Forces, but the scientists are mostly civilians.

Aurora Australis, which has had almost ten years involvement with Antarctica is an all civilian operation. It left again on January 13 with its eager Antarcticans for another crack at the ice and the resupply Mawson and Casey bases. The following morning about 90 NM SW from Fremantle a fire broke out on the auxiliary engine. This is usually used in open



Aurora Australis temporarily feeling much better at Freo

JA icebreaker *Shiraz*

waters, with the larger main engine reserved for the much heavier ice work. The machinery space was sealed off and the extinguishing system successfully discharged. No one was injured, but the ship was obliged to creep back to Fremantle for repairs lasting several weeks. The vessel also had an engine room fire last July during a voyage south. The Australian Antarctic Division people are apparently doing their best to keep their cool. **Paul Weaver** Fremantle.

Beautiful Ballina basking by the sea

Balllina is located on Shaws Bay near the mouth of the Richmond River NSW. The region was originally examined by Captain Henry Rous in 1828 and the river was named for the fifth Duke of Richmond. Stands of native cedar soon attracted attention of timbermen but no permanent facilities were allowed until after the Robertson Land Act of 1861 was brought in. As a result of this, a small ship-building industry soon developed to service the increased river traffic. The timber near the settlement became depleted and necessitated the extension of operations further upstream with logs being rafted from small settlements such as Uralba, Teven and Tintenbar. Clearing the trees opened the way for sugar-cane growers. As agriculture developed inland, Ballina beacme a maritime gateway for Casino and Lismore.

A river trader on the Richmond River.
Collection: P. Weaver

Like many Australian river-mouths, the Richmond River had a bar which tested the skill and patience of skippers. Sometimes as many as thirty vessels could be waiting on each side until it was safe to navigate. Nevertheless, many fell victim to the turbulent natural forces. Such a situation provided lucrative opportunities for tug owners such as Captain Tom Fenwick, who arrived in 1871. Fenwick established a shipyard and soon became one of Ballina's prominent citizens.

Work began on a breakwater near the river mouth in 1892, but even today the bar still demands respect. Visitors to Ballina will notice the magnificent 100 year old Norfolk Pines in the older parts of town. Spanish speakers might suspect that the town was named after whales but the locals say Ballina is derived from the Aboriginal *bullenah* or *buloona;* words which purportedly relate to oysters and the mouth of the river.

Thanks to Joan Humphries for an inspiring clipping about Ballina from *The Advocate* 23/12/98 p.17.

Historic SEA-ME-WE 3 project coming on stream

Saturday January 9 provided an opportunity for Telstra to celebrate the inshore hookup of a new fibre-optic submarine cable from Perth to Singapore via Indonesia. The project is part of a major 37,000km submarine optical network linking Australia, south-east Asia, the middle east and western Europe, designated as SEA-ME-WE 3. In essence, the main cable runs offshore from Korea via Singapore thence across the northern Indian ocean, through the Red Sea and Mediterranean into the Atlantic, then northward through the English Channel to Germany. Many adjacent countries with a maritime aspect, including Australia are serviced by connecting spurs. Some 33 nations are involved. Interestingly Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and some other small Arab states are not mentioned in publicity material as being part of this commercial project.

The 3,500km Perth to Singapore link was laid by the French CS *Vercorst*. Prior to the 9th, the vessel was engaged 100km offshore dragging aside old submarine cables in preparation for laying the new one along the same corridor. Unfortunately these activities took longer than expected and so the ship was not actually stationed close by for the beachside ceremony as planned, instead arriving two days later.

The engineering involved in the project is astonishing. The cable has an overall diameter of only 70mm, and the bulk

of this is steel armour to protect four ultra-fine mono-filaments (two pairs) which lie inside a pressurised metal tube. The tube also carries a charge of several thousand volts DC which supplies the numerous torpedo-like laser repeaters installed along the cable. The repeaters have an anticipated life of between 20 and 30 years, but can be lifted and replaced if necessary. They have internal back-up systems and are performance-monitored from shore.

Nearshore and in busy shipping lanes the cable is buried. From Perth this is about a metre of so until a depth of about 1km, after which the shelf slopes away too steeply for the robot-plough to operate. Running northwards the cable is exposed until near Indonesia, where because of the volume of shipping traffic and risk of anchor damage it is buried much deeper, as much as ten metres. Even so the buried cable can be lifted if required, and this has already happened once to remove a kink.

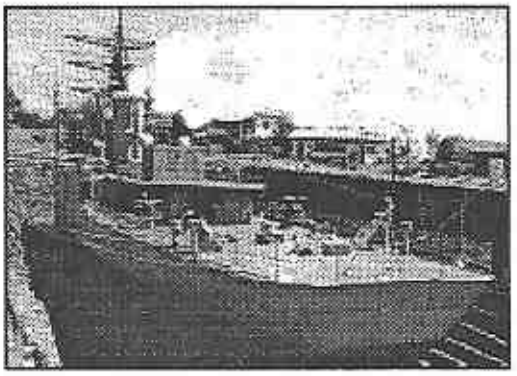
Australian communications engineers have played a significant role overseas in the international project, particularly in assisting technical people in developing nations to develop skills involving the new technology.

In a search for superlatives, Telstra's PR people claim one pair of hair-like optical fibres can carry 500 broadcast-quality digital TV channels. Computer nerds might better appreciate this as equating half a million pages of email traffic per second. Now isn't that something to look forward to? Even so, it is anticipated that the cable will reach full capacity within a few years and plans are reportedly already underway for another.

The significance of submarine optical fibre for data transmission is that the technology is immune from external electromagnetic interference and internally generated "noise". In essence, what goes in one end comes out the other unchanged. The entire global network is estimated to have cost A$2 billion shared between 33 nations and should be fully operational by the end of this year. It will be a big profit earner for Telstra. On 9 January their PR people put on a beachside sausage sizzle for the event, with a suitable inducement for the local surf lifesavers to cook 'em. Plus there was free fairy-floss, a clown, some sea-shanty singers, cans of soft drink, plastic frisbees and free five minute phone calls to anywhere in the world. In the light of all the gee-whiz technology, it is perhaps ironic that the fairy-floss machine gave up the ghost. Old submarine cables to Rottnest and Cocos Island are long out of service but can still be seen in the shallows at Mosman Park a few kilometres south. **Paul Weaver** Fremantle.

Queensland maritime news

Now that news has leaked nationally about Queensland's Maritime Museum, a very attractive colour publication *Shorelines* (ND) has been received from them. Not sure if this is a one-off, but it is so good that we hope there will be many more editions. At $2.50 it is a price every visitor to the museum will be able to afford. *Shoreline's* editor and Museum Director Peter Nunan is particularly interested in working up a detailed story of their star-exhibit HMAS *Diamantina*. He says any information about this ship will be appreciated. The vessel has an intriguing history. A short article in *Shorelines* by James Hansen revealed that the quarterdeck of the Queensland built frigate had been the scene of Japan's last surrender ceremonies off Nauru and Ocean Island in late 1945. There is a photo of a surrender document being signed on board by Lt. Cdr. Nahoomi Suzuki under the watchful eye of Brig. J.R. Stevenson.



Diamantina in the South Brisbane graving dock

Commissioned near the end of the war, HMAS *Diamantina* hadoperated in New Guinea and Solomon Island waters. After a period of post-war reserve service, the ship was converted in 1959 for oceanographic survey work on behalf of the CSIRO. In 1979 it was paid off at Fremantle and installed at South Brisbane's historic dry dock two years later. Incidentally, the dry dock serviced 51 US subs during WW2, which is another special area of interest for Peter. He would be pleased to receive any further information at PO Box 3098, South Brisbane. 4101.

Also from Qld comes the news that there are proposals afoot to build a replica of an early government steamer, SS *Lucinda*. A fast 1891 paddlewheeler with a luxurious interior, the vessel has been described as "the cradle of Queensland's constitution". The document was apparently formulated on board. *Lucinda* was scrapped in 1923 and the sorry remains are still visible at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

Australian Archives - new old stuff

Australian Archives have recently made available the following which may be of interest to maritime historians.

Brisbane: Command HQ., Northern Command (II) Australian Military Forces. Property register, 1946-1947. (J3023/1).
Canberra: Dept Interior. Photographs of the construction of Norfolk Island aerodrome 1942 - 1943. (A10967/1).
Darwin: Met. Bureau. Case history material for Cyclone Tracy. 1974 - 1975. (E490/4).
Hobart: Customs - register of inward passenger ship lists. 1924 - 1959 (P2785).
Perth: Customs. WA photographs of customs activities 1864 - 1997. (K1349/1).
CSIRO. Research papers of DL Serventy covering fish and seabird research 1937-1969. (K1343 - K1348).

Corrections

The author of a piece on oil measurements in the December newsletter was John K. Ling, not King. John is currently trying to collate elephant seal oil-yields from King Island in the early nineteenth century, not of course, the early eighteenth.

A book *They Kept This State Afloat* was given a plug in our September issue last year. The author was Rod Dickson, not Dixon.

A member goes time-travelling during the summer hols

The itinerary for my summer armchair cruise was through the little explored territory of 1,000 years of Indian Ocean maritime history. In order of reading were Richard Hall's *Empire of the Monsoons;* E.J. Harding's *Dominion's Diary;* Frank Broeze's *An Island Nation* (1998) and Malcolm Tull's History of the Port of Fremantle *A Community Enterprise* (1998).

Empires of the Monsoon was an epic journey weaving the stories of ambitious sultans, nasty pirates, scholarly travellers and waves of traders and invaders from China, Europe and Arabia. The book covered the northern, central and western littorals of the Indian Ocean from the time of Alexander the Great, through to the fall of Africa to colonial powers during the late 1800s.

Zanzibar was the common thread in this great work as it traced the rise and fall of dynasties, trade and culture of indigenous African states, Arab sultinates, Prester John's Ethiopia and the doomed Portuguese colonial administrations. In between, there was the enjoyment of visits of the 'Three-jewelled Eunuch's' Chinese fleet to Arabia and India, and of the British invasion of Sri Lanka. Other lesser known invasions were also recanted, such as the supposed Indonesian settlement of Madagascar around 900 AD and Omani and Turkish adventures in west Africa.

My journey across Hall's Indian Ocean concluded around 1900 and recommenced with Harding's *Dominion's Diary*. Based on a series of 'letters home' this traced a clerk's travels with a British Royal Commission throughout the Empire between 1913 and 1916. The contrast between Hall's and Harding's descriptions of exotic places and the indigenous cultures was significant. For exmample, When I left Hall, Colombo was in ruins following the British conquest. Returning with Harding, the port had been reconstituted and was thriving, although the past had not been obliterated.

Harding's arrival at Fremantle on the *Medina* in February 1913 coincided with the opening of the trans-continental railway. This event had a far reaching impact for maritime and continental trade, something which is picked up in Tull and Broeze's histories. These two works are possibly more familiar to AAMH members and therefore need little recounting here.

While I felt all four books 'topped me up' on as much Indian Ocean history as I could bear (for at least a month or two), I concluded there is a need for a book with the richness of Harding's for the eastern and southern littorals involving Indonesia, Australia and the Southern Ocean. Such a book would surely provide Australians with a greater knowledge and appreciation of the region. **Peter Ridgway**, Perth. (Peter was AAMH treasurer until last year.)

Cook CD ROM

The Australian National Maritime Museum and the National Library have produced a CD ROM containing the full text in facsimile of Cook's Endeavour journal, plus J.C. Beaglehole's annotated 1955 transcript. The Disk apparently has graphics, sound segments and the other sort of interactive stuff found on educational CDs. AAMH members may have received a publicity leaflet with their subscription reminders. Unfortunately we have not tested the CD yet. A copy was promised but had not arrived by the time we went to press, the reason given that there had been a production delay. However various glowing reviews, mostly by the one writer appeared in several major Australian newspapers weeks earlier. At $94.95 posted it's fairly expensive, so for those members who can wait, we hope to include a serious test-drive of the CD in our next Newsletter, after the production delays are overcome.

Incidentally Horden House and the ANMM have produced a facsimile of *A Voyage Round the World in His Majesty's Frigate Pandora* by George Hamilton, first published in 1793. The facsimile is hand bound with marbled paper and a spine of red Scottish calf leather. It is available for A$154 posted from Horden House, 77 Victoria St. Potts Point. NSW. 2011.

Duyfken replica launched on Australia Day weekend

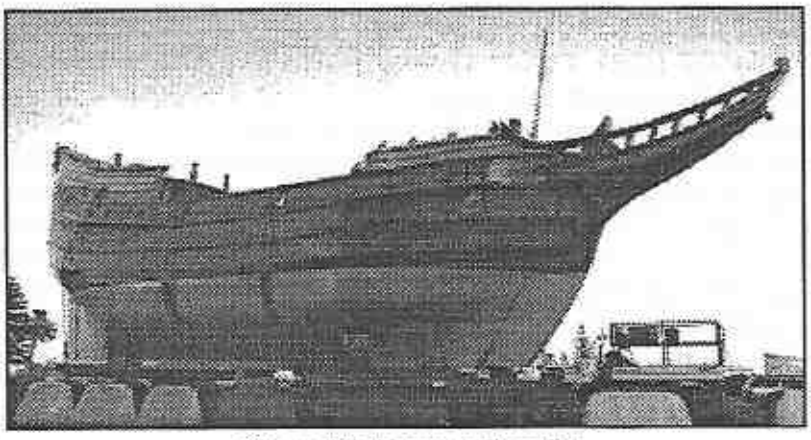
The Latvian oak replica of the VOC ship *Duyfken* was launched with much ceremony and celebration at Fremantle Boat Lifters in the fishing boat harbour on 24 January. The vessel had been built under a large metal shed at the front of the Fremantle Maritime Museum. During the preceding weeks the shed was stripped away and taken to Albany where it will be used as part of a wooden boat building operation.

On the 21st the 64 ton *Duyfken* was fitted onto a jinker with 120 or so independently steerable wheels and towed in a street parade to the centre of Fremantle for a ceremony prior to the launch. It may qualify as the world's largest trailer-sailer. Amongst its escorts were people in Dutch period costume, school children carrying sardine shaped placards, police on horses, plus the many dedicated people who had worked on the project. One of the sponsors, The WA Water Authority was giving

away little bottles of WA water with a highly collectible *Duyfken* label, the pitch being that water in the past on these sort of ships was so bad that sailors only drank beer. However, for the purists there is a special Duyfken beer in Freo pubs. Not all went smoothly at the ceremony, the jinker had stopped short and the crowd which had closed in had to be moved, and a powered "scissor lift" lurched back and forth amongst them before it was in the right position to ceremonially mount a Fremantle City crest on the high stern. After Mayor Richard Utting said the appropriate things mayors say at these sort of occasions and declared Fremantle "the centre of the world," *Duyfken* was trundled off to the local shipyard of "Fremantle Boatlifters" to be prepared for an early morning launching on the 24th.

Alarmingly the 23rd saw Perth walloped with some of its worst electrical storms and almost the heaviest rain on record for a single day, but come launch day the weather was perfect for the 7.15am launch. Lots of people turned up and those with a pass gained access to seating in the boatyard. An RAAF aerobatics team gave a display to seaward while other pre-launch entertainment included a chorus of Dutch ladies and gentlemen in costume and a group of Australians playing traditional Indonesian gamalan music. State Premier Richard Court spoke enthusiastically of the many maritime related events which had taken place in Fremantle in recent times. Jon Sander's and David Dix's solo yacht circumnavigations, the America's Cup and the building of the *Endeav our* replica had all inspired him. Billy, his adopted Aboriginal daughter then delivered a memorable rendition of *Advance Australia Fair*.

Meantime Duyfken was hidden in a large shed behind some orange plastic curtins. A branch from an olive tree at New Norcia Monastery had been draped over the bow. (Remember; dove - olive branch - Noah's ark.) At the appropriate moment an amplified Aboriginal didgeridoo started up, the curtains parted and the *Duyfken*, cradled by a "Tammy lifter" moved towards the water. The theatrical use of the didgeridoo had a touch of irony because the arrival of the original *Duyfken* off Cape York in 1606 could be argued as a benchmark for the violent holocaust which was to envelop the Aboriginal peoples and ultimately deprive them of their lands. Perhaps not surprisingly there were few Aboriginal people noticed at the ceremony, unlike the previous week's Sardine Festival.



The world's biggest trailer-sailer

When the lifter came to a halt over the water, Mrs Court blessed all who would sail in it and cut a ribbon enabling a bottle of WA wine to smash on the bow. Amid hearty cheers, *Duyfken* was then lowered into the water.

The day after the launch the vessel was towed up the Swan River in a nautical parade. En-route about a hundred blank charges were fired from two minature brass cannons supplied by the Australian Army. On Australia Day evening *Duyfken* became a focal point on the river adjacent to a radio station's firework display, something which has become an annual event on Perth Water in recent years.

The *Duyfken* project is reported to have cost about A$3.7 million dollars and to a significant degree was funded by the Dutch and Australian governments. Some 27 people were directly involved in the construction which took an estimated 61,000> person/hours. The boat will be fully rigged and ready to sail in April. It is expected to make a trip to Holland, and to re-enact the voyage of the original vessel to Cape York. (Could this be in 2006? Wik people sharpen your spears.)

Following the launching there was a noticeable emphasis in the WA TV and print media to credit AAMH member Michael Young with the original idea for a *Duyfken* replica. Michael wrote letters to the press going back five years and since then has been like a man possessed in his research, which he has generously shared with all and sundry.

With the *Duyfken* replica out of the way the Mayor of Fremantle Richard Utting has proposed building a replica of the whaleship *Catalpa*, which carried escaping Fenians from Freo to the USA in 1876. **Paul Weaver,** Fremantle.

Getting up to speed on *Duyfken* history

The original *Duyfken* under Willem Janzoon is credited with facilitating the first sighting of Australia by Europeans, at Cape York, Queensland in 1606. Unfortunately all the evidence for the visit is secondary, the original journals and charts being long lost. Determining the validity of the *Duyfken* visit has exercised a lot of mature minds for a long time, and a great deal has been written on the subject.

VOC cartographer Gerritsz produced a map with the *Duyfken* discoveries in 1622 and a reproduction is in Günter Shilder's book *Australia Unveiled* (1975) p.289. A 1634 amended version of the chart is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. A chart purportedly copied from Duyfken's original was made for an atlas in 1670. This is in the National Library in Vienna and this is most frequently used to support arguments of an Australian landfall. Photographs are in Shilder (1975:287) and Eisler W. *The Furthest Shore*, (1995:70). Perry T.M. (1982) *The Discovery of Australia* has reproductions of other very early charts which correlate to the voyage.

When Cook and *Endeavour* called into Batavia in 1770, following the monumental charting of the east coast of Australia, Joseph Banks apparently had a rummage through the VOC archives in an attempt to shed more light and found an old but brief description of the *Duyfken* voyage. A translation of this appears in George Collingridges *Discovery of Australia* (1895) p.240 (A modern facsimile of this book appeared in several editions from 1983).

For those interested in exploring the subject, Shilder's and Collingridge's books carry far more material relating to *Duyfken* than it is possible to describe here.

Matthew Flinders was similarly interested in *Duyfken*, and attempted to confirm the various landmarks on the west of Cape York in 1802. Flinders experienced difficulty in correlating a copy of a Dutch map he carried with the landmarks he found, and while expressing doubts as to the true location of some places, deferred to antiquity when entering them on his charts (see Flinders, M. (1814) *A Voyage to Terra Australia*, vol. 2 pp.128-130). Brett Hilder in *The Voyage of Torres* (1980:7) says the original *Duyfken* chart must have contained an average error of 14 miles of lattitude.

During *Duyfken's* voyage, which was intended to further explore New Guinea, the Dutchmen had confrontations with native peoples, and in one incident, depending which author you read, lost eight or nine crew to "arrows." This has led to the general supposition that this was in New Guinea because the bow and arrow was absent in the Australians' weapon inventory.

In fact, the Dutchmen did not recognise when they charted a portion of the west coast of Cape York that it was separated from New Guinea, but they deduced that all the natives were equally unfriendly and soon scuttled back to more familiar climes. Later in the same year, Luis Baéz de Torres from Portugal crossed their tracks during his westward beat through the strait which bears his name, but the Dutch were not to learn the significance of this for many years.

It is arguable if *Duyfken* sailors actually came ashore in Australia. Some people are absolutely convinced they did, but unfortunately it remains conjectural. Various Aboriginal oral accounts of the visit have been collected in the twentieth century, but the validity of these is also questionable. There exists the suspicion they have a relatively modern European origin, for example through missionaries and numerous other curious visitors to the region over time.

The main argument that *Duyfken* sailors did actually come ashore arises from a 1623 expedition to the region by *Arnhem* and *Pera*. Commander Jan Castenesz on *Pera* had knowledge of the *Duyfken* expedition and certainly his own men came ashore on Cape York, kidnapped one Aborigine and shot at others. One Dutchman was fatally speared. Shülder (1975) provides photographs of the appropriate log entries, and translations. As with Jansz in 1606, the commanders of *Pera* and *Arnhem* had not recognised that a strait separated New Guinea and a new continent, even though they charted a portion of it.

The often repeated Eurocentric claim that *Duyfken* "discovered" Australia is misleading. Discovery implies revelation or awareness of significance, and as remarkably courageous as those early Dutch sailors were, they and their masters remained blissfully ignorant of the existence of another continent girt by sea. Furthermore, indigenous peoples had been moving about the region for millenniums, and had their own watercraft. **Paul Weaver,** Fremantle.

Joint conference being organised for end of century

Expressions of interest, and papers are being called for an *Australasian Economic and Maritime History Conference* being jointly convened by the **AAMH** and the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand. The conference will take place in WEA building at the Sydney Centre of the University of New England, Bathurst St, City centre. It is planned that the conference will commence on the evening of 2 December and conclude about midday on 5 December 1999 (this year). The registration fee has not been set, but the organisers say it will be modest. The organisers are negotiating concessional accommodation nearby.

There will be a broad range of themes:

All aspects of economic/business history, including but not restricted to aspects of of the histories of Australia and New Zealand, the Pacific and the broader Asia/Pacific region.

The Maritime history of these regions and the wider world.

Mining and other resource histories.

Associated aspects of labour and social history, including labour migration.

Theoretical and methodological issues of economic, maritime, socioeconomic, and institutional history, including relationships among the historical social sciences.

Contact the following persons for further information:

Christopher Lloyd and Maxine Darnell
School of Economic Studies
University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351. Australia.
Email: Chris.Lloyd@metz.une.edu.au. mdarnell@metz.une.edu.au. Ph. 61 - 2 - 6773 3156. Fax. 61 - 2- 6773 3459.

Navy FESR veterans fight for historical recognition

The Malayan emergency in the 1950s is one of those neo-colonial type "non-wars" that modern Australian kids are not taught about, and yet many still-living Australians were in it at the deep end. At the behest of Britain and the Menzies

government something like 3,000 to 4,000 RAN sailors endured arduous conditions for long periods at action stations on 13 ships in the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) between 1955 and 1960, but did not get the same recognition and war service benefits as RAAF and Australian Army personnel. HM Australian Ships *Anzac, Arunta, Melbourne, Sydney, Quadrant, Queenborough, Quiberon, Quickmatch, Tobruk, Vampire, Voyager* and *Warramunga* were involved. Ships shelled terrestrial emplacements during the campaign to destroy Communist insurgency, but the men involved were apparently denied equal recognition because they were not considered to be in danger of retaliation. In *The Australian* 13/1/99:13 the federal secretary of the Naval Association of Australia Commander Peter Cook-Russell (Ret.) said the continuing discrimination is heartless bureaucratic obfuscation. Aside from the general lack of recognition by Canberra, RAN personnel who died while serving their country during the emergency have been excluded from a roll of honour in the Canberra War Memorial. Bruce Scott, Minister assisting the Minister for Defence said in a letter to the same paper (17/1/99:14) that the coalition government has authorised The Australian Service Medal (ASM) with a clasp "FESR" for persons who served more than 30 days in the FESR between 2 July 1955 and Oct 30 1971. He said Navy service between June 1955 and May 1963 is now classed as operational which allows veterans to make disability pension claims for illness or injuries received during that period. He added that FESR personnel were eligible for the Defence Service Home loans scheme.

The statements are hardly likely to placate the veterans. The ASM is a sort of EBM (every body's medal). There is nothing exceptional about the medical treatment of veterans anymore and the loans scheme lost its significant attraction long ago when it was placed in the hands of private enterprise.

Nuclear veterans - another group of Australian servicemen getting a dirty deal

In the newsletter last June there was an item which mentioned Scottish research into the effect of British atomic tests in Australia on service personnel. Ms Rabbitt-Roff reported that there were significant health problems with these men which were being ignored by their governments. The acronym SAPHO was mentioned: synovitis, acne, pustulosis, hyperstosis and oesteitic syndrome. These are believed to have been triggered by radiation exposure and are capable of being inherited by succeeding generations. Fifteen percent of servicemen surveyed in her study have also experienced fertility problems and exotic cancers have been rife. Some 22,000 British servicemen and about 15,000 Australians were exposed in some way to the tests, but many of these are now dead. Roff's claims have been unpopular, but Britain has finally decided in January to conduct an inquiry. This has forced the Australian government to announce that it will appoint an epidemiologist to look into the matter.

The federal opposition says that there has been no official monitoring of the health of nuclear veterans. The Australian nuclear veterans are apparently now not after monetary compensation, although it would be helpful. Their prime concern is that they be provided with the best of health care until they die, and that descendants who have inherited radiation-caused genetic abnormalities are similarly looked after.

British nuclear tests sanctioned by the Menzies governments took place on Australian territory between 1952 an 1962. The first were on the Monte Bello islands off the northwest coast. A fission device was detonated in 1952 on board HMS *Plym* in the lagoon on the western side of Trimouille Island. Chunks of *Plym* were blasted far and wide. The 1956 explosions were on towers; G1 at the northern end of Trimouille Island, and G2 on the north eastern end of Alpha Island. The sites of all explosions were within approximately one and half nautical miles of eachother, the positions forming a triangle. After the tests, British scientists reportedly wore protective suits and were well aware of the potential hazards, but there were many inadequacies with information provided to both British and Australian service personnel, which reflected in how they dressed and handled contaminated materials.

Checklist of vessels involved with the 1952 British nuclear test "Operation Hurricane." at the Monte Bello islands[1]

Vessel	Task	Duration	Personell
HMAS *Karangi*	Preliminary survey Oct 1950	28 days	40
HMAS *Warrego*	Complete survey of Monte Bellos June-July 1951	35 days	
HMAS *Brolga*	General purpose with above	35 days	160 with *Warrego*
HMAS *Warreen*	General purpose vessel	intermittent	
HMAS *Limicola*	General purpose vessel	Intermittent	50 with *Warreen*
Motor water lighter 251			
Motor refrigeration lighter 252			
HMAS *Mildura*	Minesweeper - ferry duties from Fremantle	36 days	50
HMAS *Hawkesbury*	Frigate - Security duties prior and after test to Jan '53	180 days	150
HMAS *Sydney*	Aircraft carrier - patrol duties		
HMAS *Tobruk*	Frigate - patrol duties before and after test		
HMAS *Shoalhaven*	Frigate - patrol duties before and after test		
HMAS *Macquarie*	Frigate - patrol duties before and after test		
HMAS *Murchison*	Frigate - patrol duties before and after test		

[1] Source: Symonds J.L. (1985). *A history of British atomic tests in Australia.* Canberra. Australian Government Publishing Service. pp. 75-77.

HMAS *Culgoa*	Frigate - weather watch 300 miles to west		
HMAS *Reserve*	Tug - oil fuel lighter towing	35	40
ALC40	Australian Army water craft		
SS *Dorrigo*	State ship - water delivery		
HMS Campania	Flagship		
HMS *Tracker*	Healthship		
HMS *Zeebrugge*	Stores and personnel transport from UK		
HMS *Narvik*	Stores and personnel transport from UK		
HMS *Plym*	Detonation platform for device		

Note: The was also a number of RAN and Australian Army ground staff, plus the RAAF involved. Some Australians were also on HMS *Campania* in a liaison capacity. HMAS *Karangi* and HMAS *Koala* were later involved in other general tasks prior to test. *Karangi* was involved in recovering equipment after the test. In these roles approximately 40 men were involved on Karingi for 200 days and 35 men on *Koala* for 60 days. Submarines apparently operated in the vicinity, but details remain obscure. **Paul Weaver,** Fremantle.

NZ news

NZ member David Johnson writes that he has been flat out zipping back and forth across the globe with business, and his books. Some of these were described in our September newsletter. David advises that he has some copies of *Wellington Harbour* (1996) A$65 posted. *Star Ferry: The Story of a Hong Kong Icon* (1998) A$45 posted. Ordinary Aussie bank cheques are okay. NZ residents can send him the same amount in NZ dollars. David Johnson, PO Box 18250; Glen Innes, Auckland 6, New Zealand. David says he has just been commissioned to do a history of the Hong Kong Tramways and he is working on a history of the NZ fishing industry for Canterbury University Press. On the latter he writes:

I've been working on early attempts to introduce trawling to NZ. The first was with the *Redcliff*, shipped from Melbourne to Dunedin in January 1868 by Captain John McLean of the *Alhambra*. The *Redcliff* was described both as a "fishing smack" and as a coaster which had been fitted with a well. Experimental trawling produced a sizeable catch and a snagged net. For some reason McLean didn't persevere, and the *Redcliff* became a coastal trader

There were several other attempts with sailing vessels in the early to mid 1 870s and again (including one with a steamer) in the early 1880s, but trawling was not a method used with any regularity or reliability until the advent of steam trawling in the 1890s - and most of that was after 1898. I'm interested in the state of the fishing industry in Melbourne and Sydney at that time. When did trawling begin? Was it a while before it was used extensively? When were steamers first used? What knowledge could NZ residents who wanted to try trawling have gleaned from Australian experience?

On a diffetent topic, I've been looking at Australian vessels fishing in NZ waters and vice versa. In 1889 the ketch *Gratitude* cruised the NZ coast looking for fish. She was fitted with a well, was line fishing; found snapper near Auckland, and returned to Sydney in 9 days after a cruise of "3 or 4 months." My reference is dated 14/8/1889 and quotes an unnamed Sydney paper, no date mentioned. It comments that the result "would rather encourage the hopes of those who have a belief in the successful capabilities of a steam fishing fleet of trawlers." Question: How or where can I track down an account of the voyage - maybe something at the outset to say who and why, and something at the end to indicate whether anything came of it? Can anyone offer advice? **David Johnson,** Auckland.

Editor's note: Breaking on the Australian beer consumer this summer is a disposable insulated-cardboard container for cans and stubbies said to do away with the need for an Eskie. The invention apparently comes from NZ and is supposed to have been originally developed for thirsty NZ crayfishermen. What's the good oil on this David?

Encounter Bay - an account of a historic container ship

In the A Shed Cafe on Fremantle's Victoria Quay there is a large photograph taken about 1961. The harbour had the old look about it. A ship was loading wheat at berth 10 North Wharf, *Canberra* and *Southern Cross* were at F and E berths on Victoria Quay and various cargo ships occupied other berths. But there was also evidence that an historic change was about to occur. Berths 11 and 12 had been added to North Wharf and a strange looking crane, seemingly all legs and arms sat in readiness. A new railway bridge to accommodate these changes had been constructed further east of the former bridge (now removed).

I remember March 28, 1969 when a most unusual looking ship arrived. Groups of boxes piled high on its decks. A large green funnel and black "stove pipe" emerging highly. It was OCL's (Overseas Containers Ltd.) *Encounter Bay* inaugurating a new method of cargo handling called "containerisation."

In quick succession other "Bay" ships began to arrive, and then came some from the ACT (Associated Container Transportation) Line. Italian, German, Dutch and French container ships followed and it was apparent a new era had settled in.

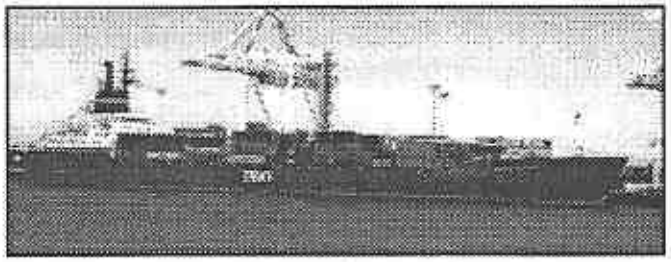
From our family home in Tuckfield Street, we could watch them come and go. Plus pilots, tug crews, boat crews and

moorers, all combining skilfully to handle these ships in the swirling tides around the bridges. At work, the new cranes were operating so differently from the old conventional types.

Encounter Bay at some 27,835 tons could carry 1572 containers plus extras under certain conditions. It made some 240 calls at Fremantle during its global voyages. In 1977 it made its first call to New Zealand, and its first transit through Suez and Panama Canals. Needless to say, masters and crews have been kept on their toes over recent years to keep this 30 year old ship running to its tight competitive schedule, and there are of course some memorable events.

For example a new alignment of Berth 4 on North Wharf saw P&O - Nedlloyd move from 11 and 12 to 4, 5 and 6. Berth 4 required plenty of skill to negotiate. In November 1988 as *Encounter Bay* was moving off, some 40 ft out, it came to a halt, stuck in the mud, in view of a an ABC TV film crew. The three assisting tugs applied more power and got it moving again with no damage done. Heavy rain may have caused a more than usual quantity of fresh water in the harbour causing the ship to sit some 22cms lower.

In September 1996 it was only with very great difficulty that a very sick Bo's'n was brought ashore in Albany. Too rough for pilot boat or helicopter, the ship itself had to be conned into King George's Sound. The earlier hopes of the man's recovery, not good at the time, were ultimately fruitful and two years later he visited the ship in Naples.



Encounter Bay on its final day in Australia Photo: P. Weaver

The ship has had three changes of funnel colours during its service: Firstly from OCL to P&O, then in April 1997 to P&O - Nedlloyd. This merger brought a hull-colour change from green to blue.

Now after 30 years *Encounter Bay* has made its final departure from Fremantle. In the late afternoon of January 5, after assisting *Lawrence H Gianella* from berth 10 en-route between Greece and Antarctica, Fremantle tugs *Wyong* and *Wambiri* slowly moved downstream to berth 6 where *Encounter Bay* had completed loading about 5.45pm. Wharfside, the container-crane arm was raised out of the way. Just on 6pm *Wambiri* moved towards its stern and attached a line. Wyong moved more slowly towards the bow. From my position between B and C sheds on Victoria Quay I saw the first line smack the water, then the tugs took the strain and the ship began to move forwards, with the bow gradually swinging towards midstream. *Wambiri's* line was dropped and she moved to push the stern out as Wyong tugged on the bowline. With *Encounter Bay* turned about and pointing seaward Wyong let go; and so to sea. The final departure was marked by some shoreside car horns and a few people waving to eachother.

In an exclusive interview beforehand the ship might have said "I'm sorry to be leaving. Have always encountered friendly treatment, but as you well know when we age, we have to let go and let the new take over". The new replacements have been arriving for a while, and the calm of the earlier period has given way to the storm of the past few years.

Father Henry McFall, Fremantle.

Footnote: Two sister container vessels *Moreton Bay* and *Discovery Bay* now sail with Australia New Zealand Direct Line (ANZDL) as *Direct Kea* and *Direct Kookaburra*. They still have the unique original funnel arrangements. In all there were six "Bay" container vessels and *Encounter Bay* was the flagship. All the others were converted for bulk cargo or as tankers. *Encounter Bay* departed Fremantle on 5/1/1999 to Singapore for a complete discharge, thence to the breakers on the sub-continent. During its service it loaded about 4.5 million tonnes of cargo and voyaged some 4.4 million miles, equivalent to around 180 circumnavigations. The world's first purpose-built container ship was *Kooringa*, constructed at Newcastle, NSW in 1964.

Australia Post to reissue old navigator stamp designs & other nautical stuff

Six 45¢ stamps bearing the portraits of, A. Tasman, J. Cook, M. Flinders, G. Bass, P.P. King and W. Dampier will be issued in two mini-sheets on 19 March, in association with a World Philatelic Exhibition in Melbourne 19-24 March. These designs were previously issued in 1963 an 1966. Four stamps bearing pictures of sailing vessels *Polly Woodside, Alma Duepel, Enterprize* and *Lady Nelson* will be released on the same date. Australia Post reveals to us that *Polly Woodside* was built in Ireland in 1885 and mainly spent its working life on the run between Australian and New Zealand. It is now a floating exhibit on the Yarra for the Melbourne Maritime Museum. (Yep, Melbourne has a Maritime Museum too.) *Alma Doepel* was built in NSW in 1903 and holds the record for sailing vessels of 578 Bass Strait crossings. It now operates as a sail training vessel in Port Philip Bay. The original *Enterprize* was built in Hobart in 1829. The modern replica was launched last year. *Lady Nelson* followed through Bass Strait shortly after Flinders and Bass. It was destroyed by fire in 1825. A modern replica of this vessel was also built in Tasmania.

WA Sardine Festival sets new records

Fremantle hosted its ninth Sardine Festival on 17 January, with record crowds attending. First initiated by local seafood processor Joe Mendolia to promote public acceptance that the common pilchard (*Sadinops neopilchardus*) should be regarded as a valuable food-fish for people rather than pet food or cray bait, his plans have gone from strength to strength, almost that is, apart from the two recent "mystery" epidemics which have spread eastwards and westwards from South Australia killing inestimable millions of the species and forcing many people, including from Mr Mendolia's factory, out of work. The word is that the virus was in frozen raw fish imported from the north America to feed captive fish in SA, but seemingly no Australian scientist has what it takes to do a fundamental DNA check to prove or disprove the theory. Instead the line is being pushed that the virus is naturally endemic, and the promoters of this argument bizarrely cite small dead fish having been once seen on the surface by Matthew Flinders. Apparently too there are now massive deaths of other species such as leatherjackets occurring in Qld with scientists being similarly nonplused. One gormless boffin there appeared on ABC TV in February and said there was no satisfactory explanation, "we will just have to put it down as one of those things which happen in nature." Australia is well behind the USA in examining such matters. In the US there are huge archives of frozen fish of many species going back decades so that comparative research can be readily undertaken.

Nowadays the Freo sardine festival has forty or so different vendors cooking up all sorts of fishy and not so fishy fare for eager consumers. Crabs, crays, swordfish kabobs, yabbies on a stick, mussels, emu, ostrich, kangaroo and white rhino were all available. (Only joking about the latter). Plenty of beer encouraged the hesitant to try things they might not otherwise, and seemingly a good time was had by all. Entry was controlled, $5 for adults and $2 for kids, and reportedly this went to charity. Mr Mendolia still organises the one-day event, and with the approval of Fremantle Council sub-lets space on a corralled off part of the Fremantle Esplanade to the various food and sideshow vendors, who all seemed to have happy smiles on their dials at the end of the day. Not to be outdone, another WA seaside town, Mandurah had its inaugural "Crab Festival" on the weekend 20-21 Feb. Are there other similar maritime festivals happening around Oz?

Believe it or not department

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has determined that in the 230 museums and art galleries across Australia there are some 5,500 full-time curators of one thing or another. (*Aust.* 16-17/1/1999:53) If one laid them all end to end what would this mean?

The 3 hr *Titanic* video which got a free plug in the newsletter last year after the editor received an unsolicited review copy has sold 58 million copies. It has also been on TV and the combined total sales have been in excess of 1.5 billion US dollars. Yep, US$1,500,000,000. All up, the Titanic industry has generated in excess of five billion dollars (*WA* 13/1/1999:46). Will the editor receive a bonus cheque in gratitude? In his dreams.

The Oz Defence Dept. reportedly intends to throw another $50 million at the five billion dollar Collins project to hasten a solution to data-systems integration problems.. Each commissioned Collins sub reportedly has seven gee-whiz sonar systems but apparently they still can't identify the location of the wreck of HMAS *Sydney*, which is virtually on the doorstep of their main base. Feature articles on the continuing problems appeared in *The Australian* 18/1/1999:2, 7, but there has been more since. Hmm, the *Titanic* business could have paid for several Collins subs.

John Pilger in the *Guardian* newspaper has reported that Britain's Labour government under Tony Blair has secretly approved 64 weapons contracts with Indonesia (*WA.* 26/1/1999:16).

Millennium bug bites editor

In this final year of the century (no smart-alecs please) your newsletter editor would like to present some original short essays from members about significant maritime-history events in Australia during the twentieth century. There are plenty of subjects to choose from. Please contact me ASP if you would like suggestions, or just send me your signed material. Remember, you do not have to be an experienced writer, and no academic expertise is required for newsletter contributions. However, material might be discreetly edited if necessary. Furthermore, always remember the AAMH is about sharing knowledge, so authors should provide some indication of the main sources of their inspiration to enable other readers to explore a subject further if they wish.

The *Quarterly Newsletter - The Australian Association for Maritime History* is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Contributions are always welcome. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History. The editor is Dr. Paul R. Weaver, 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157.

Publication will be the 30th days of May, August and November in 1999. Material for inclusion should be sent direct to the editor well prior. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of submitted material. Material for inclusion should be sent direct to the editor well prior to the deadline. Original articles should carry the author's signature. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of material.