



The Porthole

Volume 15 No. 08
August 2015

The newsletter of the South Australian Branch of the Company of Master Mariners of Australia.

PO Box 1, PORT ADELAIDE, SA 5015



Branch Master's Comments:

August, another winter almost over!

David Holmes' submission, which he proposed at the July Branch meeting, was accepted by a majority of voting Members, and has since been accepted by Federal Court as the Company's formal submission to the Senate Inquiry. A copy of the submission, as tendered, will be available for inspection at the Branch Meeting on Wednesday.

Other than the discussions on the Company's submission there is nothing to report on Federal matters. A date for the next Federal Court phone link-up has yet to be arranged. I am unable to report of the progress of 'the book'.

Internationally the new Suez Canal has been officially opened, and the new locks at the Pacific end of the Panama Canal have been opened to the sea. Meanwhile there seems to be little progress, if any, of the proposed canal through Nicaragua, and each month a new 'largest containership in the world' seems to be floated out of an East Asian shipyard.

Paul P
Branch Master

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Speaker:

Paul Phillips, who will give an illustrated talk about his recent visit to the Egyptian Nile.

The next Branch Meeting will be held at the Largs Pier Hotel, 198 The Esplanade, Largs Bay, on Wednesday, 26th August 2015, at 1145 for 1200.

Please confirm your attendance at the lunch or register your apology before 1200 on Monday, 24th August 2015, with

**Ian Dickson (08 8396 1030)
or
Paul Phillips (0407 779 209)**



The Company of Master Mariners of Australia Ltd. is a Company established to promote and further the efficiency of the Sea Service generally, and uphold the Status, Dignity, and Prestige of Master Mariners in particular.

The Company of Master Mariners of Australia Ltd., S.A. Branch.

Minutes of the Branch Meeting at the Largs Pier Hotel, on 29 July 2015.

1. Opening & welcome: Meeting opened at 1205hrs. Branch Master welcomed members and guests.
2. Present:
 - Members: Captains Phillips (Branch Master), Buchanan, Carr, Dickson, Fraser, Hehir, Holmes, Kemp, Rajagopalan & Westley.
 - Associate: Lt Cmdr Wynne.
 - Guests: Mr Tony Carr (guest speaker) Capt. Nick Frank and Mdms Dickson & Fraser.
3. Apologies: Sir Eric Neal, Captains Bourne-Jones, Carrington, Carter, Ganesan, Hammond, Jayasuriya, Lydell, Marshall, Parsons, Pearson & Pronk and Messrs Boettcher & Hales.
4. Minutes of last business meeting, 24 June 2015: (circulated in the Porthole). Captain Carr proposed that the minutes represented a true and correct record of proceedings. Seconded by Capt. Westley and carried.
5. Business arising from the minutes:
 - a) Speakers:
 - August: Paul Phillips on his "Recent Visit to Egypt".
 - September: To be advised.
 - October: To be advised.
 - November: To be advised.
 - Suggestions Mike Carrington: Topic: "Diamond dredging in Namibia" (Mike Carrington).
Speaker from the Australian Maritime & Fisheries Academy (Paul Phillips).
Kate Linley: Topic: Under Keel Clearances. (Howard Pronk?)
 - Visits:
 - Suggestions: Australian Maritime & Fisheries Academy: bridge & engine room simulators and ship fire fighting training facility (Paul Phillips).
 - One & All: Visit: To be arranged (Ian Dickson).
Le Fevre High School.
 - b) "Master Mariner" journal. More articles required.
 - c) Development of maritime facilities and construction programs: The Branch Secretary wrote to the Federal Secretary on 26/11/14; still no reply. The Branch Master is to seek a response at the Federal Court meeting in about 2 weeks' time.
 - d) Company Plaques: One was given to the Governor at the June meeting. Presentations of plaques to the SA Maritime Museum and the *One & All* are still to be arranged (Ian Dickson).
 - e) *One & All* Capt. Carr advised that he had asked on several occasions when the bell would be made available for re-engraving, but had not yet been given a date. He is of the opinion that the Friends of the *One & All* Executive Committee have other more pressing matters to consider. He will continue monitoring the situation (Eddie Carr).
6. Treasurer's report: Not available.
7. Correspondence 13/06/15 to 17/07/15: (Summary tabled). Inwards correspondence received & outwards correspondence approved at the Branch Court meeting on 22/07/15
8. Membership
 - Applications

Applicant	Status sought	Branch	Master's Certificate			Occupation/ Position
			No.	Date	Place	
Anurodh PRASAD	Ordinary	Sydney	IF008347	21/05/14	Chennai	Master of a container ship
Ian Paul SHEA	Ordinary	Federal	AY10041	1988	Melbourne	Master on a FPSO

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Applicant	Status sought	Branch	Master's Certificate			Occupation/ Position
			No.	Date	Place	
Laurence Frederick CRISP	Ordinary	Queensland	6203	20/01/92	Newcastle NSW	Retired Master, now a Marine Surveyor
Philip Robin GIENZLER	Ordinary	Sydney	112746	10/01/72	London	Retired: ex Master with Cementco
Raul PEREIRA	Ordinary	W Australia	AY10059	12/10/15	Australia	Marine advisor with Chevron

Ratifications: Nil.

Branch Members:

Category	Number		
	Financial	Un-financial	Total
Members	7	0	7
Seagoing members (incl. tug crews & pilots)	2	1	3
Retired members	15	0	15
Associate member	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
Total paying members	<u>27</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>28</u>
Honorary members	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Total Levied Members	<u>31</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>32</u>
Life Members			<u>2</u>
Total Branch Membership			<u>34</u>

Federal Matters: Nothing to report. A Federal Court meeting is planned for mid-August.

10. Motions on Notice: Both of the following motions had previously been circulated to all Branch members on e-mail in the Porthole and the meeting agenda:

Motion 1: That this Branch recommends that the Federal Court make a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (SRRATRC), expressing disappointment and concern at the increasing use of "flags of convenience" vessels and the consequent demise of the Australian merchant fleet.

This Branch also recommends that the submission should also urge the SRRATRC to recognise the urgent need for the growth and maintenance of the Australian maritime industry for strategic, commercial and military reasons.

The motion was proposed by Capt. Dickson and seconded by Capt. Rajagopalan, after which the Branch Master invited members to speak to the motion. Capt. Holmes spoke against the motion. He expressed the view that while the Inquiry purports to be addressing the evils of FOC shipping, the real issue for the unions is to seek to re-introduce measures to protect Australian coastal shipping from competition. Capt. Holmes noted that, in the 1990s, the then Labor governments had introduced measures aimed at making Australian shipping more efficient and competitive. These measures only had limited success and merely slowed down for a time the decline in the number of ships under the Australian flag. The Coalition, on coming into office in the late 1990s, had repealed the legislation, and it was noteworthy that Labor, on returning to government, did not re-introduce measures to support the industry. Capt. Holmes noted that many reputable companies registered in so-called FOC countries, and opined that it was sub-standard ships rather than FOC ships that were a matter of concern. He stated his understanding that AMSA, through its port state control inspections, was effective in detecting and prosecuting sub-standard ships and ensuring the appropriate standards of welfare of crews on foreign ships. Capt. Holmes concluded that the protection of Australian shipping through cabotage reduces the efficiency and competitiveness of the coastal shipping task.

Past Labor governments have provided subsidies and incentives to make Australian shipping competitive, but to little avail. It is much more important to the Australian economy that the coastal shipping task is performed efficiently than it is performed under the Australian flag. After some discussion, it was agreed that the motion should lie on the table while Capt. Holmes would prepare a draft motion for consideration by the Branch.

Motion 2: That this Branch, recognising that the CMMA is an association established to promote the interests and status of the Merchant Navy generally, and of Master Mariners in particular, but that the CMMA is not a union, recommends that the Federal Court accepts an invitation from the ACTU to participate in the Shipping Industry Summit, but with observer status only.

This Branch also recommends that any further involvement only occurs after consultation with all branches, and with the agreement of the majority of CMMA members.

The motion was proposed by Capt. Dickson and seconded by Capt. Rajagopalan. Members were invited to speak to the motion. There being no response, a vote was taken with the following result: For: 9, Against: 0, Abstentions: 2. The motion was passed.

11. General Business:

- a) Articles for "Master Mariner": Always required.
- b) Other business: Nil.

12. **The next Branch meeting will be held at 1145 for 1200 on Wednesday, 26 August 2015, at the Largs Pier Hotel, Largs Bay. The guest speaker will be our Branch Master, Capt. Paul Phillips, who will give a talk on his recent visit to Egypt.**

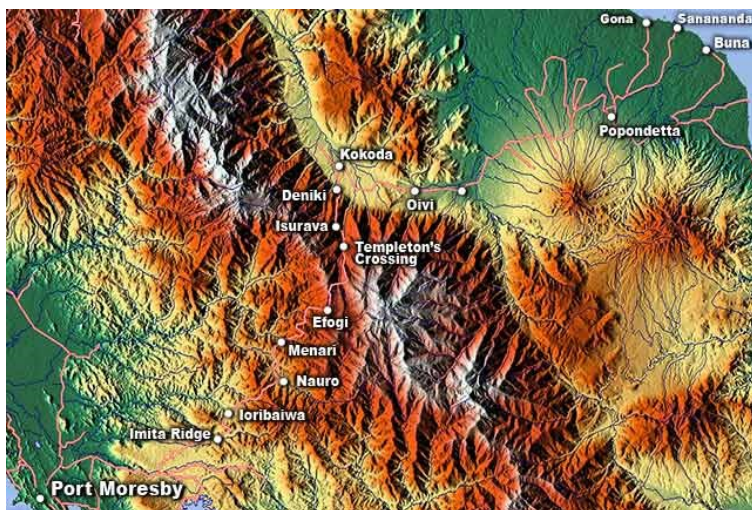
13. Closure: Business meeting was closed at 1240 hours and lunch was taken.

After lunch, Tony Carr gave a talk, supported by a DVD, about a trek he had made along the Kokoda Track in 2006, a summary of which follows:

Tony's family have lived in the Port Adelaide area since 1898. At the age of 20 years he did his National Service in the 7th Battalion of the Australian Army, serving in Vietnam for 12 months.

In 2000 he was asked if he would like to join a group on a trekking holiday in Nepal, although the area of their trek did not include Everest Base Camp. He accepted the invitation and found it challenging and enjoyable, and left him eager to do more.

In 2006, when Tony was 60 years old, one of his two sons invited him to join a group trekking the Kokoda Track; they were also joined by Tony's other son. There was another family link: Tony's father-in-law had fought in New Guinea during World War II with the 2/14th Regiment. The Kokoda Track is considered by trekkers to be one of the three most challenging in the world. Tony and his sons trained by walking to the Mount Lofty summit, overlooking Adelaide, from Waterfall Gully. They started in walking shoes and gradually progressed to making



consecutive ascents while carrying backpacks filled with bricks.

They flew from Adelaide to Port Moresby via Sydney and Cairns. Port Moresby is a town with a high crime rate, and tourist hotels and local businesses alike hire their own security guards, as the local economy is unable to provide sufficient Police.

Trekkers were flown to the north end of the Track, where the young militiamen of the 39th Battalion had first come under attack from the southward advance of the Imperial Japanese Army. The Track has an altitude at this point of about 8,000 – 9,000 feet, which has the

advantage that there are no leeches in the rivers and no mosquitoes, just mud. Lots of it! Local porters, descendants of the "Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels" (the last of whom is believed to have died in 2013), were available to the trekkers, if requested. Tony's trek took 9 days; one of the local porters holds the record for the fastest

transit of the Kokoda Track, 19 hours!

On one of the sections of track, which was cut into a very steep hillside, Tony slipped and fell off the track; fortunately he became stuck in some bushes from which he was rescued by another trekker. Beyond the bushes was a sheer drop to the flooded river below.

The Kokoda Track is managed by the Kokoda Trust, which, in addition to maintaining and improving facilities on the Track, also seeks to fund and improve the standard of local villages and to improve water supplies. It also funds scholarships for eligible villagers.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Lt Cmdr Wynne and passed by acclamation

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NEW SUEZ CANAL

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

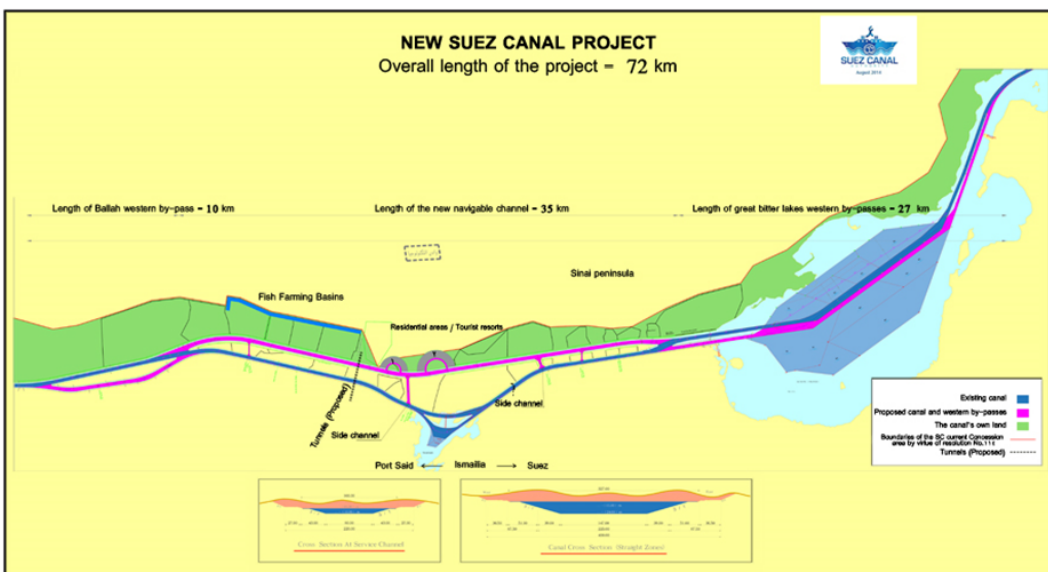
The **New Suez Canal** (Arabic: قناة السويس الجديدة *Qanāt al-Suways al-Jadīdah*) is the name of a waterway project in Egypt, expanding the existing Suez Canal between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. It was launched simultaneously with plans to build six new tunnels under the canal and to transform a 76,000 km² (29,000 sq mi) area on both banks of the canal into an international logistics, commercial and industrial hub that Egyptian authorities projected would create one million jobs.

The project adds a new 35-kilometre-long (22 mi) second shipping lane in the existing 164-kilometre-long (102 mi) canal, allowing for separated passing of ships in opposite directions. It also includes the deepening and expansion of a 37-kilometre-long (23 mi) section of the existing canal.

The enlarged capacity allows ships to sail in both directions at the same time over much of the canal's length; beforehand, much of the canal was only one shipping lane wide, with limited wider basins for passing. This is expected to decrease waiting time from 11 to 3 hours for most ships, and to increase the capacity of the Suez Canal from 49 to 97 ships a day. The construction of the new canal was initially scheduled to take five years. It was then first reduced to three years, and finally

ordered by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to be completed in one year only.

Technical difficulties initially arose, such as the flooding of the new canal through seepage from the existing canal. Nevertheless, work on the New Suez Canal was completed in July 2015. The channel was officially inaugurated with a ceremony attended by foreign leaders and featuring military



flyovers on 6 August 2015, in accordance with the budgets laid out for the project. The opening day was also declared a holiday in Egypt and mosques were instructed to compare the project to Muhammad's digging of a trench, to defend Medina from attackers, during the Battle of the Trench.

Six new tunnels for cars and trains are also planned to end the isolation of the Sinai Peninsula, connecting it better to the Egyptian heartland. As of 2015, there was only a single tunnel under the canal, the Ahmed Hamdi Tunnel, which connects Suez with the Sinai.

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EL-MAHROUSA YACHT: A HISTORY ENTWINED WITH THE SUEZ CANAL

The presidential yacht was the first ship to cross the Suez Canal in 1869, and was the first vessel to pass through the new extension on Thursday 6th August 2015.

At the heart of the preparations for the inauguration of the new Suez Canal waterway last Thursday the 150-year-old presidential yacht, El-Mahrousa, stands out because of its long association with the Suez Canal.



Mahrousa Yacht arriving at Port Said in its way to Suez Canal from Alexandria on 31 July 2015 (Photo Courtesy : Sameh Abdel Khalek)

The yacht earned its spot in Egyptian history when it became the first ship to pass through the Suez Canal after the waterway was opened in November 1869. Aboard the ship were Egypt's ruler Khedive Ismail and a number of royal guests.

The ship is the oldest active yacht in the world, and the seventh largest. El-Mahrousa is still in service and on Thursday it carried President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and his guests from all over the world along the new waterway, the largest-ever addition to the canal.

Many Egyptians still associated El-Mahrousa with the Suez Canal and with Egypt's former royal family, but the history of the ship goes beyond those associations.

The story of the yacht began in 1863 when Egypt's ruler, Khedive Ismail, ordered the British shipbuilding pioneers the Samuda brothers, who were based in London, to build him a royal yacht. The luxurious vessel was designed by Oliver Lang, who designed Queen Victoria's first steam yacht, with the aim of being a state-of-the-art ocean-going steamer.

In August 1865, the 411-foot and 5-floor vessel was handed over to its Egyptian crew, who sailed it from the River Thames to Alexandria.

Two years later the yacht embarked on its first official mission, transferring Egyptian troops to aid the Ottoman forces that were cracking down on the Cretan revolt in Greece.

The strong historical bond between the yacht and the Suez Canal began in 1869, before the canal was opened. Early in the year Khedive Ismail took his yacht on a tour of Europe to invite kings, queens and emperors of the continent to attend the inauguration of the Suez Canal.

In November 1869, El-Mahrousa became the first ship to officially pass through the newly inaugurated waterway.



Interior of El-Mahrousa in the 1950s (Photo : Al-Ahram Archives)

On board alongside the Khedive was Eugénie de Montijo, empress of France and wife of Napoleon III, who gave the Khedive a piano as a gift. It is still located on the yacht today.

Other well-known figures who have been on board include Reza Pahlavi, the shah of Iran; King Abdelaziz Al-Saud, the founder of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Josip Tito, ruler of Yugoslavia, and Menachem Begin, Israeli prime minister.

A witness to Egypt's modern history

In a small note of historical irony, the yacht in 1879 carried the man who commissioned its construction, Khedive Ismail, to his exile in Italy, after he was ousted by his son Khedive Tawfik.

In 1914, the ship played the same role once again, taking Khedive Abbas Helmi II to his exile in Turkey.

The biggest irony of all was on 26 July 1952, when El-Mahrousa carried the last king to rule Egypt, Farouk I, and his infant son, Ahmed Fouad II, in favour of whom he abdicated, to their exile in Italy, thus witnessing the final chapter of the royal dynasty of Mohamed Ali.

In the newly founded republic, El-Mahrousa was renamed El-Horreya, meaning freedom, but the new name was little-used by ordinary people. Assigned to the Egyptian navy where it was docked at Ras El-Tin naval base in Alexandria, El-Horreya continued to play an active role, including transporting President Gamal Abdel-Nasser to many places.

The yacht was also frequently used by President Sadat on important events and trips.

In June 1975, the ship was once again the first to pass along the Suez Canal at the huge celebrations marking the re-opening of the channel for naval movement following its closure after the 1967 and 1973 wars.

The following year the ship took part in the celebrations marking the bicentennial of the US, crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

In September 1979, Sadat made a famous trip to Yafa on board the El-Horreya, during the peace talks between Egypt and Israel.



Interior of El-Mahrousa in the 1950s (Photo : Al-Ahram Archives)

In December 1980 Sadat made one final trip on board the ship, as it was the first vessel to pass through the newly inaugurated expansion of the Suez Canal.

Under former president Hosni Mubarak, the ship was less active. Instead, the Egyptian navy would use it in ceremonies to mark the graduation of students from the naval academy.

In 2000, Mubarak decided to change the name of the ship back to El-Mahrousa.

Renovating El-Mahrousa

The five-floor yacht has undergone major alternations in its 150 years.

In 1872, it was lengthened by 40 feet. In 1905, it was subject to a major rebuild in Scotland where it was lengthened by another 16.5 feet and its two paddle-wheels were replaced by steam turbines.

In 1912, a telegraph was installed on the ship.

In 1919 El-Mahrousa underwent another major alternation in UK, so that it was powered by diesel oil instead of coal. This required that the ship be lengthened for a third time, this time by 27 feet.

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ALLIGATORS, PIRANHAS, VAMPIRE BATS AND A SOLITARY UNICORN.

by Mike Robinson (Mizzen 49-51)

In mid-1980, my company, Unicorn Lines of Durban, obtained a contract to carry a full cargo of oil pipes to Iquitos in Peru. Oil had been discovered on the western slopes of the Andes in a pretty remote area and it was necessary to build a pipeline to a terminal port on the Pacific coast. A casual glance at the map (*right*) would seem to indicate that, with a distance of only three hundred or so miles from the Pacific to the oilfields, the sensible option would have been to deliver the pipes to the Pacific coast ports, but the problems of transporting them over the Andes were deemed insuperable. Hence, we would take them in via the back door, a distance of some 2,100 miles from Belem at the entrance.

We were initially given a stowage factor that meant all the pipes could be stowed in the holds, thus giving us plenty of space to carry out deck maintenance on the voyage. Sadly, the actual stowage factor was larger and we ended up with both deck and hatch tops covered with pipes.

We departed Durban in mid-September 1980. For two days, the weather was foul and the creaks and groans from the cargo as the ship worked in the seaway were somewhat disconcerting. I might add that our Trade Manager had preceded us to Brazil to enquire about navigation on the river, problems that might be met, and return with masses of local information for the benefit of the Master. What actually happened was that he was entertained royally, both in Manaus and Rio, but neglected to ask any questions which might have helped us. If he had, he would have learned the worst possible time to be in the river was between September and October as the Andean snows were not yet melting and the river would be at its lowest. This would have repercussions. Especially so as the 5,500-mile voyage would leave us low on bunkers. Emergency supplies were arranged at Recife but would add to our voyage costs, and the decision to take them rested with me.



The first major decision was Recife - to bunker or not to bunker? Based on a faster than expected trip, I went for the latter, and we made landfall somewhere west of Salinópolis, the Pilot Station for the river. We had an early version of SatNav, but that depended on sufficient satellites, usually three, being at least fifteen degrees above the horizon at the same time to give an accurate fix, and we could often go ten hours between positions. The coastline was no help, being low-lying. An old Admiralty chart indicated 'prominent trees', but all we could see was a shoreline with thousands of 'prominent' trees, all identical. With a rough following sea, even the guesstimated speed was not much help, but, as Salinópolis had some 40 or so ships waiting for pilots or orders, it was, in the end, fairly easy to locate.



With the pilot safely on board in a heavy sea and swell, we eventually entered the mouth of the Amazon and much calmer water. What had not been

apparent before, but was now painfully obvious, was that the decision not to take fuel in Recife might have been a little optimistic, as the ship adopted an angle of loll. Not huge, but enough to make the Captain surreptitiously cross all available digits. Belem was now 50 miles away, but it felt like a circumnavigation of the globe, before we were safely berthed and could start replenishing our sadly depleted tanks.

Now for another problem. Urban legend has it that Belem has more Ladies of the Night per capita than any other major seaport, and it seemed most of them were intent on boarding. The gangway watchman was useless, the girls boarding at bow and stem instead. The crew, who had been at sea for two weeks, were non co-operative. After an hour of throwing the girls off via the gangway and having them re-board elsewhere, I gave up, with a mental memo to update our medical stocks at the earliest possible opportunity.

Along with the dawn, two Brazilian Pilots boarded and we headed off for the main river. It has two entrances, divided by Marajo Island, roughly the size of Wales. Our entry from Belem was via a maze of narrow waterways that surrounded the island called Los Estreitos. There were numerous timber factories lining the banks along with the local residences on stilts, and the children, each with their own surfboards, paddled out ahead of us, and then rode the bow wave as we went along. Every time they disappeared under the bow, I was terrified that we would kill someone, but they were amazingly adept and nobody died.

Once in the main section of the river, and as far as Manaus, it was pretty deep and wide, logging depths of 20 fathoms beneath the keel in places. There were several large ports accommodating ships of up to 50,000 tons, and one of these, Obidos, was the scene of a major tragedy just three days after we passed. An over-laden ferry capsized half-way across and over three hundred passengers died due to a combination of crocodiles, piranhas and drowning. This gave us a healthy respect for whatever lurked below.

Watches had been doubled, with the 3rd Mate and me on the 6-12 and the Mate and 2nd Mate on the 12-6. The climate was hot, humid and a variety of biting insects made life on watch miserable. On occasion, there were enough of these to dim the navigation lights. Mosquito repellent failed miserably, and one was faced with the choice of providing tasty snacks or covering up completely and facing near death from heat exhaustion. Fortunately, the upper reaches of the river beyond Manaus were to be cooler and less insect-infected.

Manaus itself was situated on the juncture of the Amazon and the Rio Negro - aptly named as its waters were jet black due to the plentiful minerals washed down river. The brown of the Amazon and the black of the Negro providing fetching patterns and a mass of eddies and whirlpools. Here we changed Pilots, getting two Peruvians in place of our locals, even though there were roughly 800 miles of Brazilian river still to be transited. To my delight, one Pilot was pure Inca and, in silhouette, could have been Montezuma himself.

On departure, we entered the upper Amazon, now called the Solimoes. Here there were no navigation marks, and sand banks came and went with gay abandon - here today, gone tomorrow. Navigation perforce was in daylight only, so that by 3pm, we would start looking for a suitable anchorage for the night. Once anchored for our first night, the pilots informed me that in the morning, they would leave the ship in our boat (What bloody boat??) and survey the reaches of the river ahead, before re-joining the vessel and sailing over the newly surveyed area. I pointed out that the only boat we had available was the motor lifeboat - six knots if we were lucky. They informed me that vessels advancing to Peru always carried a small boat complete with outboard and this could (should) have been supplied in Manaus. Another question our Trade Manager had failed to ask! I was all for returning to Manaus, only about 100 miles behind us and obtaining same, but Montezuma assured me that the lifeboat would be fine. Not for the first time on this voyage, I agreed and lived to regret it.

Dawn! Both pilots boarded the now-lowered lifeboat, along with one Engineer, the 3rd Mate and two crew members. The engine fired nicely and we let go the painter. At full speed, the boat made a very comfortable one knot astern. I now realised that, unless I wanted to be stranded without pilots, I would have to do something, and I was not happy.

Up anchor, turn round and, current-assisted, chased after my lifeboat. Once passed, turned the ship athwart the current and allowed the boat to come alongside with a resounding thump. Luck was definitely on my side here, as I was quite frankly terrified, but we secured the boat alongside and dropped anchor again. This time, I told the pilots that we were going back to Manaus for a proper boat - no argument. The Agent was contacted via radio and instructed to meet us somewhere on the way back, complete with suitable speedboat. This was done, and by sunset we were back in our original anchorage.

The agent, whom we had not met physically in Manaus, turned out to be a wizened, snaggly-toothed Hobbit with the name of McIntyre. He had originally worked for Booth Line, and came from, of all places, Wigan. On the demise of Booths, he had married a local Indian girl and fathered a brood of blowpipe-hunting children complete with Lancashire accents. We now fell into a routine of early morning surveys, the pilots usually getting back to the ship around 0900.

I constantly worried that I might never see them again but they always came back, and we managed between 150 and 200 miles per day against the current, followed by a good night's sleep at each anchorage.

Halfway through Day One, the ship came to a grinding halt as we discovered our first uncharted, unknown sand (mud) bank. I was horrified, having been brought up to regard this as the ultimate sin and one which Masters in Shell seldom survived. However, there was a procedure - drop anchor and hold on at about two shackles, then in a very short time, the current scoured the obstruction away as the boat would discover the deep (relatively) water channel and away we would go. On our total voyage upriver, this was to happen over 20 times, but around that stage, I stopped counting and only logged them if the delay was longer than normal. A large number of these sand banks were above water, and the locals planted them with rice as the river fell and had time to harvest them before the river rose again - these islands therefore were an attractive shade of emerald green as we passed by. And so westwards towards our final destination we went.

To Be Continued

Source: "The Cadet" No. 68 July 2014

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Coast Guard Seizes 8 Tons of Cocaine, Loses 2 of Them Off California Coast

A United States Coast Guard ship seized 16,000 pounds of cocaine last month in the largest drug bust of its kind.



Only problem is, they lost 4,000 pounds of it. The cocaine, estimated to be worth approximately \$180 million, was being smuggled in a semi-submersible low-tech submarine that travels with both its cockpit and exhaust pipe above water. The vehicles are reportedly extremely dangerous to operate, but they're also very difficult to detect, making them appealing for those in the drug trade. The semi-sub was caught when a Navy maritime patrol aircraft flying overhead noticed something

strange in the water and notified the Officials. A Coast Guard vessel intercepted the semi-sub and crew members boarded the vessel, opened its top and ordered those inside to surrender. Four men climbed out and were arrested. It is not currently known what charges they are facing. A bitcoin exchange called ItBit is the first exchange for the virtual currency to be granted a licence by New York State's financial regulator. But two tons of the contraband they also found on-board ended up at the bottom of the ocean, as the Coast Guard crew decided to leave it on-board the semi-submersible to stabilize the vessel as it was pulled to shore by their ship. Both the sub and the drugs sank, and are believed to be 13,000 feet under water. Despite the loss, this is still reported to be the largest drug bust of its nature. The bust took place on July 18, but information could not be released to the public until it was cleared by several governmental agencies. The US Coast Guard has disrupted 15 other drug smuggling attempts since April, seizing \$540 million and 33,000 pounds of narcotics, Mashable reported.

Source : sputniknews

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