The Porthole

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The newsletter of
the Company of Master Mariners of Australia,
South Australian Branch
PO Box 1, PORT ADELAIDE, SA 5015
Branch Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC

Branch Master's Comments

Good day to all our members and readers once more,

Another month has passed us by, and as if I didn't need the hint, my garden is telling me that Spring has well and truly sprung, and if nothing else, the grass requires cutting. At least the temperature is more civilised now, and no artificial heating is required, and our move to our permanent home in the Hills is only a week or so away. With this imminent transfer looming, I admit that I haven't been keeping an eye on nautical happenings recently. The main item of interest is still the phasing in of the promised nuclear-powered submarines and their eye-watering $120 Billion cost, but I read recently that, due to the inordinate lead in time for the delivery of these promised vessels, Raytheon has been given a $200 million contract to extend the life of the Collins class, enabling them to soldier on into the late 2030s. I can only hope that we will not drift into an emergency situation in the meantime, though I recall that we were in a similar situation in 1938 .....

I also note that during my eclectic reading, I garnered that, at the last I.M.O. meeting this month, a motion was adopted to amend the London Protocol which governs dumping wastes at sea, to prohibit the dumping of sewage sludge on a worldwide basis.

Meanwhile, back at home, our monthly meeting is being held as usual at the Largs Pier hotel at 1145 for 1200 next Wednesday 26th Oct, with the Branch Court meeting one hour beforehand. All members are, of course, very welcome to attend.

Until next month,

Happy Sailing!
Bob W (SABM)

In this issue

COVID-19 restrictions permitting,
the next Branch meeting will be held at
The Largs Pier Hotel. 198 The Esplanade, Largs Bay,
on Wednesday, 26th October 2022, at 1145 for 1200.
Please confirm your attendance at the lunch or register your apology
before 1200 on Monday, 24th October 2022
with Bob Westley (0427 644 947)
or Ian Dickson (0418 807 788)

On board with technology

By Michael Grey

It was World Maritime Day last week, not that anyone outside our intimate circle of shipping friends would have noticed, such is the way that this vital industry has disappeared over most peoples' horizons. The IMO Secretary General said some interesting things about technology and its place in the maritime world, but also pointed out that technological change needs to take those affected along with it.

This was amplified by Captain Kuba Szymanski of InterManager, who emphasised that everyone needs to keep seafarers in mind when implementing digital solutions and new ways of working at sea. You can't just impose change, he inferred, but have to keep in mind the need to maintain safety, provide proper training and ensure that operating procedures don't become redundant.

We probably need these reminders when everyone is frantically researching new fuels, amazing advances in artificial intelligence, communication breakthroughs and the headlong rush towards "net zero". Scarcely a day goes by without some triumphant announcement of a technological breakthrough which "could" (this is the operative word) revolutionise fuel economy, sustainability, cargo handling, speed up the whole logistic infrastructure, automate everything and reduce operating costs substantially. It is also worth noting that most of these huge advances tend to be future projections, rather than actual achievements.

One shouldn't be too sceptical – my wife says it is unattractive – but on my notice board at eye level as I write, there is a verse written by Ronald Hopwood which tells the reader –"In an age of swift invention it is frequently believed/ That the pressure of a button is as good as work achieved/But the optimist inventor should remember if he can,/ Though the instrument be perfect, there are limits to the man." There is a timelessness about this appeal for humility, which, although it still pops up from time to time, (a few years ago I saw it pinned up on the bridge of a very sophisticated new ship), was in fact written in 1913.

The IMO Secretary General and Captain Szymanski are spot on when they urge "optimist inventors" to make sure that they are bringing important people like seafarers into their developments. Because the fact is that invariably they are thought of only at the last minute, if at all, before some product or development is launched upon the market. I never forget an event to commemorate the entry into service of one of the world's fastest cargo ships (which obviously dates it), when some wild-eyed scientist was explaining to an audience of shippers and potential customers that an amazing new device would instruct the master about when he ought to slow down in heavy weather.

During this oration, I was watching the master's face and afterwards I sidled up to him and asked him about the use of this device. He assured me that he had no intention of ever using it, as he thought his experience in many years crossing the winter North Atlantic provided rather better indicators than a "box of tricks", which had been inflicted upon him, the workings of which he found completely incomprehensible.

Today, of course, his attitude would be heavily criticised, as masters of ships at sea will be in receipt of all sorts of information, data, instruction and advice 24/7. But there is still this worrying gulf between those who are developing equipment, regulations, protocols, systems, who remain in isolation from those who will eventually be affected by their developments. And you can reasonably argue that if this division could be narrowed in some way, by bringing the operators into the loop at an early stage, everyone would benefit, with better equipment or systems, and operators more attuned to the overall objectives.

We still have a singularly unhelpful mindset which sees new equipment that involves quite radical changes installed and the operators just told to "get on with it", with people trying to train themselves with inadequate manuals or using what they managed to pick up from the installation engineer. I recall a friend, who ran a containership in the Atlantic, arriving back from leave to take his ship to sea that night to discover that the entire navigational outfit had been changed in his absence, without a word of consultation.

There is a wonderful episode recounted by the authors of "Notable points in the design history of the Doxford opposed piston marine oil engine" (A great book, despite its formidable title), about one of the first installations in which the engine could be controlled from the bridge. The master and the chief engineer, both quite elderly and neither of whom had been party to this leap forward in engineering, were deeply suspicious of the development and agreed between them to change the new system back to the tried and trusted manual operation, telling nobody ashore. This worked perfectly, but problems arose when after their final voyage, the manufacturers had to be called in to change the system back to bridge control.

And you can think of so many developments in recent years, in which operators have been told to "just get on with" what experts have installed in their ships. How much better if they had been involved rather earlier.

Michael Grey is former editor of Lloyd's List.

Source: Maritime Advocate 814

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Discovering the three largest shipwrecks in the St. Lawrence River

Published: October 8, 2022 6.11am AEDT

Author

Sébastien Pelletier, Doctorant en sciences géographiques, Université Laval

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Of all the rivers in the world, the St. Lawrence River is undeniably one of the most challenging for mariners.

This water highway is at some spots as narrow as a large river and, at others, as wide as a small sea. It has played a vital role

over the last three centuries as an important artery for trade, communication, transportation and settlement. And since 1959, the year the St. Lawrence Seaway was inaugurated, it has been a gateway to the heart of the continent.

On June 26, 1959, Canada and the United States inaugurated the St. Lawrence Seaway with great fanfare.

This article is part of our series, "The St. Lawrence River: In depth." Don't miss new articles on this mythical river of remarkable beauty. Our experts look at its fauna, flora and history, and the issues it faces. This series is brought to you by La Conversation.

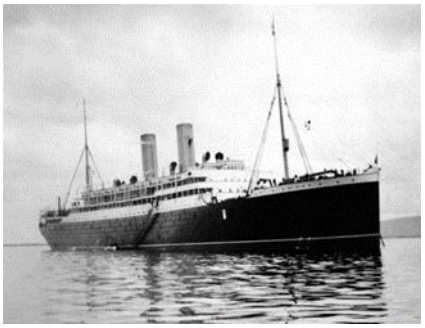
The first European explorers who sailed the St. Lawrence discovered it was not easy to master: it was long, but never calm. After crossing the Gulf, mariners would face many difficulties navigating up the river to Québec City, including narrow, sinuous channels, shallow waters, shoal deposits and strong tides. Currents are sometimes unpredictable, there can be very dense fog, and, of course, the river is impossible to navigate in winter. No one ventured on its waters from the end of November to the beginning of May.

Qualified maritime pilots are a must on the capricious and indomitable St. Lawrence, which has the reputation of being one of the most difficult rivers to navigate in the world. The risk of collisions, groundings and shipwrecks is high, which led to tightened navigation safety regulations, particularly in response to the accidents involving large ships that occurred in the 1960s.

It is estimated that there are several thousand wrecks below the surface of the river.

As a doctoral student in geographic sciences at Laval University and president of the Technical Wreck Divers of Québec (PETQ), I propose introducing you to the three most important shipwrecks in terms of size that took place in the river. Our diving activities push the very limits of exploration. Notably, we use diving techniques adapted to the particularly restrictive underwater context of the St. Lawrence, with its strong currents, often reduced visibility and cold, black water, among other hazards.

Our expeditions allow us to share the passion of diving by exposing the results of our research and discoveries, while making the public aware of the history and hidden relics that are just a few steps from the shore of the river.



The RMS *Empress of Ireland*, on an unspecified date. Its sinking caused the death of over a thousand people. (shmp), Author provided

The tragedy of the *Empress of Ireland* (1906-1914)

Because of its magnitude, one shipwreck in the St. Lawrence River cannot be overlooked: the Royal Mail Ship (RMS) *Empress of Ireland*. With its 1,012 victims, there is no question this disaster strikes the popular imagination.

This tragedy was the result of the ship colliding with the Norwegian coal carrier *Storstad* during the night of May 29, 1914, off Sainte-Luce, east of Rimouski, during foggy weather. In as little as 14 minutes, the liner sank in the cold and inhospitable waters of the St. Lawrence. Unlike the much publicized sinking of the RMS *Titanic* two years earlier, the worst tragedy in Canadian maritime history was quickly overshadowed by the outbreak of World War I.

It was only 50 years later, in 1964, that the wreck was discovered by a group of divers. Although gigantic, at 173.8 metres in length, this Edwardian liner, built in 1906, was not the largest to have sunk in the waters of the St. Lawrence.

SS Bulk Carrier *Leecliffe Hall* (1961-1964)

SS *Leecliffe Hall* sailing upstream over a lock. (Boatnerd.com, Bob Graham collection), Author provided

At 222.5 metres long and 23 metres wide, the *Leecliffe Hall* ranks first among the largest wrecks in the St. Lawrence River.

Built by the Scottish shipyard Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. — the same yard as the RMS *Empress of Ireland* — and launched in Port Glasgow on May 18, 1961, this colossus was an impressive 18,071 gross registered tons (GRT). The ship's length from stern to bow is the equivalent of two American football fields glued together.

On Sept. 5, 1964, in the middle of a foggy day, the ship, loaded with 24,500 tons of iron ore, collided with the Greek freighter MV *Apollonia* off Île aux Coudres, in Québec's Charlevoix region. The ships remained stuck together and did not sink.

The crew members were evacuated, safe and sound. But some of them, a few hours later, voluntarily returned to the ship, which was drifting alone, to attempt a rescue *in extremis*. While the men were in the midst of trying to regain control of the ship, the hull suddenly broke apart, killing three brave sailors. Two of the three bodies were never recovered. The *Apollonia* escaped with a badly damaged bow but was able to sail again.

On Sept. 9, 2017, a little less than two years after our divers first visited the wreck,

a commemorative ceremony was held at the Charlevoix Maritime Museum. In the presence of the widow of one of the missing sailors and some descendants of the other two victims, the ship's bell and the builder's plate, which had been recovered the previous year by our team and declared to the Receiver of Wreckage (a federal official whose key role is to act as the custodian of a wreck in the absence of the rightful owners) were handed over to the museum in an effort to maintain the collective memory of Charlevoix's subaquatic heritage.

The ore carrier MV *Tritonica* (1956-1963)

At 161 metres long and 12,863 GRT, the MV *Tritonica*, built at the English shipyard Laing James & Sons Ltd. was the first ore carrier to use the St. Lawrence Seaway.

MV *Tritonica*, approximately one month before it sank.
(René Beauchamp via shipspotting.com), Author provided

Sunk on July 20, 1963, off Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, in Charlevoix, following a collision in foggy weather with the SS *Roonagh Head*, the ship is the third-largest wreck on the St. Lawrence River in Québec waters.

In the silence of the night, locals in the village of Petite-Rivière-Saint-François heard the sounds of engines and sirens, and many, the metallic crash of the two ships colliding. The sinking cost the lives of 33 sailors, mostly Chinese. This was the greatest civilian maritime tragedy of the 20th century on the St. Lawrence since that of the *Empress of Ireland*.

In the days following the disaster, bodies were recovered from the sea, from the banks of the river and from Île aux Coudres, located a little downstream from the site of the sinking. The wreck posed a danger to navigation, so it was subsequently dynamited and moved to a trench dug on the bottom of the river to provide the necessary clearance for the passage of deep draft ships.

The *Tritonica* only received its first visitors in 2016, aside from the hard-hat divers involved at the time in the post-sinking work. Despite the very limited visibility, exploring the wreck allowed our team to note the absence of its central superstructure, a section removed because it was too high and close to the surface.

A duty to remember

Exploring the remains of ships involved in such disasters is particularly exhilarating.

But alongside these tons of rusty steel that fascinate divers so much, there are often human tragedies. We must never forget this.

The privilege of visiting the relics of our past and bringing their stories to the surface must always be carried out with great respect.

Source: The Conversation 221008 —oo00oo--

Containership Reportedly Sinks in Red Sea After Fire

Mike Schuler October 13, 2022

Multiple news sites are reporting that the Panamanian-flagged containership has sunk in the Red Sea nearly a week after a fire broke out in a cargo hold.

Photo: Saudi Press Agency

The fire on board the *TSS Pearl* was first reported by the Saudi Press Agency last Friday, October 7, as the ship was located approximately 123 nautical miles northwest of the Port of Jizan.

All 25 crew members abandoned ship and were picked up by other vessels in the area.

Japan's NYK Line reports that its pure car and truck carrier *Orion Leader* had rescued eight sailors just after midnight local time on the morning of October 6 after receiving a distress call concerning a container ship on fire. *Orion Leader* transferred the sailors to the bulk carrier *St. Dimitrios*, which was also participating in the rescue. NYK shared the image (left) of the vessel:

Casualty management consultancy WK Webster reported today it understands the ship sank approximately 186 miles (300 km) southeast of Port Sudan and several containers were floating near the site.

The Equasis database shows the *TSS Pearl* is owned by Rafidain Shipping and managed by Tehama Shipping Services, both of which are located in Dubai.

The incident adds to the ever-growing list of containership fires that the sector continues to try to combat. In many cases, misdeclared cargo is to blame.

Source: gCaptain 221014 —oo00oo--

Journalists Film Nord Stream Blast Damage

by Stine Jacobsen (Reuters) October 18, 2022

A section measuring at least 50 meters (164 feet) is missing from the ruptured Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea, Swedish daily Expressen reported on Tuesday after filming what it said were the first publicly released images of the damage.

Photo of Blueye Robotics recovering an underwater drone similar the one that was used to inspect the Nord Stream Pipeline.
Photo via Blueye Robotics

Swedish police and prosecutors suspect the leaks that emerged on Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 on Sept. 26 were caused by deliberate subsea blasts and are investigating the case as an act of gross sabotage.

Expressen's video, captured with a small remotely operated underwater vehicle, or subsea drone, showed bent metal and a wide-open pipeline in murky waters at the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

Parts of the pipeline appeared to have straight, sharp edges while others were deformed, showed the footage recorded at a depth of roughly 80 meters (262 feet).

The video was filmed on Monday, Expressen said. Reuters could not independently verify that the images published by the newspaper were of Nord Stream 1.

Sweden's security services said this month they had seized material on site after concluding their investigation.

It was not clear how the Swedish authorities' crime scene investigation could have altered the area, according to Expressen.

The Swedish navy and the security police declined to comment. The country's coast guard was not immediately available for comment.

Copenhagen police, investigating separate ruptures to the two pipelines, on Tuesday said the holes identified on the Danish side of the Baltic Sea maritime border appeared to have been caused by "powerful explosions."

Pipeline Inspections Continue

Danish power and gas grid operator Energinet has expedited inspections of its own pipelines in the wake of damage to Nord Stream 1 and 2 which run through the country's waters, but has so far found no irregularities, it said on Tuesday.

Source: gCaptain 221019 —oo00oo--

Seacor Power Capsizing: NTSB Finds Severe Winds, Weather Data Gaps and No Personal Locator Beacons

Mike Schuler October 18, 2022

NTSB investigation into the Seacor Power capsizing finds no fault in captain's decision to get underway but acknowledged gaps in weather data made available to the crew.

The National Transportation Safety Board has issued three safety recommendations to the U.S. Coast Guard and reiterated fourth on the use of personal locator beacons following the agency's investigation into last year's fatal capsizing of the *Seacor Power* liftboat in the Gulf of Mexico.

A Coast Guard Station *Grand Isle* 45-foot Response Boat-Medium boat crew heads toward a capsized 175-foot lift boat *Seacor Power*, April 13, 2021. U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of Coast Guard Cutter *Glenn Harris*

The NTSB is also making one recommendation each to the National Weather Service, Federal Aviation Administration and the US Air Force, two to the Offshore Marine Service Association, and three recommendations to the owner and operator of the vessel.

The NTSB said severe winds during a thunderstorm led to a loss of stability and ultimately the capsizing of the liftboat off the coast of Port Fourchon, Louisiana, back on April 13, 2021. Thirteen people were killed in the accident, including seven whose bodies have not been recovered. Six people were rescued by the Coast Guard and good Samaritan vessels.

The NTSB held a public board meeting on Tuesday to vote on findings, probable cause and recommendations.

At the time of the accident, the *Seacor Power* was *en route* to an oil and gas lease block in the Gulf of Mexico with 19 people on board, including eleven crew and eight offshore workers. After getting underway a little after noon, sometime after 3 p.m. the vessel was overtaken by a rain squall. The vessel's mate told the investigator that a second squall about 10 minutes later caused "white out" conditions.

As the crew was lowering the vessel's 265-foot-long legs to the seafloor to allow the vessel to ride out the storm, the mate turned

the *Seacor Power* into the wind to slow its speed. As the vessel turned, it heeled over and capsized at around 3:57 p.m.
A National Weather Service report at the time concluded the area of the capsizing was affected by an "unusually intense thunderstorm wind event." Vessel operators reported heavy rain, winds exceeding 80 knots and 2- to 4-foot seas at the time of the capsizing.
The NTSB determined the probable cause of the capsizing was a loss of stability that occurred when the vessel was struck by severe thunderstorm winds, which exceeded the vessel's operational wind speed limits. Contributing to the loss of life on the vessel were the speed at which the vessel capsized and the angle at which it came to rest, which made egress difficult. High winds and seas in the aftermath of the capsizing hampered rescue efforts.

Image from Seacor Marine's website showing the *Seacor Power*. Credit: Seacor Marine

In a report abstract released by the NTSB, the agency said it found that the captain's decision to get underway was reasonable and not influenced by commercial pressure. However, weather information provided on the morning of the capsizing to *Seacor Power's* crew by the vessel's owner and operator, SEACOR Marine, was "insufficient for making weather-related decisions about the liftboat's operation."
NTSB investigators further identified data gaps that prevented the National Weather Service from identifying and forecasting the surface wind magnitudes that the *Seacor Power* encountered. Specifically, localized wind conditions could not be detected by weather service radars due to their elevation angles.
As a result, the NTSB has issued the National Weather Service, Federal Aviation Administration, and the Air Force a recommendation to work together to assess coastal weather radar sites to determine if it is safe and appropriate to lower radar angles, which could improve the ability to accurately forecast weather conditions.
Also, due to an outage at the Coast Guard's New Orleans navigational telex site, the *Seacor Power* crew did not receive a National Weather Service Special Marine Warning notifying mariners of a severe thunderstorm in the area.
The NTSB also issued three safety recommendations to the U.S. Coast Guard. First, to develop procedures to inform mariners in affected areas whenever there is an outage at a navigational telex broadcasting site. Second, to modify restricted-service liftboat stability regulations to require greater stability for newly constructed restricted-service liftboats. Lastly, to develop procedures to integrate commercial, municipal, and non-profit air rescue providers into Sectors' and Districts' mass rescue operations plans.
The NTSB also reiterated a recommendation to the U.S. Coast Guard to require all personnel employed on vessels in coastal, Great Lakes and ocean service be provided with a personal locator beacon. The NTSB also recommended the Offshore Marine Service Association notify members of personal locator beacons availability and value.
"We've been waiting five years for the Coast Guard to implement our recommendation on personal locator beacons — a call to action we're renewing today for the fourth time," said NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy. "Mariners' safety can't wait, which is why I'm urging employers to invest in personal locator beacons for their crew. As the *Seacor Power* tragedy shows, the lifesaving promise of these devices cannot be overstated."
The first time the NTSB recommended the Coast Guard require personal locator beacons was following the 2015 sinking of the cargo vessel *El Faro* with the loss of all 33 crewmembers. NTSB reiterated the recommendation for the first time after the fishing vessel *Scandies Rose* sank off Sutwik Island, Alaska, in 2019, killing five people. And again following the 2020 sinking of the Emmy Rose fishing vessel off the coast of Massachusetts, which killed all four crewmembers.
"None of the people aboard the *El Faro*, the *Scandies Rose*, the *Emmy Rose*, or the *Seacor Power* had personal locator beacons. If they did, perhaps more of them would be with us today," Homendy said. "Instead, 55 people died or were unrecovered in these tragedies — 55 people gone forever."
The three recommendations to SEACOR Marine focus on providing timely and accurate weather forecasts, ensuring its fleet is operated within its operating limits, and requiring liftboats to remain in port or jacked up when a Special Marine Warning is issued.
The NTSB's final report on the incident is not expected for several more weeks.
The executive summary, probable cause, findings, and safety recommendations are in the report abstract available on the investigation web page.
Source: gCaptain 221019

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Here's why the US Navy could not prove a teenager destroyed its mighty warship

GCaptain October 9, 2022
by Megan Rose (ProPublica)
A military judge found Seaman Recruit Ryan Mays not guilty on Friday of setting fire to a $1.2 billion Navy ship.
Mays, 21, had stood trial on charges of aggravated arson and wilfully hazarding a vessel for the four-day blaze that destroyed the *USS Bonhomme Richard*, an amphibious assault ship, in 2020.
The acquittal marks the end of a two-year ordeal for Mays, who spent 55 days in the brig after he was arrested.
"I can't get everything I've lost back, but today is the start of my new life," Mays told ProPublica in a statement. "I am grateful that the military judge saw me for who I am: an innocent man who wanted to serve his country. This fire was traumatic for me and a lot of other sailors. This court-martial is an added layer of trauma."
On July 12, 2020, the *Bonhomme Richard* was moored at a San Diego Navy base and undergoing a major overhaul. That

morning, an area of the ship known as the "lower V" caught fire, and the blaze quickly spread throughout the vessel. The warship was lost and had to be decommissioned.

Seaman Ryan Mays, centre, and his lead defence attorney, Lt. Cmdr. Jordi Torres, in August. Mays stood trial on charges of aggravated arson and wilfully hazarding a vessel for the 2020 fire that destroyed the USS Bonhomme Richard.
Credit: Devin Yalkin, special to ProPublica

A ProPublica investigation into Mays' case found there was little to connect him to the fire. There was no physical evidence that Mays — or anyone — purposefully set the fire. The Navy had one witness who placed Mays at the scene shortly before the fire but whose story changed over time.

The criminal investigation into Mays also stood at odds with another Navy inquiry into the fire, which found that 34 people, including five admirals, either directly led to the loss of the ship or contributed to it. That investigation uncovered a litany of failures that put the ship at risk for a catastrophic fire, including poor training, insufficient oversight and dangerous storage of hazardous materials. Additionally, 87% of the ship's fire stations were out of order.

The Navy continued to pursue Mays even after a military judge recommended this year that the case be dropped for lack of evidence after a probable cause hearing.

In closing remarks, Mays' lead defence attorney, Lt. Cmdr. Jordi Torres, said the investigation was a "live-fire exercise in the dangers of confirmation bias." He said investigators and then the prosecution discounted any evidence that didn't fit the narrative of Mays as the arsonist.

The lead prosecutor in the case, Capt. Jason Jones, told the judge, "You're allowed to use inferences and circumstantial evidence" in making a determination of arson. Jones said criminal cases are like puzzles, and even when there is a missing piece, the picture is still clear.

Jones also addressed some of the findings of the other Navy investigation in his closing remarks, saying the prosecution didn't dispute that the ship was lost to firefighting failures. But, he said, the fire started as a "sucker punch from behind" that the Navy couldn't have prevented.

In the nine-day court-martial, the Navy had alleged that Mays was a disgruntled sailor who had gone down to the lower V with a bucket of flammable liquid, set the fire and then snuck out a hatch, changed his clothes and slipped back among the sailors on duty.

Mays was 19 at the time of the fire, assigned to menial jobs such as mopping and painting. He had previously dropped out of SEAL training and had told fellow sailors that the special warfare program was where he thought he belonged. Being on a ship he disliked, the prosecution said, was his motive.

Investigators found a blue Bic lighter in Mays' possessions and have pointed to it as the possible way the fire was started. Torres was dismissive, saying "apparently just having a lighter makes you an arsonist."

The trial largely centred on two competing witnesses and arguments over whether a crime had even been committed.

Fire investigators with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ruled the blaze an arson that was started by someone putting an open flame on large cardboard boxes. But defence experts disputed that conclusion, saying that there were two other possible causes ATF investigators missed and that "undetermined" was the only reasonable conclusion. The defence experts testified that lithium batteries and arcing from an engine wire on a forklift could not be ruled out as causes of the fire.

Phil Fouts, the fire investigator who testified on behalf of the defence, said he could not with any scientific certainty say whether the batteries, the forklift or arson was more likely the cause of the fire.

An ATF electrical engineer testified that he did not take any pictures or notes about the batteries during his examination of the scene, even though the batteries were found in the area that the agency identified as the origin of the fire. The batteries were then stored in a Home Depot bucket by ATF investigators. The engineer also did not photograph the forklift. The engineer testified that upon further inspection and testing of both the batteries and the wire, he did not think either caused the fire.

Trying to rebut the defence experts' findings, the ATF engineer showed the judge a presentation using a forklift photo to highlight why he thought it couldn't have caused the fire — but the photo was of the wrong forklift. There were two in the lower V, and the defence expert had found evidence of arcing in the other forklift.

Jones said that arson cases are often based on circumstantial evidence and the government had done its due diligence in re-examining the possible causes brought up by the defence.

The prosecution's key witness, Petty Officer 2nd Class Kenji Velasco, testified that while he was standing watch the morning of the fire, he saw Mays go into the lower V shortly before he spotted smoke. Velasco at first told Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents he couldn't identify the person he saw, but over several interviews he changed his story to say he was sure it was Mays. Velasco said the person he saw was wearing coveralls, but several witnesses testified they saw Mays in a different uniform that morning.

In an unusual twist, the prosecution did not call the lead NCIS agent to the stand. However, defence lawyers did call agent Maya Kamat to testify. The defence mainly questioned Kamat about an alternative suspect she investigated for several months. Another witness told NCIS she had spotted the sailor, Seaman Recruit Elijah McGovern, sprinting from the lower V around the time she saw smoke that morning.

Miya Polion, who is now out of the Navy, testified she saw McGovern jump over a cone that had been blocking off the lower V. "It's kinda weird to be running on the ship," she said, so she kept looking at him the entire time he was in view.
The prosecution claimed that video evidence showed Polion could not have seen McGovern that day because there was too much contractor equipment, such as scaffolding and dumpsters, in the way.
When interviewed by NCIS agents, McGovern denied setting the fire. McGovern had been searching online for fire characteristics the morning of the blaze and had a drawing on his phone depicting steps to set a coffee shop on fire. McGovern had told agents that the searches were research for a book he was writing about dragons, and that the novel began with a ship on fire.
Kamat testified she stopped investigating McGovern because he left the Navy and NCIS no longer had jurisdiction. Several months later, the Navy charged Mays with the crimes.
In response to prodding by the prosecutor during cross-examination, Kamat agreed that she also stopped investigating McGovern because she had exhausted all leads.
In closing arguments, Jones dismissed McGovern as a sci-fi loving sailor who had been seen leaving the ship and had been properly cleared as suspect.
The Navy and Capt. Derek Butler, the military judge, have refused to release nearly all records in Mays' case, citing Article 140a of the Uniform Code of Military Justice as well as a memo issued by the former Defense Department general counsel and Navy interpretations of that guidance. ProPublica has filed a complaint and motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to prevent the Navy from continuing to withhold court records in Mays' case, contending that the Navy and the judge are violating the First Amendment and common law rights of access to court proceedings and records.
During the court-martial, exhibits also weren't always visible, including photographs of key evidence, and stipulations of fact, sometimes to correct testimony, weren't publicly available.
"There was never any evidence to support a conviction, and that's about the only thing that makes sense about this court-martial, because Seaman Mays is innocent," Torres told ProPublica on behalf of the defence team. "Thankfully, the military judge based his verdict on the evidence and not on mere argument and supposition. The Navy won today because an innocent sailor avoided a wrongful conviction."
Source: gCaptain 221010 —oo00oo--

Canberra presses ahead with national fleet plans

Sam Chambers October 20, 2022

The new Australian government today laid out plans towards the creation of a national fleet, something vehemently opposed by the local ship-owning association.

A new taskforce has been appointed to speed up the creation of an Australian-flagged and crewed fleet.

Infrastructure, transport, regional development and local government minister Catherine King said: "Establishing a strategic fleet made up of Australian flagged and crewed vessels was a key commitment of our government during the election, and we are moving quickly to deliver on it."

King said it was vital Australia had a "robust" supply chain, in comments that quickly attracted criticism from Shipping Australia, the country's shipowners' association.

"Many of the policy goals put forward for the development of a national fleet can be achieved at a lower cost by other methods or simply do not stack up," argued Melwyn Noronha, the CEO of Shipping Australia. Workforce skilling can be addressed through education, training, cadetships on globally trading vessels, and immigration, Noronha suggested.

Source: Splash247 221020 —oo00oo--

China rolls out its first VLCC with four rigid wing sails

Adis Ajdin September 29, 2022

China Merchants Energy Shipping and China Shipbuilding Trading Company have taken delivery of the first ever very large crude carrier (VLCC) built in China featuring four 40 m rigid wing sails.

CCS

The 307,000 dwt vessel built by Dalian Shipbuilding Industry Co (DSIC) has been named *New Aden*, and according to the China Classification Society (CCS) it is one of the most advanced VLCCs ever built in China.

The ship sports two pairs of carbon fibre composite rigid wing sails that use airflow to change the flow field on the surface of a specific device, thereby generating propulsion using aerodynamic principles. The sails have a combined surface of around 1200 sq m and are expected to reduce average fuel consumption by nearly 10% on the Middle East to the Far East route, cutting an estimated 2,900 tonnes of CO_2 emissions a year.

The vessel is also said to come with the latest SOx and NOx technologies to reduce emissions, meeting the EEDI and EEXI

requirements.

"The *New Aden* is an outstanding vessel which embraces the very latest design techniques as we work towards meeting the IMO GHG targets," said CCS vice president Fan Qiang, adding: "China Merchants, Dalian Shipbuilding's R&D team and Guangwei Composite Materials have undertaken great work in developing the ship and this new generation of rigid wing sail."

The new vessel builds on China Merchants' test run with DSIC in 2018 when two rigid sails were fitted on a VLCC New Vitality.

Source: Splash247 220929 —oo00oo--

Losing Taiwan Would Jeopardize Key Shipping Lanes Says Japan

Reuters

By Tim Kelly (Reuters) October 19, 2022

Japan is rapidly building out its Navy to defend against China. Officials say losing an independent Taiwan would be a disaster because it would jeopardize key shipping lanes that supply nearly all of Japan's critical industries.

Between China's 20th Communist Party Congress, which began Sunday, and the next one in 2027, Japan will undertake its biggest arms build-up since World War Two in a race to deter Beijing from war in East Asia, according to Japanese government officials and security analysts.

Former US Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert salutes as he passes the American and Japanese flags during a full honours ceremony at the Japanese Ministry of Defence in 2014. (U.S. Navy photo by Peter D. Lawlor)

Japan identified China as its chief adversary in its 2019 defence white paper, worried that Beijing's flouting of international norms, pressure on Taiwan and rapid military modernization posed a serious security threat. That anxiety has intensified since Russia invaded Ukraine, weakening Japanese public opposition to rearming, security experts say.

Japan's government "has the wind at its back and will use that to do whatever it can," said Takashi Kawakami, a professor at Takushoku University in Tokyo. By pointing to 2027 as the moment when East Asia's power balance may tip in China's favour, Japan's government can rally support for greater defence spending, he added.

In addition to being the next time Communist Party delegates gather in Beijing, 2027 is the next major milestone on China's military modernization roadmap and the centennial of the founding of the People's Liberation Army. At a congressional hearing last year, U.S. Indo-Pacific commander Admiral Philip Davidson said that China's threat against Taiwan could "manifest" that year.

For Japan, losing Taiwan to mainland Chinese control could be a disaster because it would jeopardize key shipping lanes that supply nearly all Japan's oil and many of the materials it uses for manufacturing. It would also give the Chinese navy unfettered access to the Western Pacific from bases on the island.

"There are different shades of opinion, but generally, government officials share the same view of the significance of 2027," said a senior Japanese government official involved in defence build-up plans.

"This has been discussed internally," he added, asking not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue.

China's foreign ministry said Japan was using China as a pretext for a military build-up.

"Political forces in Japan have repeatedly used China as an excuse to deliberately exaggerate regional tensions. In doing so, the Japanese side is only looking for excuses to strengthen its own military and expand its military," the ministry said in a written response to Reuters.

At the congress in Beijing, Chinese leader Xi Jinping called for accelerating China's plans to build a world-class military and said his country would never renounce the right to use force to resolve the Taiwan issue.

Japanese defence ministry officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

TAIWAN SCENARIO

Japan's delicate diplomatic and economic relations with its bigger neighbour mean it is unlikely to commit to directly defending Taiwan. But with Japan's nearest territory only about 150 kilometres (93 miles) from the island, it could be drawn into conflict with an adversary that spends more than four times as much on its military.

China could try to capture Japanese islands close to Taiwan to establish air defences and fend off any counterattack, said another Japanese government official involved in planning, who also asked not to be named because he is not authorized to talk to the media.

China lobbed missiles into waters less than 100 miles (160km) from those islands in August during exercises after a visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, which Beijing slammed as American interference.

Japanese military bases, airports, seaports, and other logistical hubs could also be tempting targets for Chinese missile strikes because they would be staging grounds for U.S. forces.

In crafting its defence plans, Japan needs to consider a scenario in which Washington does not respond to a Chinese attack on Taiwan, said Yasuhiro Matsuda, an international politics professor at Tokyo University and former Ministry of Defence senior researcher.

"If Japan can strengthen its defence capability … then China's calculation to attack U.S. forces on Japan will be quite different, the cost and risk of a Taiwan operation will be quite high," Matsuda said this month during an online discussion hosted by the Rand Corporation think tank.

ARMS RACE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which it calls a "special operation," has helped shift public opinion in Japan away from the post-war pacifism that has dominated defence policy for decades.

In an opinion poll published by public broadcaster NHK this month, 55% of 1,247 people surveyed said they supported increased defence spending, compared with 29% who opposed it. Of those backing a stronger military, 61% said Japan should pay for it with public spending cuts.

In July, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida won national upper house elections with a pledge to "substantially" increase defence spending. His ruling Liberal Democratic Party promised to double the military budget to about 10 trillion yen ($68 billion) within five years.

That extra money will pay for longer-range missiles – improved Mitsubishi Heavy Industries 7011.T Type 12s, Kongsberg KOG.OL Joint Strike Missiles and Lockheed Martin LMT.N Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles – that can strike distant warships and land targets in China or North Korea.

Big projects include a new jet fighter for deployment in the 2030s that will most likely be merged with Britain's proposed Tempest stealth plane into a program led by MHI and BAE Systems. The splurge of defence spending should also benefit U.S. suppliers such as Lockheed, Boeing and Northrop Grumman.

More immediately, it will help Japan increase stockpiles of spare parts and ammunition that its untested military would need to sustain any fight.

"We will need to give priority to things that we can deploy within five years," the first government official said.

Kishida will unveil details of military spending plans in December along with a revamped security strategy. That strategy is expected to give Japan a bigger regional security role alongside the United States, which has thousands of troops, hundreds of aircraft, and dozens of warships deployed in Japan.

Japan's focus on China is unlikely to waver, analysts say, even as its former top adversary, North Korea, is in the midst of a fresh cycle of missile tests, the latest on Friday, including the first flight over Japan since 2017. After the Chinese Communist Party congress, the Kim Jong Un regime is widely expected to follow up with a nuclear test.

Japan wants to let South Korea take the lead in tackling its belligerent northern neighbour, a senior Japanese Self-Defense Force commander said, speaking anonymously because of the sensitivity of the matter.

"I don't see North Korea's actions leading to any significant change" to Japan's China focus," said Bonji Ohara, a senior fellow at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and a former military attaché at Japan's embassy in China. North Korea's latest actions may even help solidify public support for it, he added.

Source: gCaptain 221020 —oo00oo--

Thirty years on

By Michael Grey

It was thirty years ago that a particularly thoughtful Lloyd's underwriter Jonathan Jones became concerned at the number of shipping casualties which were being attributed to human error. It was also a period where the number of cadets entering the UK shipping industry was at a low level, which boded ill for future sea skills and the obvious consequences for marine safety. Additionally, he considered the wider implications of the shortage, thinking of the number of careers in the maritime infrastructure ashore which drew on the experience of former seafarers. From where, some years down the line, would this vital experience be found?

From this evident need, identified by Jonathan Jones, the Lloyd's Officer Cadet Scholarship scheme emerged. It was designed to train the officers of tomorrow, funded by the Lloyd's market, which of course would itself have been exposed to all these marine casualties. The scheme, as designed thus became something of a virtual circle. It was to eventually become associated with Maritime London, and it was as the Maritime London Officer Cadet Scholarship scheme it celebrated its 30th birthday in London recently. More than 100 officer cadets have been enabled to qualify as certificated officers under the scheme, and some have, as anticipated, moved into shore side careers in a wide range of maritime fields, some now at senior levels.

Speaking at the event, which was attended by a number of former cadets and sponsors of the scheme, the MLOCS Chairman Tony Vlasto spoke of the ongoing need for competent officers as the importance of shipping remains crucial. There was a current seafarer shortage of some 26,000, putting safe ship operation at risk and good quality training was as important as ever. It was also a fact that training costs money, which many people entering the profession just don't have, so sponsorship helps to "plug the gap" and enable them to have the life-changing experience offered by a sea career. He also noted that the sponsors of the scheme support their own industry, help to create safer seas and in doing so enhance their ESG credentials.

The Chairman also thanked sponsors Chris Adams, Carisbrooke Shipping, Chiltern Maritime/Viking Group, the Maria Tsakos Charitable Foundation, Reed Smith, The North P&I and the Company of Watermen and Lightermen and their clerk Julie Lithgow.

A number of former cadets at the event spoke warmly of their experiences. Fiona Scrimgeour, currently BP Shipping's Operations Lead, Marine Production & Operations – North Sea Region suggested that her cadetship, which also facilitated her First-Class Honours degree in Merchant Ship Operations and Officer of the Watch certificate was a huge draw. The things she learned in her initial sea experience; the people skills and life experiences were, she said, the best introduction to working life she could have had.

Rob Crees who is currently senior vice-president/Counsel of the World Fuel Services Corporation spoke of the many advantages his sea experience gives him; mariners, he said "think outside the box", think on their feet and solve problems. He was grateful for the broad experience on multiple vessel types provided during his cadetship. One of the very first cadets – he was actually the third to be sponsored, Rob Crees qualified with combined deck and engineer certificated and sailed as a deck officer in the offshore oil and gas sector, before reading law at university. He has since been a lawyer in private practice and counsel in two International Group P&I Clubs, spending the past decade in an investment bank and shipping and energy trading roles, he emphasises the huge value of seagoing experience and the credibility it provides.

As a slightly more mature entrant, Fiona Rush was grateful for the flexibility of the MLOCS in granting her a scholarship. Now working as an operations manager with Frontline oil tankers, her career, which began with service on nine different types of vessels, saw her win a safety award, and, while serving with Shell, working in South Korea on a new build, which was to become the world's largest LNG carrier.

Currently serving at sea as Second Officer on a P&O Cruise ship in the Carnival Fleet, Joe Douglas qualified in 2018, following three years sponsored by Maritime London member JLT, in which he served in the Irish Lights tender Granuaile, Windstar's Wind Surf and several Carnival ships. After he qualified and time spent with Stena and Windstar, he has opted for cruise ships and currently serves aboard P&O's Britannia. With his Chief Mate certificate behind him, he looks forward to gaining his Masters in due course.

There is no denying that becoming established in a maritime industry career, where training places are limited and costs can be high can be something of a challenge. But the MLOCS, along with Chiltern Marine, has provided a pathway to the achievement of such ambitions. Last word to Fiona Scrimgeour; "there isn't a day that goes by where I don't reference some part of my cadetship, be that trading salty yarns, problem solving with colleagues, speaking with my own children or engaging with today's cadets on board ships that I am chartering".

Michael Grey is former editor of Lloyd's List.

Source: Maritime Advocate 815

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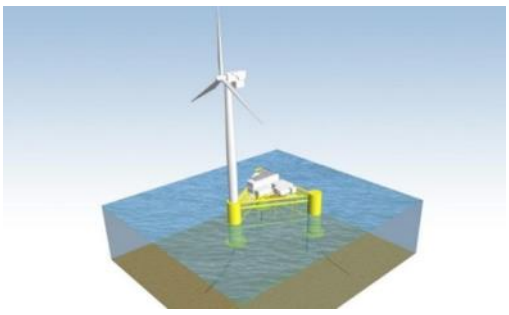
Scottish floating wind-to-hydrogen project presses ahead

Adis Ajdin October 12, 2022

Floating offshore wind technology provider Principal Power has signed a contract with ERM to advance the front-end engineering design (FEED) for a wind-to-hydrogen Dolphyn 10 MW demonstrator project off the coast of Aberdeen.



ERM Dolphyn (deepwater offshore local production of hydrogen) has developed a concept design to produce large-scale green hydrogen from floating offshore wind. The concept employs a modular design integrating electrolysis and a wind turbine on a moored floating semi-sub platform based upon WindFloat technology by Principle Power to produce hydrogen from seawater, using wind power as the energy source.

The two companies have been collaborating on the development of decentralised hydrogen production opportunities since 2019 and the new contract follows ERM Dolphyn's award of £8.62m from the UK Government, via the Low Carbon Hydrogen Supply 2 Competition.

The demonstrator project is targeting operations in late 2025, with commercial-scale projects of over 300 MW already under development and expected for operation before the end of the decade.

ERM said that when fully deployed, at an expected 4 GW total capacity, ERM Dolphyn could potentially supply energy to heat more than 1.5m homes with no carbon emissions.

The world's first floating offshore wind-powered hydrogen production unit was recently launched in the port of Saint-Nazaire, France.

The unit, called Sealhyfe, will, following a phase of dockside tests, connect to BW Ideol's landmark floating offshore wind turbine operating off France's west coast. The pilot project, led by the French renewable hydrogen producer and supplier Lhyfe, has the capacity to produce up to 400 kg of renewable green hydrogen a day, equivalent to 1 MW of power.

Source: Splash247 221012

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OCEAN project

The Nautical Institute has announced its participation in the OCEAN project which has just been launched.

The OCEAN project is focused on enhancing operator awareness in navigation, to reduce the frequency of severe accidents like collision and grounding, to mitigate ship-strike risks to marine mammals, and to mitigate the risk presented by floating obstacles to ships.

The project will contribute to an improved understanding of accident root causes, and will strive to reduce the resulting human, environmental and economic losses through socio-technical innovations supporting ship navigators.

The OCEAN consortium, coordinated by Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, includes 13 partner organisations across seven different European countries from the industry, academia, NGOs and end users. The project was awarded funding by Horizon Europe and launched recently, and it is due to run until 2025.

Around 3,000 maritime incidents occur every year in the European maritime fleet. Some 28% of these accidents are categorised as severe or very severe accidents, resulting in the loss of life onboard, pollution, fire, collisions or grounding. Navigational accidents are dominant in these statistics according to the European Maritime Safety Agency, be it for cargo, passenger or service ships.

The OCEAN project ambition is to contribute to the mitigation of navigational accidents by supporting the navigators to do an even better job than they do presently. The OCEAN consortium will address the most pertinent factors that may contribute to events becoming accidents: training, technical, human or organisational factors, operational constraints, processes and procedures, commercial pressures, and will recommend improvements and amendments to regulations, standards and bridge equipment design approaches.

OCEAN seeks to enhance navigational awareness “on the spot” and to improve the performance of evasive manoeuvring to avoid collision with near-field threats. The project will deliver and demonstrate several human centred innovations. For example, the 4D Situation Awareness Display which will be developed in the OCEAN project will improve the visualisation of navigational hazards, integrating current bridge information systems with marine mammal and lost floating containers detection, and tracking capacity specifically developed by the project.

Going further, the project will design and implement a European navigational hazard data infrastructure to feed multi-source observations and hazard predictions relating to floating containers and large aggregations of marine mammals into the existing distributed maritime warning infrastructure. OCEAN seeks to transfer this data ecosystem to relevant European organisations for deployment and maintenance.

David Patraiko, Director of Projects at The Nautical Institute, said: “Focusing on the Human Element and how good decisions are made to prevent accidents is at the heart of The Nautical Institute’s work so we are thrilled to be partnering with this project and look forward to playing a significant role in improving safety for ships, the effectiveness of seafarers and the marine environment in which they operate.”

Source: Maritime Advocate 815

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If a dog were your teacher, you would learn stuff like:

*When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
*Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride.
*Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
*When it's in your best interest, practise obedience
*Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
*Take naps and stretch before rising.
*Run, romp, and play daily.
*Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
*On warm days, stop to lie on your back on the grass.
*On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
*When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
*No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout... run right back and make friends.
*Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
*Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Stop when you have had enough.
*Be loyal.
*Never pretend to be something you're not.
*If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
*And MOST of all... When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle him gently.

(With thanks to Paul Dixion)

Source: Maritime Advocate 815

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