



# The Porthole

Volume 15 No. 09  
September 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:

Federal Court held a telephone meeting last week, and the intention is to hold another meeting before the end of the year.

I will make a provisional report at the September Branch meeting, as only draft minutes of the Federal Court meeting are currently available.

Locally, Captain Mike Parsons' voluntary work as Skipper of the *Archie Badenoch* and the *Yelta*, has been recognised in a front page article of South Australian edition of The Senior newspaper. Congratulations, Mike.

The recent change in Prime Minister and in Federal cabinet seems to have improved prospects of at least a major Australian contribution to the new submarine program, with the flow on of benefits that this will bring to the economy in general.

Best Wishes

Paul P

Branch Master

## Inside this issue:

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Summary of Paul Phillip's talk "Egypt 2015" 7/10

## Speaker:

**Chris Purton, retired Meteorologist, whose topic will be "Advances in Weather Forecasting over the past 40 Years, with Particular Reference to the Great Australian Bight"**

**The next Branch Meeting will be held at the Largs Pier Hotel, 198 The Esplanade, Largs Bay, on Wednesday, 30 September 2015, at 1145 for 1200.**

**Please confirm your attendance at the lunch or register your apology before 1200 on Monday, 28th September 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.

Branch Meeting at the Largs Pier Hotel, on 26 August 2015.

Minutes

1. Opening & welcome: Meeting opened at 1200hrs. Branch Master welcomed members and guests.
2. Present:
  - Members: Sir Eric Neal, Captains Phillips (Branch Master), Buchanan, Carr, Dickson, Hammond, Hehir, Holmes, Pronk & Westley.
  - Associates: Mr Hales & Lt Cmdr Wynne.
3. Apologies: Captains Bourne-Jones, Carrington, Carter, Fraser, Ganesan, Jayasuriya, Kemp, Marshall, Parsons, Pearson & Rajagopalan.
4. Minutes of last business meeting, 29 July 2015: (circulated in the Porthole). Captain Pronk proposed that the minutes represented a true and correct record of proceedings. Seconded by Capt. Holmes and carried.
5. Business arising from the minutes:
  - a) Speakers:
    - 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 at 10.00 on 23 September 2015, if possible (Ian Dickson). If the visit goes ahead, the opportunity will be taken to present the plaque.
      - 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. Presentation of a plaque to the SA Maritime Museum has still to be arranged (Ian Dickson).
  - e) One & All: Capt. Carr advised that the vessel is presently undergoing a refit, and he hopes that the bell will soon be made available. He will continue monitoring the situation (Eddie Carr).

6. Treasurer's report: The Branch Treasurer submitted his report, as follows:

Balance at 18/06/15	2,151.25	Bendigo Bank deposit balance at 18/06/15	2,676.76
Income: Subs. Lunch & Interest.	166.04	Interest added quarterly	1.99
Expenditure: Lunches	<u>-56.00</u>	Bendigo Bank deposit balance at 18/08/15	<u>2,678.75</u>
Balance at 18/08/15	<u>2,261.29</u>		
		Bendigo Bank Term Deposit at 1/02/15	7,051.66
		Re-invested for 9 months from 1/02/15 @ 3.40%	

The Treasurer proposed, and Capt. Pronk seconded, that the Treasurer's report be accepted; carried.

7. Correspondence 18/07/15 to 14/08/15: (Summary tabled). Inwards correspondence received & outwards correspondence approved at the Branch Court meeting on 18/08/15.

The Branch Secretary drew attention to the volume of e-mails exchanged in connection with the formulation of submission proposals for consideration by the Federal Court.

8. Membership:

Applications:

Applicant	Status sought	Branch	Master's Certificate			Occupation/ Position
			No.	Date	Place	
Chandi Arundika MAKALANDA	Ordinary	WA	AY08054	2002	Fremantle	Resident of Sri Lanka, presently a pilot in Oman.
Daniel Frederick ORCHARD	Ordinary	Sydney	N090450	24/05/12	Melbourne	Master "Maersk Supporter", Maersk Offshore Services.
John Edward PRINCE	Ordinary	WA	AY10645	14/04/11	Fremantle	Master, offshore industry on the NW Shelf.
Malcolm RAMSAY	Ordinary	WA	CoC0025069	2/03/01	Glasgow	Chief Officer on a FPSO off the NW coast of Australia.
Christopher GALTON -FENZI	Associate	WA				Master under 35m, currently Master on a Kimberley Coast charter vessel.
Raul PEREIRA	Ordinary	WA	CoC??????*	13/10/10	??	Marine advisor with Chevron

As directed, the Branch Secretary pointed out to the Federal Secretary that Raul Pereira's application form contained several errors. The Federal Secretary has now responded by sending a copy of Pereira's CV which refers to a CoC obtained on 13/10/10, a copy of which was attached to the original CV, but not to the CV copy sent to this Branch. After discussion, members present agreed that, although neither the number of the CoC nor the place of issue had been given, there was sufficient evidence that the CoC had been submitted for scrutiny and verified, and that this Branch could endorse the applicant's ratification.

Ratifications: Nil.

Branch Members:

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

9. Federal Matters: Nothing to report. A Federal Court meeting is planned for early September.
10. Motions on Notice: Both of the following 2 motions were considered at the July 2015 meeting, resulting in the actions detailed below:

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 above motion was allowed to lie on the table while Capt. Holmes formulated a submission. Because the closing date for submissions occurred before the date of this Branch meeting, the completed draft submission was circulated to all Branch Members by e-mail on 3 August 2015, with responses to be received on or before 7 August 2015. On 7 August 2015, 9 responses had been received, 6 for and 3 against. On the following day, a final late response for the submission was received, making the final vote 7 for and 3 against the submission. Accordingly, the submission (copy attached) was circulated to the Federal Secretary and all Federal Court members. Ultimately, after some minor editing, the submission was adopted as the Federal Court's submission to the Senate inquiry.

On behalf of members of the Branch, the Branch Master thanked Capt Holmes for the production of the submission and the research that it entailed.

In the light of the above, Capt Dickson withdrew the original motion.

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 Branch Master advised that this submission had been sent to the Federal Secretary, without any acknowledgement to date.

#### 11. General Business:

- a) Articles for "Master Mariner": Always required.
- b) Townsville re-visited: Capt Hammond commented on his observations while staying in Townsville recently. The town has a population of 190,000. It is the main port for PNG and handles 13 vessels a week, mainly bulk, livestock and car carriers and cruise ships.
- c) Lone Pine Commemoration. Sir Eric Neal briefly mentioned his attendance at the recent commemorative service at Lone Pine, Gallipoli, and commented on the Turkish government's strong encouragement for local secondary school students to attend Gallipoli

#### 12. **The next Branch meeting will be held at 1145 for 1200 on Wednesday, 30 September 2015, at the Largs Pier Hotel, Largs Bay. The guest speaker is to be advised.**

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

After lunch, the Branch Master gave a presentation on his recent visit to Egypt, with his wife; specifically their tour from Abu Simbel to Luxor. Please see the presentation elsewhere in the September issue of The Porthole.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ROY!

Doug Bourne-Jones reminds us that our oldest member, Roy Pearson, will be 93 on Tuesday, 6th October 2015.

Despite the strictures that come with advanced years, we hope that your day will be enjoyable.

## Alligators, Piranhas, Vampire Bats and a Solitary Unicorn.

by Mike Robinson (Mizzen 49-51) Part 2 of the Amazon Voyage

After two or three days of uneventful steaming, I was called to the Bridge by an agitated 3rd Officer, who seemed unable to enunciate properly. Silently cursing, I arrived in the wheelhouse to find our two pilots cowering in the port corner, whilst firmly attached to the outside of our chartroom curtain was, wait for it, a Vampire Bat. The pilots, of course, were scared of rabies. These little monsters, with two Dracula-like white fangs, fed basically off the large vein in the neck of the local cattle and had no interest in ships whatsoever. Eventually, with the aid of a pair of heavy duty work gloves, we coaxed Peter Cushing into a cardboard box, took him up to the Monkey Island and suggested that he depart to Transylvania, or wherever he came from. Now here was a problem - bats of course work by echo location and his transmitter had obviously been totally confused by the preponderance of metal around him. In short, he was going nowhere. When in doubt, call the cook, who thawed out some meat and after a few failed attempts, Peter sank his fangs in it and seemed sated. He was then left on the deck to his own devices, made several attempts to take off, each time hitting something metallic, but eventually finding his bearings and disappearing into the night.

Apart from almost daily groundings, the next few days were uneventful and we had time to admire the wild life. Nothing like it was in the old days, according to the pilots, but still, we had alligators, which we spotted on the banks at night with the aid of searchlights. As soon as the light came on, they hightailed it for the water, obviously wary of hunters who turned them into shoes and belts. There were birds by the million, including many parrot varieties, and a species of pink dolphin, unique to the Amazon. The once-prolific butterflies were now missing, having been turned into butterfly trays by local vendors - very sad, although I too have one of those trays at home.

Eventually, we arrived at the point where three countries, Brazil, Colombia and Peru, met and here we anchored whilst Customs and Immigration formalities were complied with. The Brazilian Immigration official was only interested in whisky and cigarettes, so the outward clearance was friendly and simple. His opposite number in Peru lived in a jungle hut called Ramon Castilla, a fancy name for a few houses, and he was away visiting family in Leticia, the Colombian border village, and would be back *mañana* - maybe. The next morning there was a bit of excitement, when, with the aid of our boat, we rescued an Indian whose canoe had overturned. Eventually the Peruvian flag was hoisted over the Immigration Officer's house and away went our boat again, complete with the ship's clearance documents neatly wrapped around two bottles of Johnny Walker. An hour or so later, the boat returned with the information that the fee was insufficient, and the addition of some cigarettes would smooth the way. This being complied with, we were now allowed to enter Peruvian waters, where the river changed its name for the third time to Marañon. The promised land of Iquitos was just four hundred miles away. Some 24 hours later, we rounded a bend, and saw two Peruvian vessels, Yacu Runa and Yacu Caspi, anchored in midstream, with no port in sight. This seemed a little strange, and our pilots made radio contact, only to be advised, that, just ahead of them, was a large sand bank stretching right across the water with insufficient depth for transit. What to do? It appeared we would have to anchor until the waters rose sufficiently, or, better option, contact our agents in Iquitos and see if they could organise lighters, so that we could discharge our deck cargo. Radio communication was pretty bad, with the jungle providing a lot of static, but eventually we got through and they said they would do their best, but were not too sanguine. Meanwhile we joined the queue at the anchorage and settled down to wait.

First we made a tide gauge and installed it on the near bank - the river was probably about half a mile wide here. Every morning, I would go to the monkey island and inspect the gauge with binoculars, watching the river fall slightly each time. The nearest village was Caballo Cocha, about two miles upstream, and it turned out that one of our pilots (Montezuma) had relatives there, and he departed, taking his "oppo" with him, saying he would keep in touch. Me? I felt just a little lonely.

Food and particularly water became a problem. The latter was eased by filling the forepeak with river water and connecting the showers, leaving our supply of fresh, strictly for drinking. We advised the crew not to attempt to drink this water, but apparently some did, and nobody died. As far as food was concerned, we were soon inundated by local vendors with canoe-loads of fish, fruit and animals in the form of parrots and monkeys. The currency was whisky and cigarettes. Vegetables, potatoes and meat were obtained from Caballo Cocha, where we sent our boat every three days or so, returning perilously loaded with vegetables and meat, and once again, the bonded store was heavily depleted. After a week, most of the crew had purchased parrots, and the Mate's wife had got a tiny lion monkey, aptly named Vani after our Trade Manager Alan Stevani, the one who had forgotten to ask so many vital questions.

Me? I bought a multi-coloured parrot for 200 Marlborough, and, quite amazingly, it was so tame that it sat on my arm right away and made no attempt to fly away. I was delighted and used to take it with me on my 7am trips to observe our tide gauge and do a little sun bathing before it got too hot and humid. Meantime, the bird sat happily on the rail,

then came down for breakfast. Roughly three days later, I observed him (her?) fluffing her wings, shuddering slightly, and then take off, followed by a string of imprecations. I discovered later that the birds were tamed by introducing them to marijuana, or whatever the drug of choice was in this part of the world. Mine had obviously finished its stint of cold turkey (parrot), recovered and flown back, no doubt, to the same Indian who provided his fix in the first place, and who would then sell him again to the next available ship. During this enforced idleness, we visited the two Peruvian ships and also returned their hospitality. Rather in the same way that we had videos and exchanged them monthly, the Peruvians each carried about six females for recreational purposes, and, for all I knew, also rotated these on a monthly basis. This seemed such a brilliant idea that I wondered why other Merchant Navy fleets had not cottoned on to the scheme. Our crew wanted to know why we could not swap a few videos in exchange, but sadly, in the interests of discipline and medicine, I had to decline.

October 9th - 11th day at Caballo Cocha, and my birthday. Usual visit to the monkey island, now more in hope than expectation, and, miracle of miracles, the river had risen some four inches, providing my best birthday present ever. Same day received a message from Iquitos that a tug and lighters were on their way and would arrive tomorrow. Brilliant! Sure enough, next morning, around the bend came one tug, towing two flat-bottomed lighters, complete with about 40 stevedores plus wives, who apparently did their cooking for them. In twenty four hours - a rate incidentally never achieved in Iquitos - they discharged some 450 tons of deck cargo, and with the river giving us another four inches, we were set to continue on the following morning. The space that had been occupied by stevedores and wives was full of pipes, and, in my best Conway Spanish - 'Yo Tengo' would have been proud - I asked how the stevedores and appendages would return. It turned out that they would travel with us on the Sezela. As our crew was 24 and we were going to add some 55 passengers, this seemed a little like overcrowding. Food? 'You supply, Captain!' Bloody Hell! Our pilots had rejoined by now, and after a quick word with them, we decided, that, after crossing the shallow area, we would anchor off Caballo Cocha and purchase as much rice and meat as possible - monkey, bush rat, alligator - anything, to feed our guests.

At the crack of dawn we raised anchor, left our two Peruvian ships behind - they were still too deep - and bounced gingerly across the sand bank and into deeper water. A short stop at Caballo Cocha, then off on the last leg. Canvas lean-tos sprouted on the decks, as the womenfolk lit fires and started cooking for the stevedores. At night, this looked as if the whole foredeck was ablaze and fire watches with rigged hoses were on stand by.

October 14th - We rounded the final bend of the Marañon, and there, on a high bluff, was the town of Iquitos - the



NASA satellite image showing Iquitos Metropolitan Area. The Amazon River appears on the lower side of the photograph

Promised Land. Two floating berths, rather like the old Liverpool Landing Stage, but much bigger, each capable of taking an 8000-ton vessel and connected to the shore by covered walkways, now, at low river, some 75 feet below the shore line. Both were occupied, and the plan was that we would discharge at anchor for two days and then complete alongside. Also moored was the largest collection of seaplanes I have ever seen, apparently a prime mode of riverine transport. Later, we met one of the pilots and he regaled us with the dangers of Amazonian flying. Apparently, going from A to B, which might be 100 miles as the crow flies, but possibly

twice that if one followed the river, they would always follow the river. The reason being that, if the plane went down in the jungle, even if fairly close to the river, it was so dense, that their chances of finding their way out if they survived was virtually nil. At least, they could always land on the river.

For the two days at anchor, nobody went ashore, and I used to watch the stevedores from the Bridge Wing, whilst topping up my sun tan. On the second afternoon, I noted what appeared to be mass panic amongst the stevedores, as they abandoned ship, dived into the accompanying tugs and slammed doors and windows closed. Nothing appeared too wrong to have caused this display - the sky was blue, the weather hot, and, as I scanned through 360 degrees, I saw down river, what appeared to be a small circular cloud approaching, some thirty or forty feet above the water. It looked innocuous, so why the panic?

A moment of mental inspiration - **killer bees!!!!!!**. Into the accommodation, call the engine room - batten the ship down, stop the A/C, close all vents, warn



Iquitos\_et\_l'Amazonie\_835 [Viault](#) 1987



Percy Meza 131125 07:29 Calle en Belen Bajo

the crew. Eventually everyone was accounted for and the temperature inside was rising rapidly and becoming very uncomfortable. I returned to the wheelhouse, looked round, but no sign of the bees - the stevedores, however, were firmly indoors and not coming out. On the starboard side of the Bridge, we had our NUC signals, attached to a halyard and ready for immediate use during the river transit. These were the wickerwork ball type, and the lower one was abaft and just level with the chart room window. The bees had homed in on these and found them suitable as a nesting place and the balls now appeared about ten times their normal diameter. Wow! I suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that the Chief Officer go out with insect killer sprays and get rid of them. He declined with thanks and said it was a job for the senior Officer – stalemate! Some four or five hours later, our friends moved on to pastures new, and we could resume operations.

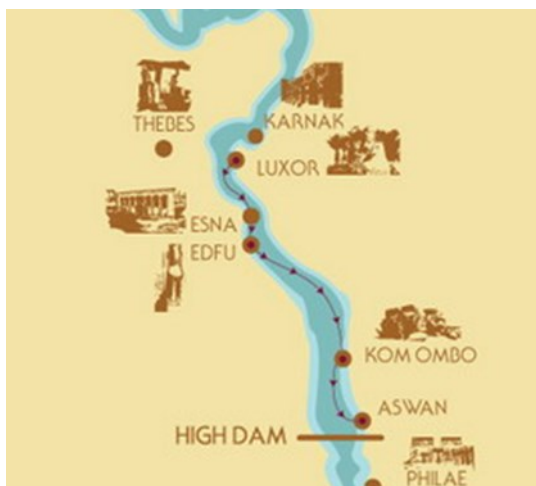
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*In that anti-climactic manner, Mike Robinson's article ends. One expects that there would be a final instalment, but none has appeared in subsequent issues of "The Cadet".*

## EGYPT 2015 – ASWAN and ABU SIMBEL to LUXOR

By Paul Phillips.

In May 2015 Janet and I were able to fulfil our dream to visit Egypt by joining a 12 night Peregrine Adventure tour of Upper and Lower Egypt. This article is about the Upper Egypt part of the tour covering Abu Simbel to Luxor.



After a fourteen hour sleeper train journey from Cairo, our tour group, twelve guests and our guide, were taken directly from Aswan railway station, across the Aswan Dam (built by the British in 1905), to Shellal for a short ferry ride to Aglika Island, where stand the ruins of the Temple of Isis, Temple of Hathor and Trajan's Kiosk. All of these memorials had been relocated from Philae Island, only the peak of which is now visible above the lake surface. The Aswan Dam overlooks the first cataract; the existence of this barrier to river traffic was the principle reason Aswan was on the southern border of Egypt during the Old Kingdom period. Aswan is



Philae Island (flooded).

also famous as being the site of the well used by Eratosthenes, along with the sun's shadow of a pole in Alexandria, to calculate the circumference of the Earth and its distance from the Sun.

When the Egyptians, with Russian aid, built the Aswan High Dam in the early 1960s, it was realised that a great many Ancient Egyptian structures in the Nubian Valley section of the River Nile would be flooded; included in this list were the temples at Philae, and so, as part of a much larger international project, the temples were relocated to Aglika Island. After returning to Shellal, we re-joined our mini-bus for the drive to our hotel in Aswan. After checking-in, the remainder of the afternoon was 'free time', and Janet and I, with two Americans from our group, one a University lecturer in Ancient Egyptian History, walked to the Nubian Museum, which contains artefacts centred around the history of



Pre dynastic rock drawing

the Nubian Valley, now lying under Lake Nasser. The museum featured displays of Nubian village life, mummified crocodiles, Egyptian statuary and rock carvings from both the Early Dynastic and Pre-Dynastic (before 3,100 BC) periods; included in the latter were 5,200 year old rock carvings of boats depicting fifteen oarsmen plus a steersman. On our walk back to our hotel we passed a Coptic Cathedral, the largest in Egypt, where a wedding was in progress; Copts being the predominant Christian Church in Egypt, and we were able to enter the grounds of the Old Cataract Hotel. Agatha Christie stayed

here when writing her book "Death on the Nile" published in 1937, and it was used again in the 1978 film of the same name. That evening we boarded a felucca, the 'Titanic', but with no risk of an iceberg, for a dinner at the home of the 'Mayor' of the Nubian village on Sehel Island. While our skipper had to contend with eddies

and whirlpools caused by the river flows around the various islets and rocks, we were able to enjoy the scenery, including the Old Cataract Hotel and ancient riverside quarries where hieroglyphs, carved into the rock when the quarries were in use, were still visible. The pair of obelisks known as Cleopatra's Needle, one in London, one in New York, are both of stone excavated from the Aswan quarries. When Lake Nasser flooded the Nubian Valley, the Nubians were given the choice of being relocated to Sudan or relocated in Egypt, mainly on Sehel Island or further north at New Nubia. The settlement on Sehel Island has a hospital, manned by an Egyptian doctor and an Egyptian and a Nubian nurse, and a primary school. Secondary students attend school in Aswan. The village has mains water, sewerage and electricity but is lacking in sealed roads and footpaths.



Abu Sibel Temple of Amon-Ra -  
Ramses II.

We flew from Aswan to Abu Simbel (Ybsambul). The flight is scheduled once a week and allows three hours at the temple site; the flight is operated by EgyptAir (their logo is based on the image of Horus, the falcon god) who also operate the bus link between the airport and the temple site. We were fortunate to have a clear view of the temples when on approach to Abu Simbel airport. As at Philae, both temples were relocated when it was realised they would be lost to flooding on completion of the Aswan High Dam. Their present site is about 200 feet above their original location. Photography is now banned inside both temples, but photographs of the interiors of both temples were on sale at nearby kiosks. Although the existence of the Temple of Hathor-Nefertari was known to early European explorers, it was not until

March 1813 that the Swiss explorer, Johann Bukckhardt, rediscovered the Temple of Amon-Ra - Ramses II. Bukckhardt, who also rediscovered the Nabatean city of Petra, said that he had stepped back to gain a better view of Nefertari's Temple, and, glancing to his left, saw four carved 'domes' projecting from the sand; these 'domes' were the heads of the 20 metre tall Ramses II statues. It was another four years before the temple entrance was found. The Ramses Temple has become famous for the "Miracle of the Sun". Twice a year, on the Equinoxes, the rising sun takes about 20 minutes to sweep across statues to the gods at the rear of the Sacrarium, the Sanctuary of the Sun, 65 metres from the entrance. The Sun's rays strike the statues of Harmakhis, Rameses and Amon-Ra, but never the fourth statue which always remains in shadow; that statue is of Ptah, the God of Darkness and the Dead.

By the time the temples at Abu Simbel were built, Egypt's southern border had been pushed south to the Second Cataract, a channel having been carved through the rock of the First Cataract, thus extending the navigable length of the Egyptian Nile, and although nominally dedicated to the principal deity Amon-Ra, the Rameses II temple was designed to impress visitors from the south, the roof of the Pronoas (main hall) is supported by eight Osiris pillars with the features of Ramses; the walls are decorated with paintings and hieroglyphs and the ceiling is decorated by the great vulture of the goddess Nehbet, protectress of Upper Egypt.

Both temples were carved into a sandstone cliff so neither temple was a load bearing structure. In their new site they have been built inside reinforced concrete shells, which have then been covered in sandstone blocks to blend into the setting. The damaged statue of Rameses had fallen sometime after being uncovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and before relocation to the current site.

After our return flight to Aswan we boarded our river cruiser for our journey down the Nile, calling at Kom Ombo and Edfu before disembarking at Luxor. The river cruisers are 'Esna-max', constrained in size by the locks and bridge at Esna. Due to the poor publicity Egypt has received in the world's press since President Mubarrak and then the Muslim Brotherhood were deposed, tourist numbers are down generally and we were travelling at the end of the season. May is the end of the tourist season as June, July and August are the three hottest months with temperatures in Upper Egypt regularly reaching the mid-40s Centigrade. Large numbers of river cruisers were laid up, and as there are insufficient river berths, we had to cross three and five other cruisers when embarking and disembarking at Aswan and Luxor respectively. Our cruiser had a capacity of 176 passengers but never carried more than 40 during our cruise, and only 21 on our last night.



Kom Ombo Nileometer.

The temple at Kom Ombo is dedicated to Amenhotep III and to the god Sobek, who is usually depicted as either a crocodile or a crocodile-headed figure. The temple stands on the river bank and is a short walk from the landing stage. Adjacent to the temple is a museum featuring mummified crocodiles. Crocodiles were both revered and feared as they had both benevolent and violent sides, and were extremely powerful creatures. Crocodiles were also known to predict the height of the annual flood, as they always built their nests above the flood level. Another method used by the Egyptians to predict flood levels and to determine when the floods were due was a system of Nileometers by which

the height and rate of increase of the river level could be measured. A good example of one was located within the temple at Kom Ombo.



Edfu temple columns.

Our next stop was at Edfu. Passengers are transferred between the river cruisers and the temple by horse-drawn carriages, all attempts by tour operators to introduce coaches having been negated by sabotage. The carriage drivers ill-treat their horses and have been known to threaten unaccompanied female passengers to extort 'tips'. Our tour guide insisted each carriage had at least one male passenger. Our horse was lame and had a respiratory problem and on several occasions I found it necessary to reach across to stop the driver whipping the horse, a practice that we noticed was common to all drivers. The temple complex at Edfu rivals that at Karnak as one of the best we visited, so it was a pity that the visit was spoiled by the conduct of the carriage drivers.

Luxor is located on the east bank. On the west bank was located the City of the Dead, where many of the Pharaohs buried in the Valley of the Kings had located their memorial temples, most of which have now disappeared as their stone was re-used for newer buildings. At night the hills behind the west bank flood plain are floodlit; not for the enjoyment of visitors but to prevent a repeat of the 1997 killing of 62 people, mostly tourists, at Deir el-Bahri where the memorial temple of the female Pharaoh, Hatshepsut, is located. The Islamic gang responsible for the killings later merged into the Muslim Brotherhood; when that organization took power in Egypt they released the two surviving gang members and appointed one as Governor of Luxor. The citizens of Luxor blockaded their city to prevent him assuming his duty; after about six weeks he resigned. On the approach to Deir el-Bahri one passes numerous family-run alabaster factories; it was the presence of alabaster that contributed to Thebes (Luxor) becoming the capital of Upper Egypt.

Over time there have been three temples at Deir el-Bahri, but only the foundations remain of the oldest, that of Pharaoh Montuhotep, and the newest, that of Hatshepsut's successor, Pharaoh Thutmose III. Polish archaeologists started the reconstruction of the temple of Hatshepsut in the mid-1960s. The entrance avenue and ramp to Hatshepsut's temple is aligned with the entrance to the temple at Karnak on the opposite bank of the Nile. The terraces and pillared colonnades of Hatshepsut's temple give it a modern appearance compared to other temples of similar age. Her architect is buried next to Hatshepsut's temple, although his grave had been prepared elsewhere. Egyptologists had suspected that the relationship between the Pharaoh and her architect was more intimate than usual for persons of their respective status; a view supported by contemporary graffiti found in a recess of the temple depicting a female wearing the headdress of a Pharaoh and a male figure wearing the headdress of a noble in an intimate position. In the main galleries the statues and paintings show Hatshepsut in the favour of the female goddess, Hathor, usually depicted as a cow or with a cow's face. In one painting Hatshepsut is being suckled by the cow-goddess. Hatshepsut's reign was of consolidation, not of war, and she completed many temples here and at Karnak. She also sponsored a large trading expedition to the country of Punt which is believed to have been in the vicinity of Ethiopia or Djibouti, her ships and trade goods are depicted over several panels. Hatshepsut was succeeded by her step-son Thutmose III. Late in his reign he conducted a campaign of erasing all likenesses depicting Hatshepsut as Pharaoh, but leaving likenesses of her as a Queen unharmed. This is believed to be a part of a policy of confirming his son as his successor, and removing anything that would validate any claim by a descendant of Hatshepsut.

From Deir el-Bahri we visited the Valley of the Kings, which is separated from Deir el-Bahri by the cliff behind Hatshepsut's temple. Our entrance fee included entry to the three tombs open on that day, and payment of an additional fee allowed entry to either the tomb of Tutankhamun KV62 or that of Ramses V and Ramses VI KV9. As the tomb of Tutankhamun is small and all contents are now on display at the Cairo Museum, we chose the tombs of Ramses V / VI and were rewarded with well preserved paintings and an enthusiastic 'guardian' who spoke good English. The ceiling paintings depicting the goddess Nuyt in her usual form of 'protecting' Earth during the night, until the sun god Ra rises again at dawn, were particularly impressive and it is a pity that cameras are not permitted past the Valley of the Kings ticket office. The three tombs included in the ticket price were those of Ramses IX KV 6, Ramses III KV 11 and Merenptahat KV8. Ramses IX is of interest because the alignment had to be altered during construction when the diggers ran into the access corridor of another tomb. After the splendour of Ramses V/VI, the tomb of Meremtpahat seemed dull due to damage to the wall paintings caused by flooding.

We also visited the Colossi of Memnon, actually the Colossi of Amenhotep III (the name was changed during the rule of the Ptolemys), they overlook the ruins of his memorial temple. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the area on which they stand was the Nile flood plain and several artists have painted them surrounded by flood water. They were given the name Memnon after receiving damage in an earthquake, as a result of which, when struck by the rays of the morning sun, air inside the statue would expand and cause the statue to 'wail'. During the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, a Roman governor tried

to repair the damaged statues after which the wailing stopped.

Karnak lies 6 kilometres from the Temple of Luxor; the two are connected by an avenue lined by human-headed sphinxes. Plans to fully excavate the avenue have been thwarted by the presence of two mosques and a church built over the alignment; as all three buildings are now more than a hundred years old, under UNESCO protocols, they cannot be demolished.

Of the two temples, that at Karnak is the larger and the better preserved. The main entrance at Karnak was at the river's edge, with a secondary entrance aligned to the Avenue of Sphinxes connecting to the Luxor temple. Karnak has been extended by several pharaohs including the female pharaoh Hatshepsut and her successor Thutmose III. Hatshepsut celebrated her reign as Pharaoh by erecting one of the several obelisks to be found in the temple complex; when Thutmose III began his campaign of removing all references to his predecessor's reign he was unable to destroy the obelisk because of references to the god Amon-Ra, so Thutmose III ordered that the obelisk be bricked in, with the result that it is now one of the best preserved in the temple.

Karnak is best known for the hypostyle hall, the central part is raised above the wings to allow sunlight to enter the hall. The pillars supporting this raised section are capped by carvings of open papyrus flowers, whereas the pillars supporting the wings are capped by closed papyrus flowers.

The Luxor Temple used to have two obelisks, one either side of the entrance from the Avenue of the Sphinx. Only one now remains; readers who have visited Paris may have seen the second obelisk, now in pride of place at the Place de la Concorde. The night views of the Luxor Temple were taken from a very nice rooftop restaurant. Building tax is not paid until construction of the building is complete. In this case the enterprising owner of the ground-floor 'local' restaurant had leased the "uncompleted" rooftop and converted it into a 'tourist' rooftop restaurant with excellent views over the Luxor Temple and across the Nile to the 'City of the Dead'.

### Travel in Egypt

An Egyptian Visa is required by most nationalities including Australian and British passport holders.

Travel from Cairo to Aswan was by a 'tourist only' sleeper train. The only Egyptians on the train were staff. Tourists are not permitted on the 'local' sleeper service. Airline style dinner and breakfast are provided in the compartments; the carriage attendant sets up and puts away the bunks. Toilet facilities are provided at the end of the carriage; there are no showers. The food was adequate but basic.

As mentioned we flew from Aswan to Abu Simbel and return, and between Luxor and Cairo. Later we flew Cairo to Vienna. All flights were with Egypt Air; planes appeared well maintained, and were clean and tidy. Cabin crew were well presented and efficient. Overall I thought that Egypt Air rivalled Emirates, our long haul carrier on this holiday. International Arrivals at Cairo looked tired whereas the Departure area seemed new without the barn-like atmosphere of Dubai. On arrival, the flight after ours was that of President Sisi returning from a visit to Moscow (the red carpet was not for us!); our tour representative met us before we passed through Immigration control and then met us again at baggage reclaim to take us to the hotel transfer bus.

All other travel was by mini-bus. Traffic in the cities of Egypt and Alexandria is busy and at times chaotic; six lanes of traffic squeezed onto a five lane highway for instance, Egypt is certainly not a self-drive destination! The highway between Cairo and Alexandria is being built by the Egyptian Army; national service is compulsory and anyone not intelligent enough to fire a rifle ends up in the equivalent of a Pioneer battalion on civil projects. The Army having built the highway then benefits from the revenue raised by tolls.

Security is noticeable. The Aswan Dam has checkpoints at both approaches; and no one is allowed anywhere near the Aswan High Dam. All bridges over the Nile and the Esna Locks have noticeable security detachments. We had a security policeman, with a machine pistol slung under his suit jacket, accompany us on our return from Alexandria to Cairo; it was not due to a security alert, he just wanted a free ride to go home!

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An Egyptologist was being interviewed by a reporter in Eastern Europe.

"What feature do you notice most in Egyptian ruins?" "Probably, the pillared halls"

"Do you find many coloured balls?" "Coloured balls?"

"Yes, coloured balls. There are always lots of them in billiard halls....."

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