

MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

Newsletter of the Merchant Navy Association and the
Merchant Navy RSL Sub-Branch NSW

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TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA

THE DARWIN RAID

Story from HUDDART PARKER LIMITED 1939 - 1945



The 19th February, 1942, is chronicled in history as the date of the first enemy attack on Australian shores.

It was a bright, clear morning with the many ships in the harbour reflected in the still waters of a flat calm. The harbour was crowded with shipping. At Darwin Wharf, M.V. 'Neptuna' was occupying the outer berth, and S.S. 'Barossa' the inner berth; H.M.A.S. 'Swan' was berthed alongside 'Barossa,' taking oil from the wharf pipe line. Work was proceeding under normal conditions on the wharf and on all the anchored ships when at 0953 the first wave of bombers approached. These were 27 high level bombers flying at 15,000 feet in 'V' formation. They came in from the back of the town, flying over Darwin from the south east. Suddenly, above the roar of their engines the town air raid siren screamed a belated warning, and approximately thirty seconds later the first stick of bombs fell on and around the main Darwin

The Darwin Raid

wharf. The calm of the morning changed to the full horror of total war. 'Neptuna' and 'Barossa' each received a direct hit, and three bombs struck the wharf. A loco engine and five trucks were blown over the side, taking with them a number of wharf labourers.

Amidst the shattered wreckage of the wharf fuel oil gushed from the broken pipe line. This oil was soon ablaze and with 'Neptuna' and 'Barossa' both burning fiercely. H.M.A.S. Swan managed to cast off and steam out into the harbour. Every gun that could be brought to bear, ashore and afloat, roared into action as the Australians hit back.

The high level bombers circled round and bombed the Post Office area of Darwin and the Kahlin Hospital area at the other end of town. Then came the attack by waves of dive bombers and fighters. These attacked the shipping in the harbour.

The air seemed full of Japanese planes, and across the sky darkened by the smoke from the burning ships and oil there flashed the angry glare of flak and the lurid blaze of the fires.

The atmosphere vibrated with the roar of engines, the staccato clatter of machine-guns, the sustained roar of heavier A.A. fire, punctuated by the thunderous rumble of bursting bombs.

The U.S. destroyer 'Peary' made for the open sea. As she gathered speed a dive bomber hurtled through the billowing smoke and scored a direct hit. Almost immediately the ship was afire and down by the stern. She lost speed, but fought back gamely, every gun blazing furiously at her attackers. A bomb landed just abaft her funnel and then came the end. The next hit apparently penetrated to her magazine, and a shattering burst of flame towered above her for more than a hundred feet. When the smoke cleared only her bow remained above the water. That gradually slipped below the surface, the fo'c'sle gun firing to the last. Not far from where 'Peary' sank the hospital ship 'Manunda' was anchored, there could be no mistaking her identity, her white hull and funnel displaying the large red crosses.

A dive bomber deliberately swept down at her with machine gun blazing. There was a terrific roar and 'Manunda' rolled over as a near miss ripped 76 holes in her plates and shattered her gear and upper-works. Another plane swung out of the sky. Again, came the shattering explosion and the scream of riven steel. The bomb missed the bridge and passed through the music room skylight, exploding between B and C decks. These bombs killed nine of the crew, three military personnel, including one nurse and injured fifty eight. Seven fires were started, but these were got under control and 'Manunda' became a floating casualty station. Boats from other ships began to arrive with wounded, and from midday her operating theatres were busy for hours. Other ships hit, damaged by machine-gun fire or near misses, included 'British Motorist, a tanker; 'Mauna Loa,' 'Meigs,' Port Mar,' 'Tulagi,' 'Admiral Halstead', 'William B Preston.' H.M.A. Ships 'Platypus,' 'Swan,' 'Gunbar,' 'Kara Kara' and 'Kookaburra.'

'Neptuna' and 'Barossa' were still burning fiercely at the wharf when they were again attacked, this time by dive bombers. Bursts of yellow flame amidst the black smoke clouds indicated further hits. Shortly after there came a deep rumble from 'Neptuna.' This was followed by the biggest explosion of the raid. The whole ship disintegrated with volcanic force. Pieces of the ship and debris flew hundreds of feet into the air in a colossal burst of flame, and for some time after dust debris and ashes drifted down over the scene. On that fateful morning Diver J. Johnstone, who was later to distinguish himself in his salvage work on 'Wanganella' was in H.M.A.S. 'Yampi Class' assisting in the recovery of a sunken barge. He was just about to go below and was up to his knees in water on the ladder when the first bombs dropped. Hauled back into the launch his helmet was removed. When he realised what was happening, he established a world record for getting out of a diving suit.

The Darwin Raid



T.S.S. ZEALANDIA - AWM P05303016

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05303.016

‘ZEALANDIA’ Attacked

‘Zealandia’ was the last vessel to be attacked. She had just finished boat drill when the raid started; the late Captain R Kerr, seeing the desperate plight of the men struggling in the water, called for volunteers. Mr Ferris, Chief Officer, and Mr Stewart, 3rd Officer, led several of the crew to the boats and saved a number of men, being machine-gunned by dive bombers whilst effecting the rescues. Suddenly a bomb fell right down No. 3 hatch, exploding in the hold. The explosion blew down the Engine-room bulkhead, filling the engine-room with smoke and fumes. A near-miss holed the starboard quarter and set fire to the accommodation. Then came the dive bombers. With guns blazing they raked the ship from masthead height with incendiary bullets and cannon shells. Some of the boats were riddled, but the concrete protection on the bridge proved effective. The engineers gamely stuck to their task in the smoke filled engine-room to supply water for the hoses on deck, but with the ship ablaze from stem to stern the position soon became hopeless.

Ammunition in No. 1 hold and on the poops exploded and Captain Kerr ordered the engineers on deck. The first bomb carried away the auxiliary steam line and it soon became impossible to fight the now uncontrollable fires.

Captain Kerr gave the order to abandon ship, and the crew of 139 officers and men crowded into the boats. As they pulled away from the ‘Zealandia’ the ship was setting by the stern. Through holes in her plates made by cannon shells the water flooded the after end and at 1300 hrs she settled on her side and sank. Two men, J. Mason (A.B.) and P. O’Connell (Fireman), subsequently died on the hospital ship ‘Manunda,’ en route from Darwin to Fremantle. In view of the heavy machine-gunning and bombing it was remarkable that the casualties were not more numerous.

It is sad to relate that Mr R. J. Forster, the 2nd Officer, after surviving the raid was killed about twenty miles north of Barrow Creek by being thrown from a military truck when it overturned during the transport of the crew overland to Sydney.

When the crew disembarked from the boats, all that could be seen of the ship was masts and funnel protruding at an acute angle from the surface of the harbour.

Capt. MIKE WILEMAN - DARWIN

I enjoyed reading about the ACV Triton in the "Spring MN News". I performed a couple of "Compass Adjustments" to the said vessel in Darwin over the last few years deployment out of Darwin. And during a visit to the UK in 2018, I was visiting Great Yarmouth on the Norfolk East Coast, and noticed she was berthed alongside in the River Yare so took the attached photo (for your reference). Name on bow "Triton", I also had photos on the "Marinetreffic" website.



MERRILL BARKER

M.V. WANGANELLA REVISITED – MERCHANT NAVY NEWS.

I read with great interest the article about Wanganella in the Summer edition of Merchant Navy News. The connection I have with the ship goes back to the "one off voyage" she made from Sydney to Vancouver in September 1946. This followed her transformation from hospital ship to commercial operations following the war. I travelled with my mother Dorothy and sister Elizabeth as passengers. My father was at sea as Second Engineer of RMMS Aorangi, following his war service on various ships of the Union Steamship Company of N.Z.

My mother had previously lived with her father George and mother Mary in Vancouver. She met my father through mutual friends and following a seven year "long distance" courtship, decided to settle in Australia and were married in Sydney in 1938. Her dearest wish was to visit her parents as soon as possible after WW11 so she could introduce her children to them, particularly her father who was suffering ill health. He tragically died before we travelled.

M.V. WANGANELLA REVISITED

We boarded the Wanganella in Sydney, for the six-week voyage, via Auckland, Suva and Honolulu. I was five years old and my sister was two and a half. I have some memories of the voyage, but not much detail. I can recall seeing the Fijian band on the pier in Suva, resplendent in their scarlet jackets and white “saw tooth” sulus (skirts) as we berthed. On another occasion, we had wandered away from our mother. She searched frantically, finally locating us looking over the straight stem at the bow wave! I seem to remember some very angry words following, although I know she was very relieved, thinking we might have gone overboard! I also recall the “Crossing the Equator” ceremony with Captain Neptune, complete with crown, seaweed gown and trident. Some passengers and crew were subjected to having vile concoctions slopped over them with big paint brushes and buckets before being unceremoniously dumped into a large canvas pool rigged on the after-deck.

After arriving in Vancouver we lived with my grandmother in her two storey house on West 16th Avenue, where we stayed for over a year and a half. We enjoyed playing with Grandma’s dog “Zippy” in the large back garden and made friends with children in the street. It was great fun seeing and playing in snow for the very first time. We had occasional visits from our father when Aorangi docked in Vancouver.

We were supposed to return to Sydney around March 1948, but our mother became quite ill with whooping cough, which fortunately she did not pass on to us.

Leaving Vancouver was a very sad occasion for mum because she was leaving Grandma on her own and her brother and family in Powell River. In May 1948, we travelled by train to San Francisco to join the Marine Phoenix, a converted U. S. Navy transport ship operated by the Matson Line. She happened to be on her final voyage to Sydney. Accommodation on board was mainly dormitory, where I was berthed with other boys and men. There were some large cabins, where mum and Elizabeth shared with other women and younger children. Likewise, dining facilities comprised of long bare trestle tables and the food was pretty basic. The ship arrived back in Sydney on 27 July 1948.

That trip to Vancouver remains a wonderful memory and became an interesting item of conversation with my school friends due to my then slight Canadian accent.

Merrill Barker.



Playing in the snow



Our Christmas tree
and dog ‘Zippy’

Australia's icebreaker arrives in Hobart after final Antarctic voyage 25 March 2020



Aerial view of the Aurora Australis (Photo: Doug Thost)

Australia's icebreaker RSV Aurora Australis has arrived into its homeport of Hobart for the final time with the Australian Antarctic Program.

After more than three decades of service, the Aurora Australis sailed up the River Derwent this morning, returning from its last resupply expedition to sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island. A series of farewell events planned to farewell the ship have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Director of the Australian Antarctic Division, Kim Ellis, said the ship has had a colourful and exciting 31 years plying the Southern Ocean.

"The 'Orange Roughy' has carried more than 14,000 expeditioners on over 150 scientific research and resupply voyages to our Antarctic and sub-Antarctic stations," Mr Ellis said.

"All expeditioners who've sailed on the Aurora Australis have a soft spot for the icebreaker, whether it's because the ship has enabled their science or transported them south for an Antarctic adventure."

The ship was built in Newcastle and launched in September 1989. It's first voyage with the Australian Antarctic Program was to Heard Island in 1990.

"The Aurora has been involved in rescuing stricken ships and injured expeditioners, as well as facing a few challenges, with engine room fires in the 90's and running aground at Mawson station in 2016," Mr Ellis said.

"She's much more than a ship, she's been a lifeline, she's been a home, she's been a symbol that really captures that whole Antarctic spirit."

The delayed arrival of Australia's new icebreaker RSV Nuyina means an alternative ship will be used next summer season.

The Australian Antarctic Division is finalising negotiations with another company to supply a vessel for a minimum of 90 days.

Source: <http://www.antarctica.gov.au/news/2020/australias-icebreaker-arrives-in-hobart-after-final-antarctic-voyage>

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

Report to Merchant Navy RSL sub Branch members.

Our delayed AGM (Annual General Meeting) was held at the Chatswood RSL Club on Wednesday 18th March. There has been an element of confusion arising from a segment of the new NSW Constitution concerning the role of 'associate' members. As an instance, I have been a 'service' member of the local RSL sub Branch where I live (Forestville) for over 50 years. When I was elected to the position of president of the Merchant Navy sub Branch many years ago as an associate member I was required to make a decision at which sub Branch I wish to record a vote. While still remaining an associate member, and a service member of the Forestville sub Branch, I chose, in writing, to vote at the Merchant Navy sub Branch.

Our new constitution, which came into operation on 1st December 2019 provided that only service members could accept nomination for certain positions on the committee. This meant that Bob Harding and I were not eligible for election to the merchant navy committee at the AGM, which had to be held before 31st March this year.

I solved that problem by vacating my position as a service member at Forestville and becoming a service member of the Merchant Navy RSL sub Branch. Bob Harding was not keen to vacate his service membership at his own sub Branch at that time so, along with many other 'associates' they raised strong objections. The wave of objections eventually persuaded NSW RSL to allow those associate members who had held committee positions prior to 1st December 2019 to continue in those positions. After all, they were service members of the RSL, at other sub Branches.

At our AGM, elections were held which resulted in the election (for three years) of a committee consisting of President, Don Kennedy. Two Vice Presidents, Alan Read, and Bob McMahon, Secretary, Merrill Barker and Treasurer, Bob Harding.

Strange as it may seem the new rules allow an affiliate member to be a secretary or treasurer. I can assure members that the committee, as elected, will do all it can to continue to manage the sub Branch to the best of our ability.

You will notice that one of our WW2 members has recently 'crossed the bar'. Mr. Claude Vandersee, who lived in Queensland, died on 25th February. Merrill has been able to obtain some information from his family about some of Claude's wartime experiences. It is a great story and on a personal note, I was surprised to learn that the Japanese submarine crew behaved in such a civilised manner.

Also, we hope to have an article inserted about how our affiliate member, Sister Mary Leahy OAM, performed some wonderful welfare work here in Sydney at Christmas time. I must renew my plea for information about the wartime activities of any of our WW2 merchant navy veterans for inclusion in the next edition of 'Merchant Navy News'. How about it. ?

Very best wishes.

Don Kennedy
President.

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

Welfare report from the Merchant Navy sub-Branch, one of the smallest in NSW.

With just about a dozen World War Two service members, an excellent Affiliate Secretary and a good number of Associate members we are doing reasonably well. I would think It is pretty rare these days to have a President and two Vice Presidents who are all WW2 merchant navy veterans.

Another thing about us which is possibly unique is that one of our Affiliate members is a Catholic Nun, Sister Mary Leahy OAM. Sr. Mary is what is known as the 'Port Chaplain' for her church organisation, 'Stella Maris.' As such she spends a great deal of time mostly at Port Botany, boarding ships which are in port, performing wonderful welfare work for the visiting seamen. From my own personal knowledge, Sr. Mary usually works six and often, seven day a week doing just that.

Additionally, her church HQ in Rome appointed her as the 'Regional co-ordinator' for Stella Maris for a vast area of the Pacific, described at 'Oceania' a couple of years ago. This requires Mary to travel regularly to New Zealand, Fiji, New Guinea, and other Pacific Island countries to formulate, organise, and assist the Stella Maris units in those countries. This is one of the reasons that she was awarded the Order of Australia medal about eight years ago. Also, it was because of the significant work she performs for this sub-Branch. The nomination for the award came from us.

As part of the extensive work she undertakes she makes a special effort at Christmas time to do something for those visiting seamen. My efforts to persuade he to visit my home for Christmas are met with the usual statement. "Sorry Don, Christmas day is my busiest day of the year'

Last December she did, with the help of volunteers arrange for over 2000 Christmas gift packages to be delivered to visiting seamen. Unfortunately, I have to admit that our RSL sub-Branch was not actually involved in this magnificent welfare gesture. We feel must surely get some credit because Sister Mary is an RSL member and is our 'Star' Affiliate member. At my request Sr. Mary has agreed to prepare a report dealing with what happened here in Sydney. True to her nature it will be noted that she attributes much of the credit to others. We are very proud of our Affiliate, Sr. Mary Leahy.

Don Kennedy

President, Merchant Navy RSL sub-Branch.



Merchant Navy RSL sub-Branch committee (Left to right, Hon Treasurer Bob Harding, Hon. Secretary Merrill Barker, President Don Kennedy, Vice President Alan Read and Vice President Stan Shardlow. Seated is Sr. Mary Leahy OAM). Photo taken by Capt. Mike Wileman

CHRISTMAS AT PORT BOTANY

It is always lonely for many of the world's seafarers whose lives are spent at sea for long periods. They miss out on many family gatherings and special occasions. Most are at sea because of poverty in their lives. Seafarers come from all over the globe and are often employed as cheap labour. The global shipping world is complex and without seafarers it just wouldn't be able to transport over 95% of global commodities that we all rely on. A recent survey done by Yale university reflects that 20% of seafarers contemplate self harm or suicide. As the Catholic Port Chaplain at Sydney Ports I have the responsibility to be an advocate for seafarers in as much as I can. This can mean helping resolve/ report abuse issues, wage theft and the many other hardships that seafarers face. I am one of many Stella Maris chaplains who assist around the world. Needless to say Christmas being a time for family, friends and festivities is a very lonely time for seafarers who are far from home. Often spending months at sea international seafarers have one of the most isolating jobs, often facing piracy, cruel weather and accidents. I have made an effort over the past 28 years to gather gifts at Christmas time for the ships in port. The generosity of many volunteers made this possible for me. It has always been a challenge getting them onboard through security systems etc but always worth the effort to see the appreciation from the crew. Last year Captain Michael Kelly who is a Marine pilot at Sydney Ports Authority engaged with this activity of gift giving. Being a seafarer himself he knows first hand the havoc wreaked by working at sea away from loved ones for long periods. Michael inspired different groups within the maritime industry, Ports Authorities, Unions, tugs etc to contribute financially to a larger scale of providing Christmas cheer for seafarers. So successful he was in inspiring other to 'give back' that last December he organised a working group of volunteers to pack 1,700 gifts for seafarers whose vessels called to Botany and Kurnel over the Christmas period. The gifts contained hygiene products and chocolate! I was able to add the 400 gifts from Stella Maris to the gifts we packed on that day, bringing the number up to over 2,000. Under the direction of Captain Kelly gifts were distributed to most ships over December. The pilots and cutter crews volunteered to distribute most of the gifts even during the night. I travelled regularly with the cutter crew to do the deliveries. It was a wonderful to witness the industry showing this care for seafarers. On Christmas Day I had the pleasure of travelling with the cutter crew to Kurnel to deliver gifts. I can't describe the joy on the faces of the crew there who tend to be very isolated. It was the last thing they expected. We also went to the other vessels in port that day delivering gifts and spending some time in conversation. One young Serbian seafarer remarked " You've made us feel like family" One insight I gleaned from this whole Christmas gift project was the joy and satisfaction it gave those from within the maritime industry who volunteered. I believe it is always best when the giving and receiving has a mutuality. I hope we will continue to be inspired to give and receive. "Never see a need without doing something about it"Mary MacKillop

THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

LINDA TOTMAN 2/2/2020

Capt. WILLIAM (BILL) LLOYD 20/2/20

WESLEY (WES) BROWN 23/2/20

CLAUDE EDGAR VANDERSEE 25/2/20 WWII

**FREDERICK BRADLEY FINCH (FRANK) OAM 6/3/20
WWII MN & US Army Small Ships**

THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN

COMING EVENTS

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH MEETING:
Chatswood RSL Club, on Wednesday 27th May 2020 at 1030 hours.

ROOKWOOD MN MEMORIAL SERVICE: CANCELLED

**MERCHANT NAVY DAY COMMEMORATION: Thursday 3rd
September 2020, Mosman War Memorial at 1100 hours**

**BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA: Cenotaph Martin Place Sydney,
Wednesday 2nd September 2020 at 1100 hours**

**U.S. ARMY SMALL SHIPS: 78th Anniversary Small Ships
Reunion The Grace Hotel, Sydney Sunday 27th September 2020
commencing at 1115 hours.**

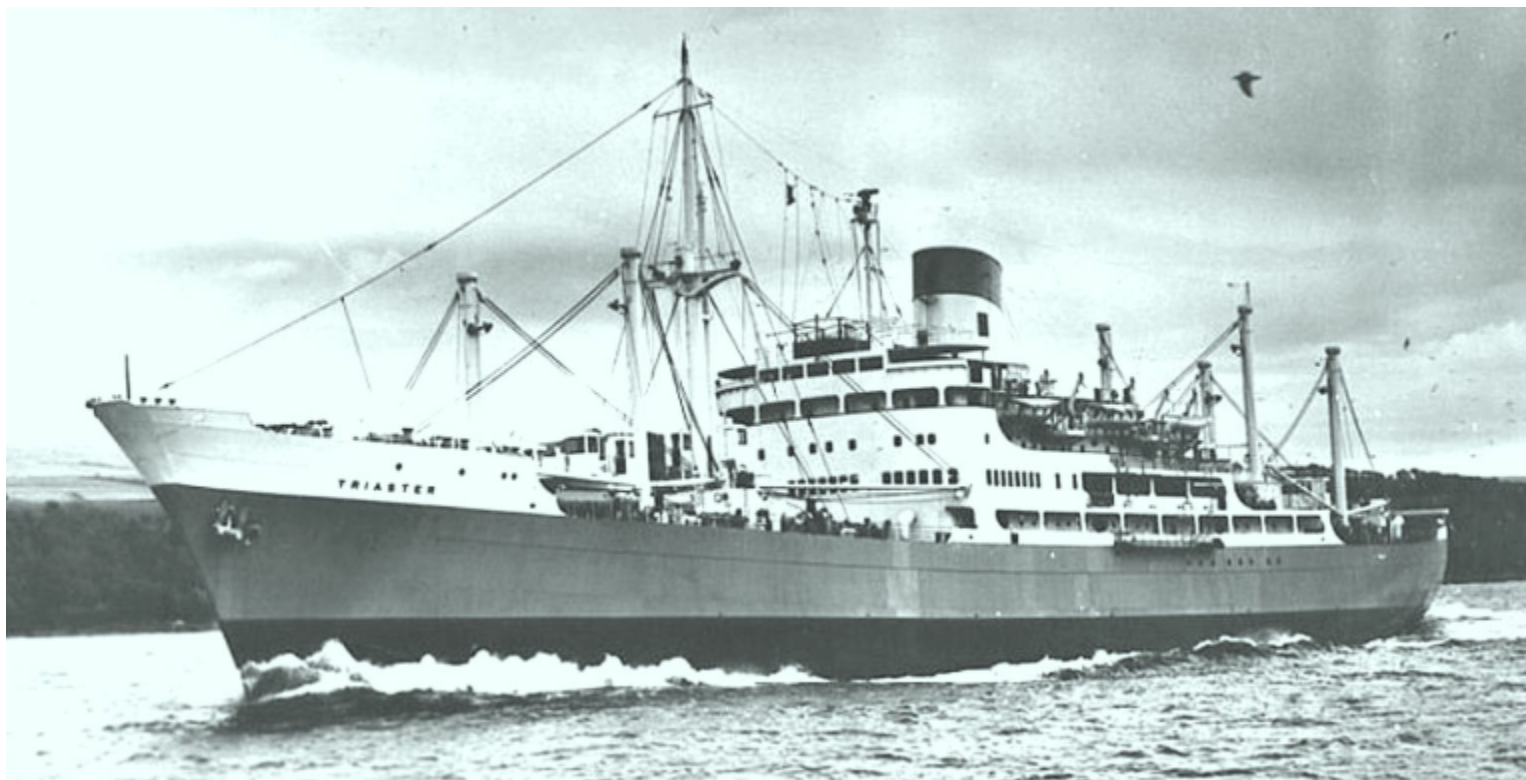
**CANBERRA MN MEMORIAL DINNER: Saturday 17th October
2020 at Garden City Hotel, Canberra**

**CANBERRA ANNUAL MN SERVICE: MN Memorial Kings Park
Canberra, Sunday 18th October 2020 at 1100 hrs**

**MERCHANT NAVY ASSOCIATION MEETING: Cabra-Vale
Diggers Club, Saturday 14th November 2020 at 1030 hours**

TRIASTER

BRITISH PHOSPHATE COMMISSION



Triaster (2) on her trials on the Clyde

Vessels owned or chartered by the British Phosphate Commission (BPC) voyaged in the Pacific well off normal trade lines to the remote islands of Nauru and Ocean Island to load phosphate for Australia and New Zealand. These twin circular shaped islands were topped with a thick crust of phosphate and lay just south of the equator in the Gilbert Islands Group.

Nauru has a coastline of 18.6 miles with no harbour, and thus vessels were loaded by barges inside the reef, and later at cantilever loading cranes, the first of which was commissioned in 1930. Mining commenced at Ocean Island in the year 1900 by the Pacific Islands Company Ltd. with principals of John T. Arundel (1841-1919) and Lord Stanmore (1829-1912), the financiers that negotiated with the German company that controlled the licences to mine on the two islands.

The Gilbert Islands are scattered over a vast area of the Pacific of five million square kilometres, and consist of four groups of atolls, circular or horseshoe shaped masses of coral enclosing a lagoon. The groups are the sixteen Gilbert Islands including, Tarawa atoll, the eight Phoenix Islands, the three Line Islands and Nauru and Ocean Island. Spanish explorers had first sighted the islands in the sixteenth century, but the first Europeans to land were British in 1764. The Polynesians were converted to Christianity by British missionaries, and the Gilbert Islands joined with the Ellice Islands in 1902 to form a British protectorate, to which Ocean Island had been added in 1900.

A start in the shipping of phosphate was made in 1901, with a few thousand tonnes shipped in 1901 and some 13,350 tonnes shipped the following year. These totals would have been much higher if the fully loaded chartered vessel Moonstone had not been lost off Ocean Island's reef in 1901. In 1902, the interests of the Pacific Island Company Ltd. were merged with Jaluit Gesellschaft of Hamburg to form the Pacific Phosphate Co. Ltd. (PPC) to mine

both Nauru and Ocean Island. Germany had annexed Nauru in 1888, and under a policy established by the German administration, royalty payments were made to the landowners. Nauru had been taken by Australian forces during WWI, and thus the British Phosphate Commission (BPC) could be formed on July 1st 1920 by a board of Australian, New Zealand and British representatives to purchase the assets of the (PPC) for 3.5 million pounds, and began to manage the assets from 1st January 1921, the royalty payments to Nauruans were fixed at 1.5% per tonne of phosphate extracted. This increased to 7% in 1927 and in the 1930s to 9% of the phosphate revenues. Significant profits were made by the BPC during their sixty year extraction tenure, running into millions of U.S. dollars per year.

Chartered vessels were used by the BPC at first, including vessels of the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand and Tasmanian Steamers (Pty) Ltd., as well as larger tramps e.g. Luciston 5,017/24, and the unlucky Ooma 3,991/05 lost at Ocean Island on 8th February 1926, and Hartfield 4,661/15 dragging her moorings inshore and damaging herself at Nauru in the same month. Ocean transport 4,643/13 of Houlder Brothers was lost at Ocean Island on the 30th January 1928 after her propeller had fouled the lines of the mooring buoy. Nauru Chief 2,934/21 completed by Nyland Verft yard at Oslo, was purchased while fitting out for Norwegian owners, and was the first owned vessel for BPC, with the fleet managed for many years by A. H. Glaze, the manager of the BPC in Melbourne. Cantilever number 1 was completed at Nauru in September 1930 with a loading rate of one thousand tonnes per hour, followed by Cantilever number 2 in 1961, after having been designed and built in Australia with a greater loading capacity of 1,500 tonnes per hour.

The first vessel to have a 'Tri' prefix to her name (to signify the tripartite agreement of Australia, New Zealand and Britain) was the new steamer Trioner 4,413/31 completed by the Govan yard of Harland & Wolff Ltd. She was followed by the motor ships Triaster (1) 6,032/35, and the sisters Triadic and Trienza, both 6,378/38, all fitted with bow sheaves to handle the mooring lines. The permanent moorings off Nauru were anchored in 160 fathoms of water, and ships loading at the island had to tie up at these mooring buoys. Periodically, the cables anchoring the buoys were taken up for inspection or replacement, and this work was done by one of the pre-war ships, all fitted with mooring laying gear to run over cable sheaves at the bow. Several Bank Line ships were chartered to the phosphate trades in pre-war and post war years.

Triaster (1) made her first visit with phosphate to Port Adelaide on 26th September 1937, two years after her completion by Lithgows. She had five holds, three forward and two aft of the machinery spaces. The shelter deck could be used for cargo or as basic accommodation for islanders making the voyage. She was equipped with four five tonne derricks on the foremast and on the mainmast, with the winches housed at the base of the masts. The BPC fleet had black funnels pre-war, and was manned with British officers, Chinese cooks and stewards and Filipino deck crew. Triaster (1) was propelled by a Kincaid-B&W airless injector four cycle single acting diesel of 3,600 bhp at 115 rpm to give a service speed of 10.5 knots.

The little BPC fleet was decimated by the German surface raiders Komet and Orion at Nauru and 6th December 1940, losing Triona, Triadic and Triaster (1) and two chartered vessels in Komata 3,900/38 of USSNZ and Vini 5, 5,181/37 owned by Ditlev-Simonsen of Norway. The Japanese then invaded Nauru in 1942 with 7,000 troops stationed on the island building military installations and three runways at the airbase, with two thirds of the Nauruans deported to Truk atoll. Nauru was liberated at the end of the war on 13th September 1945, but it was a mass of tangled and destroyed military equipment, and the surviving islanders did not return until 1st January 1946.

The island mining equipment had to be replaced and operations did not get into full swing again until 1949. Post-war BPC fleet replacements included the standard type naval supply ship Dungeness of 10,000 dwt built at Vancouver in 1945 and purchased by Pacific Shipowners Ltd. on 10th July 1947 and renamed Levuka and rebuilt into a passenger cargo-liner by the Burrard yard at Vancouver. She made only one voyage to Sydney (NSW) for Pacific Shipowners Ltd. as she was sold to BPC a few weeks later and renamed Triadic (2) and departed on her first voyage from Melbourne to Nauru on 17th May 1948. She joined the standard war built 10,000 dwt Triona (2) completed by Lithgows in February 1943. The twin screw Islander 1,598/29 was Yard number 416 from Grangemouth Dockyard, and carried two dozen first class passengers and 52 crew members to Christmas Island, to the south of Java in the Indian Ocean, for the Christmas Island Phosphate Commission. She was managed by BPC from 1949 when she was sold to the Commonwealth of Australia, management continuing until 1960.

The subject of this article, Triaster (2), joined the BPC fleet on 21st October 1955, and her slightly larger near sister Tri-Ellis joined in 1958, both from the Govan yard of Harland & Wolff Ltd., to give a fleet of five BPC vessels in 1958. Tri-Ellis was one foot wider and deeper than her near sister Triaster and could thus lift 13,950 tonnes of phosphates. Tri-Ellis was named after Sir Albert Ellis (1869-1951), who was a prospector in the Pacific and the 'father' of the Pacific phosphate industry, having first discovered phosphate deposits on Nauru and Ocean Island in 1900, and he became the BPC Commissioner for New Zealand between 1921 and 1951. Tri-Ellis was given a domed top to her funnel, and could be identified from Triaster by her reworked bridge and accommodation block for only a dozen passengers.

TRIASTER (2)

This fine passenger cargo-liner carried 48 passenger and 12,000 tonnes of phosphates to Australia and New Zealand ports from completion on 21st October 1955, having been launched at the Govan yard of Harland & Wolff Ltd. exactly six months earlier by Mr David Calder. She was an open shelter-decker with six holds, and six square hatches with sides measuring 28 feet, and two decks in her hull, Main Deck and Lower Deck. Above these was the Shelter Deck, Fo'c'stle and Bridge Deck and Navigating Bridge D with the wheelhouse top above. The dimensions of Triaster (2) were length overall of 531 feet with an overhang of her heavily raked bow being 46 feet, moulded beam of 67.6 feet, and depth to Shelter Deck of 42 feet, and loaded draft of 28.0 feet. She had provision in her fo'c'stle for her own moorings in order to hold the ship steady at the cantilever loading berths. The electrically operated deck machinery by Clarke, Chapman & Co. Ltd. of Gateshead consisted of two capstans on the fo'c'stle, and inside the fo'c'stle was a special mooring winch-windlass, capable of handling deep moorings up to a range of 270 fathoms of chain cable which was released over a bow roller.

She had a part electrically welded hull and was given longitudinal framing at the sides and bottoms of the holds as well as transverse framing. The Shelter and Main Deck were continuous fore and aft, with the Lower Deck forming the steering gear compartment. A tunnel deck was arranged in way of numbers 4, 5 and 6 holds, and subdivision of the hull was by means of seven watertight and two oil tight bulkheads. There were fresh water and ballast water tanks beneath and at the sides of the tunnel deck. The double bottom tanks were for the carriage of fuel oil or water ballast. Another feature of Triaster (2) was her design of pillar-less holds, which had ramped boundaries to facilitate easy mechanical

handling of the phosphate cargoes. These unobstructed holds were specially designed and unusual in a cargo-liner of her size.

She was rigged with a foremast with a fixed topmast and three pairs of derrick posts, all of which were un stayed. There were ten 5 tonne, two 10 tonne, and one heavy lift 25 tonne derrick operated by a dozen converter type electric winches with remote control, cargo battens were not fitted. Steering was by means of electric-hydraulic steering gear of the four ram type, manufactured by Brown Brothers & Co. Ltd. of Edinburgh. This gear was controlled by telemotor installation in the wheelhouse, with in addition mechanical control from the aft docking bridge. The navigating bridge had the latest radar, gyrocompass, direction finders and electric signalling devices.

PUBLIC ROOMS

The accommodation of the staterooms for 48 passengers, and the Lounge, Dining Room and the elegant Verandah Café was of a very high standard equal to that found on larger passenger liners. The passenger staterooms were on Bridge Deck and Boat Deck in two single berth, seventeen two berth and four three berth staterooms. All staterooms were outside rooms, with the two berth rooms being spacious and beautifully decorated in light oak panelling and equipped with a long dressing table and a mahogany set of drawers between the beds, with a large side folding mirror above, together with two easy chairs and foot stools.

The Lounge was located forward on the Bridge Deck to port, with the Dining Room occupying the central and starboard of this forward looking area. The Lounge had large window all along the port side and the curved fore end. The window curtains had a light green and yellow floral design on a soft silver grey background. An alcove was arranged in the starboard wall, and there were curved recesses at each end, into which were built writing desks. Aft the alcove were glazed entrance doors, and a large and well equipped glass fronted bookcase against the after bulkhead. The panelling was in well figured sycamore, to contrast with the Nigerian walnut skirting's. All of the easy chairs and table were of sycamore, with the coffee tables faced with plastic veneers. The card tables had reversible tops, with plastic veneers on one side, and green baize on the other. The card table chairs, as well as those of the writing table, were upholstered in soft tan coloured hide. The remaining comfortable easy chairs with matching settees and a plethora of tub chairs were upholstered with a cotton tapestry with a woven stripe in shades of primrose and green. Loose covers were provided in heavy green and yellow linens, as well as in green flowered cretonne. The floor covering had a tile effect in beige and was bordered in green and grey, with a beautiful coloured carpet in the centre.

The Dining Room to starboard of the Lounge had walls panelled in figured Canadian maple. The long, curved forward end and the starboard side consisted almost entirely of window, which were curtained with a contemporary cotton print in colours to match the upholstery. The furniture of the sideboard, carver dining armchairs, as well as the dumb waiters recessed into the panelling, was of red beech. The chairs were upholstered in smoke blue and lime green hide, and the table tops were covered by sandy yellow coloured Lionide material. The sideboard was positioned in the centre of the after bulkhead, above which was a large mirror. The entrance doors were flanked by glazed side panels, and the twin 'in' and 'out' service doors were faced in plastic veneers. The floor covering was very similar to that of the Lounge, except that the border was a rust colour.

The Dining Room and Lounge were linked by and Entrance Hall, which was panelled in figured aspen. A curved settee was covered in beautiful blue hide and occupied the starboard forward corner. The Chief Steward's office was abaft the Lounge, and a decorative grille, finished in satin chrome, embellished the opening to his office. Walnut furniture was arranged in the Entrance Hall, and the easy chairs and armchairs were upholstered in hide in blue and ivory tones. The unusual but contemporary floor design was in cream with rust and grey borders. A beautiful feature of the Entrance Hall was an illuminated relief map of the entire South Pacific, on which a magnetic model of the ship could be moved to show the midday position of the vessel.

The elegant Verandah Café was located on the Boat Deck in a large space separated from the open deck by a long, glazed folding screen. At the fore end of the Verandah was a long bar counter. Which was faced with eau-de-nil and pale green veneers, and topped with material in imitation wood grain. The Verandah walls were also panelled in pale green veneers, while around the bar, the decorative treatment of the room was in English beech wood. The contemporary floor design was of patterned green and yellow, while the settees and easy chairs were covered with grey and yellow Lionide material. Scarlet bar stools added a final touch of colour to the room.

The design of the public rooms was carried out by Heaton, Tabbs & Co. Ltd. of London, and the spacious suite for the Master, as well as the cabins of the Chief Engineer and Second Engineer were panelled in selected wood veneers. A large Smoking Room for the Navigating Officers was provided on Boat Deck and was tastefully decorated and furnished. All crew members had single berth cabins, the walls of which were panelled in Warerite plastic veneers. The furnishings of each cabin included settees with drawers under, wardrobes and washbasins with hot and cold running water. A large crew recreation room was strikingly decorated, with upholstery and floor coverings in colourful material.

All of the public rooms and passenger staterooms were air conditioned throughout, and the associated refrigeration plant was supplied by the well known firm of J. & E. Hall of Dartford. Separate laundries and drying rooms were provided for each section of the ship. In the passenger spaces, as well as for the officers and stewards, there were several Hoover washing machines, while the Australian crew laundry had a larger Bradford washing machine. Overall, the standard of the fitting out of all public room, staterooms, and crew accommodation in the four decks in the 'mid ships' superstructure was extremely good.

MAIN PROPELLING and AUXILIARY MACHINERY

The main diesel engine was a Harland & Wolff-B&W single acting two stroke cycle, opposed piston, cross-head version of six cylinders burning heavy grade fuel oil. A service speed of fourteen knots was achieved at 110 rpm in continuous service from the 6,500 bhp diesel engine, with the four bladed manganese-bronze propeller having been fitted solidly with the boss. Air for starting the engine was stored in two air reservoirs, each of a capacity of 540 cubic feet. However, scavenging air was supplied by two positive rotary blowers mounted on the back of the engine, and driven by roller chains from the engine crankshaft. Fresh water cooled the cylinders from telescopic pipes in the forced lubrication system. The lower part of each cylinder liner was enveloped in the scavenge belt, and was effectively cooled by the steady flow of the air on its way to the inlet ports.

There were two boilers providing hot water to the staterooms, one at the base of the funnel that used exhaust gases and fuel oil, and the other in the engine room that used fuel oil only.

There were four 300 kilowatt diesel driven generators arranged in parallel and of six cylinder four stroke cycle, each provided with a lubricating oil pump, and lubricating oil cooler and filter. Compressed air from the auxiliary starting air bottle was used to start the generators, and there was also a standby connection from the two main engine air reservoirs.

Pumps and additional auxiliary machinery equipment in the engine room included four lubricating pumps, each with a capacity of 325 tonnes of oil per hour. Two fuel pumps, two ballast pumps each rated at 500 tonnes per hour, one Duplex fuel oil filter, two fresh water circulating pumps, two fuel valve water circulating pumps, one salt water circulating pump, four sea water circulating pumps, one emergency fire and bilge pump, two fuel oil transfer pumps, one bilge and deck washing pump, two domestic water pumps, one general service pump, and one stand-by fuel oil pump.



Triaster -lighters unloading: <https://www.facebook.com/Ex-Employees-of-BPC-on-Ocean-Island-144367718911964/>

TRIASTER (2) IN SERVICE

Triaster served for fifteen years for the BPC from 1955 to 1970 loading phosphates at Nauru and Ocean Island in the Pacific, and at Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean. She loaded general cargo northbound at Melbourne together with refrigerated food supplies in six refrigerated lockers between numbers four and five 'tween decks. Special filter ventilation systems were built into the ship to keep the white phosphate dust out of the passenger and machinery spaces, and she had water ballast wing tanks in the forward 'tween decks to keep rolling down to a minimum when fully loaded with phosphate.

Nauru is shaped like a hat with the coastal fringe forming the brim and the raised interior the crown of the hat. The interior makes up 80% of the island, from where the white phosphate was mined and taken to the cantilevers to be loaded into Triaster (2) and her near sister ship Tri-Ellis of 1958, as well as chartered ships such as the Hogarth tramp Baron Minto 7,801/59 that loaded here in the 1960s. In 1968, Nauru took over the management of its people when independence was granted by the trusteeship committee of the United Nations. The Nauru Government took over the running of the phosphate mines in 1970 after paying US\$13.5 million the BPC. The high grade phosphate continued to be mined until 1993 and shipped to be used to fertilise pasture land in Australia, New Zealand and Japan, with millions of tonnes of white phosphate rock carried by Triaster (2) and Tri-Ellis to each of the three Pacific Rim countries.

NAURU PACIFIC LINE (NPL)

Triaster (2) was sold in 1970 to the Nauru Government and renamed Rosie D and given a blue funnel with a thin yellow line near the top to represent the equator, as well as a large white 12 pointed star to represent the dozen tribes of Nauru. She ran for the Nauru Pacific Line (NPL), formed in 1969 by the Nauru Government whose council was composed of tribe leaders. Rosie D was named in honour of Rosie Detudamo, the wife of Timothy Detudamo an early Nauru chief. She was give a light grey hull and white masts, posts and derricks, and continued loading phosphates for another five years southbound, with general and refrigerated cargo northbound, with calls also at Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, Suva in Fiji and Apia in Samoa on occasion. An eighteen minute film has been shot on board Triaster (2) entitled 'A Visit to Ocean Island and Nauru', which began with her sailing from Melbourne and also showed unloading ports such as Newcastle (NSW).



ROSIE D ex TRIASTER (2)

Triaster (2) as Rosie D took her third name of Taiyuan in 1975 when sold to the Chinese Government, masquerading as the Tai Yuan Shipping Inc. of Mogadishu in Somalia. She changed flags to Panama in 1976, and then arrived at Kaohsiung on 3rd February 1978 to be broken up by the Chien Nan Iron and Steel Co. Ltd. The BPC had used chartered bulk carriers in the 1970s to transport the phosphates e.g. the twin funnelled Cape Hawke of 23,710 dwt and completed in 1971 and which too the last cargo from Ocean Island on 25th November 1979, and the bulker Scotspark of Denholms of 26,505 dwt and built in 1971 and Valetta of Ditlev – Simonsen of 27,484 dwt and built in 1968. These bulkers were replaced in the Nauru Pacific Line fleet by their owned bulkers Kolle D of 32, 466 dwt (named after Kolle De Roburt, wife of the Head Chief and President of the Nauru Republic) and Rosie D (2) of 26,855 dwt. The Tri-Ellis, near sister of Triaster (2) also joined the Nauru Pacific Line in 1974 and was renamed Tryphena until sold in 1978 and renamed Man Tat under the Panamanian flag and arrived for scrapping at Kaohsiung on 2nd September 1980. The first ship of the Nauru Pacific line had been Eigamoiya 4,426/69 completed by the Robb-Caledon yards with 3 holds forward of the

accommodation, and a much smaller hold aft. She served until the NPL was bankrupted in 1993, calling at her regular ports of call of Melbourne, Port Moresby, Lae, Rabaul, Nauru, Newcastle (NSW), Geelong and Melbourne with her refits done in Japan.

Nauru is traditionally a matriarchal society, and Eigamoiya was named after Queen Eigamoiya, an early leader in the mid 19th century. Eigamoiya was not a good sea-keeping ship in the long rollers of the Pacific, as she had a good amount of flare at her bow and tended to slam into seas instead of riding above them. She had a set of derricks on her foremast and two cranes to work the three forward holds.

Nauruans had become rich on the royalties and profits of the phosphate mining, although the manual labour was imported from other Pacific islands and from the Philippines and China. The profits were dissipated in all type of projects include an airline Air Nauru set up in 1980, and the Nauru Pacific Line was starved of money, with Eigamoiya regularly arrested in Melbourne for non-payment of bills, until these were paid 2 weeks later, and she was released to take fresh water and supplies to Nauru and return with phosphates. Another passenger cargo-liner in the NPL fleet was Enna G, named after Enna Gadabu, wife of an early Nauru chief, and the former good looking Prinses Margriet 9,341/61 of Oranje Line of Holland on services to the U.S.A. and Canada. Enna G was impounded in Wellington by the New Zealand Seaman's Union over Pacific islander crewing issues for a period of eight weeks. It was resolved by a stormy meeting of President Hammer De Roobet of Nauru and Prime Minister Kirk of New Zealand.

Enna G was converted into a cruise ship with container carrying capacity on her forward decks for Pacific cruising to San Francisco via Majuro (Marshall Islands), Ponape (Micronesia), Truk (Caroline Islands), the Mariana Islands and Hawaii. However, she fell foul of the American cabotage laws and was prevented from carrying passengers, and thus had to return to the Melbourne to Nauru service, but she now carried no passengers as all Nauruans went by their own airline to Melbourne. She was laid up in Melbourne for one year due to engine breakdowns and financial problems, before being finally laid up at Majuro for her last seven years between 1983 and 1990. She then sailed to Thap Sakae in Thailand where she arrived for breaking up on 8th September 1990.

The Nauru Pacific Line (NPL) also used the former Brooker Line cargo-liner Brooker Challenge 8573/72 and 10,700 dwt renamed as Eigugu, the former Federal Palm 3,179/61 used in the Caribbean by West Indies Shipping Corporation and managed out of Port of Spain by Furness, Withy & Co. Ltd. She had three holds and three hatches served by five derricks and two cranes, and was renamed as Cenpac Rounder for Central Pacific services. She was replaced by the former Japanese engine aft cargo ship Kyokyu Maru 5,668/70 and 9,100 dwt and remained Cenpac (2). She had three holds and three hatches, with deep tanks for carrying vegetable oil, and had a heavy lift derrick of eighty tonnes capacity for lifting 125 TEU containers, as well as four twenty tonnes capacity and one of fifteen tonnes capacity.

However, the rich deposits of Nauru phosphates had been exhausted by 1993, and so had the extravagant lifestyle of the Nauruans, with the NPL declared bankrupt in 1993 and their high rise office building in Melbourne of Nauru House sold off. Nauru are supported today by financial aid measure from the Australian Government, and is a partner in the Pacific Forum Line.



POSTSCRIPT

The Triaster and her near sister Tri-Ellis belonged to the many classes of good looking British cargo-liners built in British yards in the 1950s for Ellerman Line, Blue Star Line, Port Line, Clan Line and many other shipping lines. Despite the poor level of investment in British shipping yards, the very high standard of naval architecture was evident in those excellent and streamlined designs. The yellow funnels with blue tops of three post-war cargo-liners built for the British Phosphate Commission in British yards during post-war years were seen regularly in Australian and New Zealand ports. This trio and the many other handsome British cargo-liners voyaging to the Antipodes gave a very favourable impression of the Red Duster Merchant Navy until it was all changed by the appearance in the late 1960s of boxy container ships.

Nauru has celebrated the ships of the British Phosphate Commission and the Nauru Pacific Line on many of its stamps. The four stamp set of 1924 show Nauru Chief off the island, the Eigamoiya is depicted on the blue 7 cent stamp of 1974 commemorating the 175th Anniversary of the First Contact with the Outside World, Enna G (ex Prinses Margiet) is depicted on the blue/grey 10 cent stamp of the South Pacific Forum, and the green Nauru 3 cent stamp of 1968 shows a vessel being loaded at the cantilevers, with the 15 cent and 25 cent stamps of 1975 celebrating the formation of BPC in 1920.



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