



The Porthole

Volume 19 No. 9 September 2019

The newsletter of
the South Australian Branch of the Company of Master Mariners
of Australia,
PO Box 1, PORT ADELAIDE, SA 5015
Branch Patron: His Excellency the Honorable Hieu Van Le AC



Branch Master's Comments

Good Day again readers,

September is not only upon us, but has almost run its course, and suddenly it's Spring again. Nice if you are looking forward to some warmer weather, but rather depressing if you have experienced a dry winter and can't see much of an improvement for the future. I believe Mr Goyder remarked on this at length some time ago. And it doesn't have a lot to do with mankind's headlong suicidal rush to ruin our environment - it's the climate doing what the climate always does, for better or worse, and with no regard to any effect it may have on us mere mortals, and completely irrespective of what we may collectively do to the long-suffering atmosphere. I don't really want to harp on about this but we have had many periods of warming, not to mention the odd Ice Age, throughout history (or pre-history if you like), and let's not consider several mass extinction events which occurred on earth before man even evolved. I suppose what I am really saying is stop blaming humans for the various climatic happenings at present, and especially stop demonising coal and oil usage as the main causes thereof.

If you think about it, the movement of these two commodities, together with iron ore, form the bulk of sea transport and without them, the Maritime industry would be in a parlous state indeed. On the subject of demonising, what is it with the chattering classes and the senseless hysteria whenever the subject of nuclear energy is broached, be it regarding power plants or submarines.

On a totally different subject, I note with sorrow the passing of Alan Lydell, who had been sick for some time.

I should also mention that a Federal Court meeting is being arranged for the beginning of October. I look forward to writing it up for next month's magazine.

Until then
Happy Sailing
Bob W (BM)

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Speaker: No Speaker this month

The next Branch meeting will be held at the Largs Pier Hotel, 198 The Esplanade, Largs Bay, on Wednesday, 25th September 2019, at 1145 for 1200. Please confirm your attendance at the lunch or register your apology before 1200 on Monday, 23rd September 2019 with Bob Westley (0427 644 947) or Ian Dickson (0418 807 788)



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.

Babcock Wins Frigate Deal as UK Bids to Restore Shipbuilding Industry

September 12, 2019 by Reuters

By Alistair Smout LONDON, Sept 12 (Reuters)

Babcock International won a contract to design new Type 31 frigates on Thursday as Britain seeks to revive its once-mighty shipbuilding industry.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks to apprentices as he visits the NLV Pharos, a lighthouse tender moored on the river Thames to mark London International Week in London, Britain September 12, 2019.

Daniel Leal-Olivas/Pool via REUTERS

The frigates will be assembled at Babcock's facility in Rosyth, Scotland, and the program will support over 2,500 jobs across the Britain, including its supply chain.

The deal will boost Babcock's efforts to repair ties with investors after a period when the engineering group's management and stock price came under fire. Its shares are more than 35% below their mid-2018 level.

Babcock's Arrowhead 140 design beat rival bids from BAE Systems and Atlas Elektronik UK, and a formal contract award is expected later this year, Babcock said.

"Arrowhead 140 is a modern warship that will meet the maritime threats of today and tomorrow," Babcock Chief Executive Archie Bethel said.

"It provides a flexible, adaptable platform that delivers value for money and supports the UK's National Shipbuilding Strategy."

The government will buy at least five of the frigates and has said the first ship is set to be in the water by 2023.

Babcock said detailed design work would start immediately, with manufacturing beginning in 2021 and Shipping finishing in 2027. The ships will

have an average production cost of 250 million pounds (\$308 million) a ship.

The government has committed to keeping up a fleet of at least 19 frigates and destroyers with the aim of growing the fleet in the 2030s. Type 31 frigates will replace Type 23 ships.

"(The) UK is an outward-looking island nation, and we need a shipbuilding industry and Royal Navy that reflect the importance of the seas to our security and prosperity," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a statement.

"I am convinced that by working together we will see a renaissance in this industry which is so much part of our island story – so let's bring shipbuilding home."

Britain is building patrol vessels and new Type 26 frigates at BAE Systems' Govan shipyard on the Clyde river in Glasgow.

But the country's shipbuilding industry has suffered a catastrophic decline in the last 40 years, with shipyards in places from Sunderland to Portsmouth closing.

Belfast's Harland and Wolff shipyard, where the *Titanic* was built, went into administration last month. (\$1 = £0.8113)

(Reporting by Alistair Smout; editing by Stephen Addison and Sonya Hepinstall)

(c) Copyright Thomson Reuters 2019.

Source: gCaptain 190913

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Meth busts spark random drugs tests at NZ port

September 13th, 2019 Sam Chambers



Random drug tests are being carried out at Port Chalmers, New Zealand's most southerly major port, after five people handling heavy machinery tested positive for methamphetamine use over the past three months. The five people have been dismissed.

"These are team members driving 60-tonne straddles. Their levels have been impaired. Driving a 60-tonne machine, taking a Class A drug, clearly that is serious misconduct," the port's chief executive, Kevin Winders, told the local *Otago Daily Times*.

Port Chalmers is located to the northeast of Dunedin on New Zealand's South Island and handles logs, containers and a growing stream of cruise ships.

Source: Splash247 190913

U.S. Orders Large-Scale Turbo Activation Exercise of Ready Reserve Force Ships

September 17, 2019 by Mike Schuler

The U.S. Department of Defense has ordered a large-scale turbo activation of ships in the U.S. Maritime Administration's (MARAD) Ready Reserve Force fleet.



The RRF fleet vessel M/V *Cape Ray* (T-AKR 9679) pictured alongside other RRF ships and Navy vessels at her homeport at the NASSCO-Earl Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia. Photo taken September 17, 2014. U.S. Navy Photo

The turbo activation is part of a large-scale activation exercise ordered by the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) on September 16. The activation calls for a total of 28 RRF fleet vessels to transition from reduced operating status to fully crewed and full operating status within 5-days. Activations are commonly followed by immediate sea trials.

The last turbo activation exercise was directed by Military Sealift Command in July when it ordered three to get underway with just five day's notice from their berths in Alameda, California. The three vessels participating in July's exercise included the SS *Gem State* (T-ACS 2), SS *Keystone State* (T-ACS 1) and SS *Grand Canyon State* (T-ACS 3). All three ships departed for the three-day sea trial within four days of activation.

This most recent activation is now the fourth turbo activation exercise to take place this year, according to USTRANSCOM.

MSC's and MARAD's reserve fleets are collectively referred to as the surge sealift fleet and are expected to be a ready source of shipping and transportation of cargo, equipment and supplies to the U.S. Army and Marine Corps.

The turbo activation exercises are meant to provide an assessment of the readiness of U.S. sealift forces and ensure their readiness in times of need. Not only do they ensure that ships can meet their five and ten-day readiness status, but also that their crews are prepared to operate alongside the Navy.

USTRANSCOM notes that typical activation exercises usually include a small number of vessels, but this most recent is being described as a stress test to test the readiness of the fleet, coming after MARAD Administrator Admiral Buzby and the head of USTRANSCOM testified to the poor shape of the RRF fleet before a joint hearing of the House Armed Services Committee in March 2019.

"This comes after a March 2019 testimony of the head of Transcom and MARAD on the poor state of the force due to deferred maintenance and age of some of the vessels," notes gCaptain contributor Salvatore Mercogliano.

"These exercises typically involve only a few ships, but this event targets 28 vessels for activation to provide a better assessment of the readiness of U.S. sealift forces than can be accomplished with fewer activations," US TRANSCOM said in a press release.

We understand that the this most recent activation – exercise or not – is the largest since the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

MARAD has managed and maintained the United States' RRF fleet since 1977. It now consists of 46 vessels, comprised of 35 roll on/roll off (RO/RO) vessels, 2 heavy-lift or barge carrying ships, 6 auxiliary crane ships, 1 tanker, and 2 aviation repair vessels. The RRF fleet is a subset of the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF), which is comprised of approximately 100 inactive, Government-owned vessels that are maintained in order to support national defence and emergencies.

Both RRF and NDRF ships were also activated to support relief efforts following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

Source: gCaptain 190918

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Brunswick port reopens after car carrier accident

September 13th, 2019 Sam Chambers



The American port of Brunswick has reopened on a "case by case" basis after Sunday's capsizing of a car carrier in a nearby channel.

The *Golden Ray* overturned with 24 crew members inside sparking a dramatic, successful rescue mission over the weekend.

Authorities are still assessing how to remove the vessel, which is stuck on St Simons Sound.

A half-mile perimeter has been established around the *Golden Ray*, which sits half in the water with its starboard side pointing skyward. An oil boom has been placed around the ship. Salvage teams are likely to start taking the bunker fuel from the ship this weekend.

Source: Splash247 190913

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Middle East Shipping Stabilized by UK Navy, Says Fleet Commander

September 12, 2019

By Jonathan Saul, London, Sept 12 (Reuters)

Britain's decision to send warships to the Strait of Hormuz has helped to stabilize commercial shipping through the critical choke-point weeks after Iran seized a UK-flagged tanker in the region, a top British navy official said on Thursday.



HMS MONTROSE (front) and HMS DUNCAN escort a tanker through international shipping lanes in the Gulf. Credit: LPhot Rory Arnold

The UK-flagged tanker *Stena Impero* was detained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in the Strait of Hormuz on July 19 for alleged marine violations two weeks after Britain had detained an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar. That vessel was released in August.

Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd, the Royal Navy's Fleet Commander, said it had "committed quite a few ships, aircraft and other capabilities to the Strait of Hormuz area because it's a live issue." "We have deployed assets for the very reason to stabilize," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the London International Shipping Week conference.

"I am really confident that we are in a good space. We are not letting our guard or our vigilance down."

The Royal Navy last week said that nearly 90 British merchant ships – representing close to 6 million tonnes of cargo – had been "safely shepherded" through the Strait of Hormuz by its warships over the past two months.

It said the *HMS Montrose* frigate was forced to fire flares on more than a dozen occasions to warn off Iranian forces.

"We are there to assure the sanctity of international law and regulation and we will stay there, of course, for as long as we need," said Kyd, who is responsible for commanding all the Royal Navy's operational elements.

"We are the British Royal Navy and we look to support and protect our own ships."

Several international merchant vessels have been attacked in the Gulf this year in incidents that have rocked world commodities trading. Washington blames Iran, which denies the accusation.

Iran has denounced U.S. efforts to set up a coalition and says that countries in the region can protect waterways and work towards signing a non-aggression pact. The UK is among countries who have already joined the U.S.-driven initiative.

GPS DISRUPTION

While it did not mention Iran directly, the U.S. military's Central Command last month said that ships had reported interference to their GPS navigation systems when sailing through the Strait of Hormuz region as well as jamming of other onboard communications "with little to no warning."

Kyd said there was an "absolute threat to safe navigation" from GPS interference in areas such as the Middle East Gulf, the Mediterranean and Baltic regions.

"We are seeing much more state and non-state actors getting involved in things like GPS denial ... to make navigation harder," he said.

"It's something that all shipping and all the maritime community needs to be alive to." (Editing by David Goodman)

(c) Copyright Thomson Reuters 2019.

Source: gCaptain 190913

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UK flag slides out of the world's top 20 list

September 18th, 2019 Sam Chambers

The embattled UK Ship Register has dropped out of the world's top 20 list of flag states by size for the first time since records began.



Latest statistics from the World Fleet Monitor monthly publication, issued yesterday by Clarkson Research Services, sees the UK flag slide out of the world's top 20 registries, falling from 19th spot in August to 21 this month with India and Iran leapfrogging in the last month.

The UK flag's fleet now stands at 956 ships totalling 10.6m gt, down 34% from the 16.1m gt on its books at the start of the year.

Among a host of international shipping companies ditching the British flag this year, France's CMA CGM pulled 49 of its ships from the register earlier this year, citing Britain's imminent departure from the European Union. The Line's Marseille headquarters said it had taken the decision to drop the Red Ensign "in light of Brexit and to avoid any uncertainty in the period

with our fleet status and regulations".

Despite the calamitous year to date, officials at the British registry are putting on a brave face, stating last week they have set a 12.5% growth target for the coming 12 months.

Source: Splash 247

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Paris Tests 'Flying' SeaBubble Taxis on the River Seine



Alex Ledson Senior Contributor
Dining & Drinking

I write about travel, culture, food & drink across Europe.



SeaBubbles out on the river
FRANCIS DEMANGE

This week, Parisians have been treated to the sight of eco-taxis, shaped like white bubbles, seemingly floating across the water, transporting people up and down the river Seine. They are called SeaBubbles and are being tested ahead of the decision to integrate them into the Parisian transport network.

The boat uses hydrofoil technology

The SeaBubble is still in early testing phases, using technological know-how from several industries; the foils derive from the aeronautical industry, the steering and navigational system come from boats and the design for the upper deck comes from the car industry. The boat sits in the water as the passengers get on and off but once the door is closed and the boat is moving at 12 kmh (7.5 mph) it uses hydrofoils attached to its hull to lift it out of the water and skirt along the surface. It is 100% electric, charged via a lithium battery, so seen as more environmentally friendly.



A SeaBubble on Lake Geneva
FRANCIS DEMANGE

Foils are coming back into fashion

Foils are not new technology; they date back to 1898 and an Italian engineer called Enrico Forlanini. The Germans tested foil boats in the 1940s, the first hydrofoil ferry became operational between Switzerland and Italy in the 1950s, and by 1965, a hydrofoil yacht was good enough for the James Bond baddie in *Thunderball*. What has changed, however, is the technology, which has improved to the point that it can now overcome some of the inefficiencies and shortcomings which prevented widespread take-up of foils from happening.

The company has big ambitions: it wants to use the world's waterways—and not roads—to transport people from A to B, and it wants to do so with “zero wave, zero emissions, zero noise.” The SeaBubbles would travel at the same speed as cars and the aim is to provide these at the same cost as a taxi, with customers ordering them via an app as they would an Uber.

SeaBubbles would add another dimension to city transport

Anders Bringdal, SeaBubbles CEO, told Associated Press that he hopes to change the way people move about cities. SeaBubbles are one more example of how shared public transport can alter the mobility landscape of large cities, much like shared bikes and electric scooters are currently doing. People are increasingly looking to rivers as a means of commuting and moving around large cities to rival the subway or buses—in London, travel cards are now accepted on river boats.



A mock-up of how the Seabubbles dock would look in Paris
Seabubbles

Source: *Forbes* 190919

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Vigor Kicks Off Construction on the U.S. Army's Next-Generation Landing Craft

September 17, 2019 by Mike Schuler

Vigor has officially kicked off construction on the next generation of landing watercraft for the U.S. Army at its new aluminium fabrication facility in Vancouver, Washington.



An illustration of the MSV(L). Photo courtesy Vigor

A keel laying ceremony for the vessel, to be named *SSG Elroy F. Wells*, was held Monday attended by representatives from the U.S. Army, federal and local elected officials, and Vigor employees.

The contract to build the Manoeuvre Support Vessel (Light), or MSV(L), was awarded to Vigor in October, 2017. The contract calls for one prototype vessel, four vessels under low rate production, and up to thirty two additional vessels over ten years for use by Army Mariners.

The design of the MSV(L) was developed in partnership with BMT and is said to dramatically improve on the capabilities of the current LCM-8. It features an

innovative tri-bow monohull that helps with seakeeping, beached stability and speeds in excess of 20 knots fully laden. A raised centre jet and 4 foot (1.2 meter) draft fully laden enable landings on even the shallowest beaches.

Vigor said the ceremonial weld marked not only the start of the MSV(L) program but also the beginning of a new era in shipbuilding at Vigor's recently acquired state-of-the-art all Aluminium Fabrication facility in Vancouver.

Vigor expects the site to employ up to 400 workers by 2023 building high performance military craft, workboats and aluminium fast ferries in addition to MSV(L).

Once the SSG *Elroy F. Wells* has been completed and fully tested, the schedule calls for four MSV(L) vessels in the Low Rate Production phase, followed by up to 32 vessels once Full Rate Production is underway.

Construction of the first MSV(L) comes as the Army earlier this year decided to deactivate and divest the majority of its watercraft and maritime capabilities, including numerous vessels, watercraft equipment, watercraft systems, soldiers, and units. In July, nearly half of the service's watercraft were up for auction on the General Services Administration website, including a majority of its 3 Landing Craft Utility (LCU) vessels, known as the workhorse of the Army's watercraft capability. The sell-off has since been put on hold and is now under review.

The first MSV(L) prototype was named in honour of SSG *Elroy F. Wells*, an Army watercraft operator killed in action during the Vietnam War.

Vigor's MSV(L) team consists of partners that include BMT, Gladding-Hearn and Northrop Grumman.

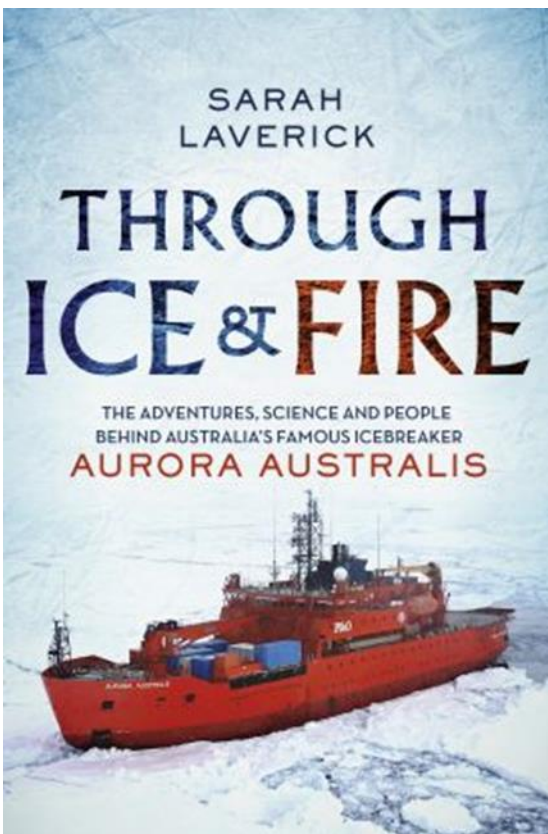
Source: gCaptain 190918

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New book brings icebreaker legacy to life

27th August 2019

'Through Ice & Fire' helps mark 30 years of Antarctic service for Australia's icebreaking ship *Aurora Australis*.



A tale of ice, fire, heaving seas and human endeavour, will help mark 30 years of Antarctic service for Australia's icebreaking ship *Aurora Australis*.

Through Ice & Fire, published today by Pan Macmillan, was written by former Deputy Voyage Leader and scientist, Sarah Laverick. Sarah is also a member of the family who built the icebreaker in their Newcastle shipyard.

"My husband's family regaled me with astounding stories of the problems they faced during the icebreaker's construction," Sarah said.

"This inspirational seed eventually grew into an overwhelming urge to tell the *Aurora's* story."

To help with her research for the book, Sarah visited the Australian Antarctic Division several times and travelled to Davis research station on the *Aurora Australis* in late 2017.

She interviewed dozens of voyage leaders, scientists, captains, crew, engineers and many others involved in the ship's history. Sarah also pored over family scrapbooks, voyage reports, library and image archives and much more.

"I struggled under the weight of this mixed blessing," she said. "The hardest part was deciding what not to include in a single readable book about the ship."

While the book is structured around the dramatic voyages in the ship's 30 year history, Sarah said these events were the exception rather than the rule, with much of the *Aurora's* life an "exercise in quiet routine accomplishment".

Today, Sarah's efforts are rewarded with the publication of what is, essentially, an inspirational human story in the face of besetments, rescues, strandings, earthquakes, fires and explosions.

Through Ice & Fire is available in all good book stores and from Pan Macmillan.

Source: Antarctic Insider August 2019

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Rock stars: the family who built Scotland's great lighthouses.

The Stevenson family tamed Scotland's wild coastline with their lighthouses'

Sandra Dick reports on a new online resource which showcases their remarkable achievements.

For those in peril on the seas or simply trying to find their way home, the reassuring glow from the lighthouses they built offered a welcome beacon of hope in the dark, stormy night.



And for those attempting to navigate Scotland by pony and trap, on horseback or hardy souls on foot, the bridges they designed offered a welcome solution to painful journeys that might otherwise have involved extra miles and even days of exhausting travel.

Across the length and breadth of the country, harbours, crossings, canals, river improvement works and, of course, scores of lighthouses rooted on rocky outcrops that have sent their warning light into the darkness for more than 150 years, are stamped with the name of a single pioneering engineering family.

While one son, Robert Louis Stevenson, would spurn engineering to achieve fame for his literary achievements, other members of the Stevenson family were busy taming Scotland's wild coastline, building towering lighthouses that defied the elements.

Many, even in this digital age of modern navigation equipment, still shine on through the harshest stormy night, albeit operated by remote control from the heart of Edinburgh.

Now a guide to the intricate drawings and plans associated with countless engineering and construction projects carried out by the Stevenson family has been made available online, offering the opportunity to see their incredible craft in a fresh light.

Around half of the National Library of Scotland's collection of more than 4000 items, documenting the Stevenson family's contribution to Scottish engineering history, have so far been uploaded to a new online map which plots records of archive items onto their corresponding locations around the country.

The map – which eventually will include the remaining 2000 maps and documents - offers an insight into the extraordinary extent of the Edinburgh family's influence on Scottish life, from helping to keep those at sea a little safer, to opening river routes and harbour entrances to ease the passage of vessels, as well as canals and bridges.

Indeed, points out Chris Fleet, Map Curator at the National Library of Scotland, while the Stevenson family may be best known for constructing every lighthouse in Scotland, the plans and designs show that element only made up around 5% of their work.

"By far the greatest proportion of their work was far more mundane but important aspects of infrastructure like harbours, breakwaters, slipways and even railway and canal projects," he says.

"But it was their initial work in early 19th century on the Bell Rock lighthouse that gave the family massive publicity."

The long and dangerous reef lying 12 miles east of Dundee and on the route for vessels navigating to and from the Firths of Tay and Forth, had been a cause for concern for decades, and was linked to the loss of up to six ships every winter – and as many as 70 during one particularly stormy season.

However, it was the sinking of HMS York in 1804, with the loss of all hands, that sparked calls for a lighthouse to be erected on Bell Rock; a daring proposal given the surface of the rock typically lies under 16ft of water, emerging only at low tide.

Glasgow-born Robert Stevenson had already worked as an apprentice to his stepfather Thomas Smith, a lamp-maker appointed by the new Northern Lighthouse Board to construct and manage four lighthouses.

Aged 19, Stevenson had already left his stamp on the nation's most treacherous stretches of coastline when he completed the erection of a lighthouse on Little Cumbrae in the Clyde.

He was in his mid-30s and had already crafted plans for a Bell Rock lighthouse when the HMS York disaster prompted calls for it to be adopted.

In a remarkable feat of endeavour and bravery, workmen defied the crashing waves surrounding the rock to begin their excavation work in 1807.

It would take four years of construction before the tower's first beam of light shone – alerting countless sailors down the years to the risk and saving innumerable lives in the process.

The 36m tall white and black lighthouse remains the world's oldest surviving sea-washed lighthouse, although its keepers moved out in 1988 and its light is now operated from the Northern Lighthouse Board offices at 84 George Street – a short distance from the New Town where the Stevenson family made their base.

Robert Stevenson went on to serve for nearly 50 years as engineer to the Northern Lighthouse Board, overseeing the construction and improvements to lighthouses from Sumburgh Head in Shetland, to Barra Head at the southern entrance to The Minch and Scotland's southernmost point at the Mull of Galloway.

His talent for civil engineering ran in the family: his sons, Alan, David and Thomas – father of Robert Louis Stevenson – would go on to follow in his footsteps.

The brothers' lighthouses stretch from the most northerly lighthouse in the British Isles at Muckle Flugga on the Island of Unst – 165 years old and still going strong - to the equally curiously named Chicken House lighthouse on an isolated rocky island at the southern tip of the Isle of Man.

At the most isolated, Sule Skerry, 40 miles west of Orkney and designed to aid the passage of vessels through the Pentland Firth to and from the Iceland seas, keepers would spend a lonely month at a time with just seals, puffins and crashing waves for company.

Perhaps the most challenging, however, was the construction of Skerryvore lighthouse. The graceful tower designed by Alan Stevenson is the tallest lighthouse in the country, measuring 46m of solid granite which was quarried on the Island of Mull throughout its six years of construction.

Huge blocks of stone were ferried by tender to Hynish on Tiree to be dressed and shaped to ensure they fitted perfectly into place, before being taken to the site overlooking a reef of treacherous rocks around 10 miles south west of the island.

The family firm was eventually passed to David's sons, David Alan and Charles, in the 1880s, and grandson, Charles.

But while they continued to specialise in lighthouse design until the 1930s – including lighthouses as far afield as New Zealand and Japan, the family also undertook a wide variety of work which helped transform travel and improve infrastructure.

Mr Fleet points out that the maps and plans held by the Library show not only the remarkable attention to detail and vision of each designer, but in some cases the changing face of the locations, such as harbours, which were redesigned to make them safer and easier to navigate, rivers where work was carried out help improve the flow, and roads, bridges and canals which opened swathes of the nation to economic development.

However, perhaps the biggest impact of their work is missing from the collection of maps, plans and documents: the countless lives their engineering skills saved.

Mike Bullock, Chief Executive of the Northern Lighthouse Board, said: "For over 150 years Robert Stevenson and his descendants designed and built the majority of Scotland's Lighthouses.

"They constructed wonders of engineering that have withstood the test of time and the elements.

"You only have to look at Robert Stevenson's Bell Rock Lighthouse, which since 1811 has been continuously safeguarding ships and the lives of their crews and passengers, to recognise their remarkable contribution to our nation."

Source: *Shipping News*

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