

MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

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

Edition 20
Xmas 2019



TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA



Della Elliott onboard M.V. Howard Smith 1985



By Jeannie Highet

Reading Captain Iain Steverson's article on the **MV Noongah** in the last issue of *Merchant Navy News* brought back vivid memories of my aunt, Della Elliott, who helped the widows and children of the men who were lost when the **Noongah** sank on 25 August 1969.

EV Elliott (Federal Secretary of the Seamen's Union of Australia, and Della's husband) wrote about the sinking of the **Noongah** (in the September 1969 issue of the *Seamen's Journal*): "We of the sea-going unions are deeply and intimately concerned in this loss of our shipmates". The then seven sea-going unions spear-headed the setting up of the Noongah Disaster Fund, and Della carried out the administration of the Fund for its lifetime.

The Noongah Disaster Committee was established in 1969, and it quickly set up the Noongah Disaster Fund. The Fund was a registered charity to provide for the dependants of the men lost at sea. Contributions to the Fund came from shipping companies, from ships' crews and from individuals and other organisations. According to Diane Kirkby (in *Voices From The Ships*), the appeal officially closed in June 1972, having raised a total of just on \$75,000. Of that money, \$54,000 had been given by Australian seafarers.

All involved with the management of the Fund worked on a voluntary basis, including Della who was appointed as Honorary Secretary. To say she administered the Fund for 23 years until it was officially wound up in 1993 is factual, but understates her commitment and compassion.

I was only nine years old when the **Noongah** sank, but five years later I had started the first stint of what was to become my regular school/university summer vacation employment working with my Auntie Della in the federal office of the Seamen's Union of Australia. It was a very busy office, and Della was both the office administrator and the editor of the *Seamen's Journal*. Those two jobs were more than a full-time load – the administration of the Noongah Disaster Fund came on top of that load.

After initial payments, the ongoing work of the Fund was supporting the education needs of the children. Mostly this was by paying for school uniforms, textbooks, equipment, sports gear, excursions and the like. I worked in the summer holidays, which was the time for setting the children up for the coming school year, so I often saw my aunt preparing the payments to the **Noongah** families. My small office desk was opposite Della's large crowded desk. Even now I can see my aunt's profile, silhouetted by the sunlight streaming through the office window, as she thoughtfully composed at the typewriter the letters that would accompany the cheques going to the families. The carbon copies of the letters were then filed (my job).

Della felt for the mothers and children very much. She kept track of their progress at school and the other activities they were pursuing. Her letters to the mothers always showed her interest in how the children were developing. When it came to payments for clothes, she was never niggardly and always ensured the young scholars were properly kitted out.

It was a very personal involvement for Della that continued until the Fund was finalised in 1993, by which time Della was 75 years old and had retired from paid work. Even then, working from home, she saw the Fund through to its final disbursements and winding-up.

In 2000, following approaches by some of the families, Della received a NSW Premier's Award for Community Service. This is *Hansard* transcript of the remarks of Andrew Humpherson, member for the electorate of Davidson, made in the NSW Legislative Assembly on 13 April 2000:

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [5.32 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of Mrs Della Elliott, the honorary secretary of a trust fund which was established after the sinking of the M.V. Noongah in 1969. Many members of this Chamber may not recall that on 25 August 1969 the Noongah sank off Kempsey, with the loss of 21 members of the crew of 26 men. In the aftermath of that tragedy a number of dependants were left without husbands, fathers and relatives. Members of seven seafaring unions got together and contributed a substantial amount to a trust fund, and its honorary secretary is Mrs Elliott. Early this week she received the Premier's award for community service.

That tragedy had a direct impact on the lives of many. The freighter, Noongah, was travelling from Newcastle to Queensland carrying steel. Early on the morning of 25 August the crew signalled that they were in trouble, and indicated that the freighter had a 12 degree list and that the cargo had moved. Some 42 minutes later, at 4.37 a.m., the master made a distress call and indicated that he was abandoning ship. Unfortunately, most of the crew did not make it off the ship and 24 hours later a rescue team sighted a life raft containing three or four men three miles out to sea off Hat Head, north of Port Macquarie. Unfortunately, their location could not be pinpointed and, despite communications between land rescue forces along the coast, the life raft and the men disappeared in poor weather.

At that time the wind was blowing at 110 kilometres per hour, with the seas at 30 feet. Clearly, the ship floundered in extraordinary circumstances. The search for survivors was one of the greatest in Australia's history, involving five destroyers, three minesweepers, seven aircraft, two helicopters and a number of other vessels. The dependants of the men who perished were well served by Mrs Elliott who, over the ensuing 30 years, distributed the funds as needed. I have been approached by Mrs Capare, formerly Mrs Hopkins, who lost her first husband in that tragedy. She said that the support and assistance extended to her and her young children was exemplary. Mrs Capare wrote that Mrs Elliott is deserving of public recognition for the duties carried out above and beyond those normally expected. Her view is supported by the other dependants and beneficiaries of the trust.

Over the years, as the children grew up, Mrs Elliott took an active interest in their progress and education. She communicated regularly with the widows, who have enormous respect for her and are grateful for her administration of the fund. Mrs Elliott was the wife of a former secretary of the New South Wales Seamens Union. Mrs Capare wrote:

Mrs Elliott is deserving of public recognition for a voluntary job carried out not only assiduously and faithfully over many years but also for the added value of her personal interest and support. Mrs Elliott is... an outstanding citizen, and is truly deserving of an award which recognises her contribution and achievements especially those on behalf of the families whose husbands, sons, brothers or fathers were lost on the Noongah. Her support and the assistance which she maintained so promptly and effectively greatly assisted my children's development.

I am delighted to have been able to assist in that regard. [*Time expired.*]

The Butlin Archive at the Australian National University holds documents relating to the **MV Noongah**, the Noongah Disaster Committee and the administration and eventual winding up of the Noongah Disaster Fund. There is a portrait of Della Elliott on display in the National Portrait Gallery. Denman Prospect in the ACT has a street named in honour of Della – Kondelea Way (Della being short for Kondelea).

Jeannie Highet



Noongah Memorial March
Sydney 1969

On all Australian ships and in all major ports seafarers held memorial services on 8 September 1969 for the **Noongah** victims. Here we see seafarers and their families marching along the waterfront to the Sydney memorial service.

(From *The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872-1972*, by Brian Fitzpatrick and Rowan J Cahill, 1981.)

IN MEMORY OF

Master: Leo Botsman

First Mate: Archibald Mitchell

Second Mate: James McCormack

Third Mate: Alfred Hopkins

Chief Engineer: Paul Hutton

Fourth Engineer: Gerald Abbott

Radio Officer: Stephen Pedemont

Bosun: John Fleming

Able Seaman: Keith LeFevre

Able Seaman: George Jenkins

Able Seaman: Patrick Kilgariff

Able Seaman: Stanley Davis

Able Seaman: Ralph Chappell

Crew Attendant: Nick Maragos

Greaser: Kenneth McIntyre

Greaser: Charles Donnelly

Chief Steward: Eric Hynes

Chief Cook: Thomas Ford

Second Cook: Hector MacDonald

Ordinary Seaman: Desmond Sorli

Deck Boy: Kenneth Betts

CELEBRITY CRUISES PLAN FIRST ALL FEMALE BRIDGE TEAM



Celebrity Edge

Celebrity Cruises has announced a cruise industry first: a special one-time sailing with an entirely female bridge team. On International Women's Day - March 8, 2020 - the cruise ship Celebrity Edge will head to sea under the command of the first American female cruise ship master, Capt. Kate McCue. 26 other female mariners and professionals will take up the ship's deck officer and operations management roles.

“Excitement does not even begin to describe how I’m feeling about working alongside these incredible, barrier-breaking women on Celebrity Edge for this truly historic sailing,” added Captain McCue. “I am inspired every day by the amazing women we have working throughout this organization – both on land and at sea. They’re proof that there’s power in diversity.”

Capt. McCue's historic billet includes mariners and professionals from 17 nations, including:

Staff Captain Maria Gotor – Spain Hotel Director Niina Hautaniemi – Finland
Guest Relations Director Julie Sherrington – United Kingdom

F&B Director Byliana Velikova – Bulgaria Senior Doctor Jennifer Bernardo – Philippines
Cruise Director Sue Denning – United Kingdom Safety Officer Ionela Burduja – Romania
Associate Hotel Director Milana Dortangs – Netherlands Revenue and Marketing Director Sarah Guinot – France
HR Manager Angel George – USA Financial Controller Teresa de Guzman – Philippines
Chief Housekeeper Lyudmyla Miroshnychenko – Ukraine Safety Investigation Officer Alexandra Villarreal – USA
Environmental Officer Maria Karoutsou – Greece Chief Security Officer Mor Segev – Israel
Chief Officer Maria Koliou – Greece Chief Officer Maria Agius – Malta
Doctor Sumaya Guffar – South Africa First Officer Rachel Arnold – United Kingdom
First Officer Despoina Tsairi – Greece Third Engineer Anna Avgoustaki – Greece
Second Officer Nicholine Tifuh Azirh

CELEBRITY CRUISES PLAN FIRST ALL FEMALE BRIDGE TEAM

Cameroon Second Officer Ioana Tzovara – Greece Third Officer Esperanza Romero – Spain Third Officer Cassandra May Mead – New Zealand Apprentice Officer Gifty Adu Gyami – Ghana



Image courtesy Celebrity Cruises

“Over the last few years, we have worked hard to diversify the crew on board and bring more women than ever into our industry. None of this could have been possible without the leadership and shared vision of the extraordinary men and women I work with every day,” said Celebrity president and CEO Lisa Lutoff-Perlo. “We are fortunate to have many incredible, experienced and beyond-qualified women who have worked tirelessly to achieve these positions. And we also celebrate the many men who continue to support them and help champion having more women crew onboard.”

As part of this sailing, Celebrity is adding specialty topical programming, including gallery exhibitions and art auctions featuring female artists; a cinema series featuring female directors, leads and inspirational narratives; and other dedicated events, like Women of the World-themed trivia challenges, a "Female Officers vs. Guests Pool Volleyball" tournament, and a Q&A panel with the ship’s female leadership team.

“Since 2015, we have raised the percentage of qualified women on our navigational bridges from three to 22 percent,” said Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. SVP of marine operations Patrik Dahlgren, who has spearheaded Celebrity’s bridge diversification efforts. “Now, we hope this all-time industry-high will continue to grow; we just need more women to raise their hands for careers at sea, especially in engineering.”

Source : <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/celebrity-cruises-plans-first-all-female-bridge-team>

RSL sub Branch.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Don Kennedy

Greetings to all our RSL sub Branch members in this final edition of Merchant Navy News for 2019. I hope I will be able to give you more news in the first edition in 2020. We appreciate the wonderful work performed by our talented and resourceful editor, Mr Geoff Walls, President of the Merchant Navy Association and member of our sub Branch.

It is important that members of a sub branch learn what their committee members do between quarterly meetings. As we are a small sub Branch with about fifty members you could be excused for thinking that there is little to do. I assure you nothing could be further from the truth.

Firstly, at least one of the three executive members frequently attend services, as required, from time to time. Should it be appropriate, I purchase a wreath from a local florist shop paying cash for it. I obtain a receipt and try not to lose it before our next meeting. I regularly have printing done for us at a place near where I live again making sure to obtain a receipt. When we get together at committee meetings Merrill, Bob and I discuss many subjects relating to the sub Branch. These are too numerous to mention in this report.

Merrill as secretary does the majority of the clerical work and, if we have incurred expenditure for wreaths, stationary stamps etc we present our receipts to our treasurer Bob Harding and pester him for a cheque to cover the outlay. I also try to get to several other ex service and RSL meetings whenever invited and if I am available. It is worth noting that Bob has plans to change our bank system so those who are required to spend money are able to do it using a card rather than the present rather cumbersome time consuming way.

Each year we ensure the Merchant Navy is represented at the MN services at Newcastle, Norah Head, Mosman, Rookwood and Canberra. I also make every effort to attend and lay a wreath at some four or five other services in Martin Place each year. Our next and final service this year will be at Norah Head for the MN service there on Saturday 7th December. All three of us will be attending. I have always attended the Pearl Harbour service at Bankstown on 7th December but this year, for the first time in 20 years we will be asking another member to represent me. I am a member of the American Legion, the US version of our RSL, resulting from my sea service with the US Army during WW 2.

Additionally, I go to Concord Hospital each year to attend and lay a wreath for the annual 'Centaur' Hospital ship service. This year I have also attended The Kakoda Track service at Concord in May and the Remembrance Day service at Merrylands RSL, this latter one together with Bob Harding. All travelling and accommodation costs incurred are met by your committee members. We are volunteers so we do not claim personal expenses. I am aware that I have told you all this before but I do hear occasionally about some sub Branch's where members funds have been used by committee members for their own use. This does not happen in this sub Branch.

Merrill and Bob also attend numerous other meetings all of which have some interest for the

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

merchant navy. For the past couple of years Merrill has organised both the Merchant Navy Day service at Mosman on 3rd September and the accommodation and dinner at Canberra in October. These are complex activities and require a great deal of time and effort. We are fortunate to have Merrill as our Secretary and Bob as our Treasurer. We may be a small sub Branch but we are doing OK. We are maintaining our membership numbers due to the energetic efforts of Bob and Merrill.

We will be able to supply detailed information about the new RSL Constitution at our meetings. Bob Harding was our delegate at the RSL congress at Albury in late October. He was very pleased that he went especially when the long-debated New constitution was passed but was less than impressed by some of those who were organising the congress.

Re. The Canberra service. I made mention in the last issue of MN News about what the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund has been doing for OUR memorial in Canberra. On Saturday, 19th October I travelled to Canberra by 'bus. I found it to be a convenient and economical way to get there. A week or so prior I was apprehensive that only about a dozen people had made a booking with Merrill for the Saturday night accommodation and dinner. I was relieved to note that some fifty people did attend. As usual, it was a beautiful meal and a good night but some felt it was not the same due to the absence of Sister Mary who had requested leave because she had been required to attend meetings in Manila and Taiwan in connection with her duties for Stella Maris.

The following morning, thankfully a fine day, we were delighted to discover the extensive remedial work that had been completed on our MN Memorial.

As a result of all the planning, supervised by Mr David Field, Chairman of the Fund all those who were privileged to attend the service were much impressed. It is now a greatly improved Merchant Navy National Memorial. People like the late Gordon Solomon and many others who have since 'crossed the bar' who did so much to have the memorial built would, like me, be much impressed.

We were fortunate to have as our guest speaker that day the Minister for Defence, Senator The Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC. This lady in her address and her friendly attitude to everyone, especially the merchant navy veterans, ensured that she was definitely a most impressive and welcome guest. She had earlier spent 29 years in the Army Reserve before entering politics, retiring from the Army with the rank of Brigadier. Some lady. I feel sure everyone who was fortunate enough to be able to attend the service would agree with me. It was a great service but without Sr. Mary perhaps it was not quite the same. I believe she will be with us next year. I certainly hope so.

As usual, at the end of the service Mr David Field had kindly arranged for a catering firm to supply a well stocked morning tea at the site. This proved to a very popular item being financed by the 'Fund'. We will be expressing our appreciation to the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund and Chairman David Field in writing , following our November meeting.

Despite my request in earlier editions of MN News I have not received any written 'snapshots' of Merchant Navy veterans wartime adventures. I feel it is better to have them

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

now rather than in some sort of eulogy. I notice the editor of the US Army Small Ships Association does an excellent job revealing the wartime activities of former and current members. How about it.? Should there be no response I may have to resort to include my own adventures which do not amount to much.

Our final 2019 general meeting was held at Chatswood RSL Club at 10.30 on Wednesday 27th November. It was pleasing to be able to welcome 14 of our sub Branch members and one visitor. Much to my surprise we had a member who, residing in Canberra ,usually attends the October service there each year,joined us at Chatswood. Mr Tony Francombe explained that he has recently moved from Canberra and now lives in Sydney, not far from Chatswood. Welcome to Sydney Tony, it was a pleasant surprise.

A few of us, including Tony, stayed for lunch.

We are indeed very fortunate to have been allocated a wonderful room for our meetings at the Chatswood RSL Club. Bob Harding has many contacts and makes these arrangements which include morning tea.

One of those who was unable to attend, WW Two Veteran Vice President Stan Shardlow, sent his apology saying, " I am not too bad above the waist but not too good below that." Stan has considerable difficulty walking. I would like to hear his story about his sea-going adventures during the war. What about it Stan ?. Also, Bob Harding has promised to give me some news about his father who was a Merchant Navy WW Two veteran. Our ranks are getting a bit thin but news about our veterans would be welcome for this newsletter. One of the nicest thing that happened at our November meeting was a motion from our Secretary to express thanks to our other Vice President, Alan Read for all the work he had done for the sub Branch re the constitution. Well done Alan. He lives up at Erina on the Central Coast but still comes down to Sydney most of the time for meetings. He also stayed for lunch. Thanks Alan.

As this is my final report for the year I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you, your family and veteran friends, a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

Merrill will have advised all members about our next meeting which will be held on Wednesday, 26th February 2020. This will be our AGM when elections for the committee will be held for the following three years. I look forward to as many as possible who can join us that day at Chatswood RSL Club.



Best wishes.
Don Kennedy
Sub Branch President.

THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

ROBERT YOUNG 21/2/2019

Capt. DEREK HEATH 25/7/19

BRUCE WARD 5/9/19

CORMAC O'CONNOR 8/9/19

JAMES GADD 9/9/19 WWII US Army Small Ships

THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN

COMING EVENTS

NORAH HEAD MEMORIAL SERVICE: Saturday 7th December, Merchant Mariners Memorial, Lighthouse Precinct Norah Head at 1100 hrs.

REMEMBERING PEARL HARBOUR : Saturday 7th December Courthouse Reserve, Bankstown, commencing 1030 hrs.

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH MEETING: Chatswood RSL Club, on Wednesday 26th February 2020 at 1030 hours.

ROOKWOOD MN MEMORIAL SERVICE: Sunday 12th April 2020 at 1100 hours.

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

SERVICE VOICES

Service Voices is broadcast every Monday night from 6pm Adelaide time; you can also listen to podcasts of the interviews at <http://radioadelaide.org.au/program/service-voices/> You can search and listen to interviews with WWII Veterans John Bird, Don Campbell, Bert Collins, Harry Cruger, Clarrie Dawes, Jim Gadd, Don Kennedy, Len McLeod, Peter Lucas, and John MacMahon. Also listen to an enlightening interview with Capt. Iain Steverson. (MN Ret'd): B.H.P. and other MN ships of WWI and WWII and later. Service Voices offer a wonderful opportunity for members of the veterans, service, volunteer and defence communities to share news, views, perspectives and memories. If you wish to offer an interview please feel free to contact Radio Adelaide directly.

The famous Australian Liner and Hospital Ship

Source: [Shipping Today & Yesterday - October 2017](#)



Wanganella was a very special Australian liner built in 1929 and owned by Huddart Parker Ltd. of Melbourne that gave 41 years of service, mostly on the Trans-Tasman passenger services of her owners, but also five years of hospital ship service to Singapore, India, New Guinea, the Solomons and the Mediterranean. She evacuated wounded British and New Zealand troops from the beach head at Anzio in Central Italy not far from the terrible battles of Monte Cassino, where German armoured divisions clashed with American and British armoured divisions in bitter fighting. She resumed her peace time Trans-Tasman service in 1946, serving until 27th October 1961 when taken over by McIlwraith, McEachern Ltd. of Melbourne, with her twin yellow funnels then painted red. However, within a year she was sold to Hong Kong owners with her funnel colours changed again to black with two silver bands, and she was to complete the final nine years of her service with these funnel colours.

HUDDART, PARKER Ltd.

This Melbourne shipping company traded from offices in Geelong and Melbourne for almost ninety years from its formation in 1st August 1876 by James Huddart, his nephew T.J. Parker, John Traill and Capt. T. Webb. The services operated including passenger and cargo services on the Australian coast e.g. Melbourne to Hobart, Adelaide and Sydney and later to other ports in Tasmania and Western Australia. Coastal colliers of up to 6,500 dwt were built for trades around Australia and encountered little competition, unlike the passenger services that went head to head with the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand (USSNZ) and the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company. The bitterly contested intense competition saw the Tasmanian Steam Navigation taken over by USSNZ, with the rivalry between Huddart, Parker and USSNZ temporarily halted in 1885 by a profit-sharing agreement. The Bass Strait passenger services were then operated jointly from 1921 by a new company Tasmanian Steamers Pty Ltd. with 50% shareholding to each company.



Notable Huddart, Parker Ltd. steamers down the years included the twin funnelled Albert of 243 grt built in 1877 but sunk off Port Phillip Heads in 1893 with the loss of fifteen lives. Coogee of 762 grt was purchased in 1888 for the Bass Strait trade after completion on the Wear during the previous year and was later chartered as a cable repair ship in the Bass Strait from 1921. Nelson of 649 grt was purchased in 1890 but sank on her first voyage for the company at the mouth of the Tamar River. The Trans-Tasman passenger steamer built in 1887 as Elingamite of 2585 grt sank to the north of New Zealand in 1905 with the loss of 45 lives as well as a large amount of gold bullion. Zealandia of 6,600 grt was a notable passenger liner with accommodation for 426 passengers in three classes and a product of the John Brown yard at Clydebank in 1910. She served as a troop in both world wars until sunk by the Japanese on 19th February 1942. Ulimaroa of 5,777 grt was a passenger liner from Gourlay Brothers yard at Dundee in 1908 for the Trans-Tasman service sailing between Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart to New Zealand for ports with accommodation for 430 passengers in three classes until broken up in Japan in 1934.

A new Huddart, Parker passenger liner was launched as Westralia at the Govan yard of Harland & Wolf Ltd. on 25th April 1929 and completed four months later with accommodation for 433 passengers in two classes, as well as carrying 6,265 tonnes of general and refrigerated cargo. The directors of Huddart, Parker Ltd. wished to have a replacement on the Trans-Tasman passenger services for Ulimaroa and a partner for Westralia, and their search ended when a new twin funnelled passenger liner was found laid up at the Belfast yard of Harland & Wolff Ltd. in the summer of 1932 due to the financial crash of the Royal Mail Line group of companies.

DESIGN and SPECIFICATION of WANGANELLA

Wanganella was launched on 17th December 1929 at Belfast as Achimota for the British and African Steam Navigation Company, and managed by Elder Dempster, a group member of Royal Mail Lines. The coastal cargo ship carrying her twin diesel engines from the Glasgow engine works of Harland & Wolff Ltd. sank during 1930, and the engine replacements saw the delivery of the new liner severely delayed. She was completed in September 1931 with a grey hull and two yellow funnels, but due to the collapse of Royal Mail Lines after the financial irregularities and trial of Lord Kylsant, the final large instalment of £300,000 could not be paid.

It was first thought that she be hired to Elder Dempster, but the creditors refused since her brand-new value was greater than the likely return on capital allied to second-hand value. It was also thought that Elder Dempster would emerge with the capability to complete the purchase. The total cost of the ship was £520,000 and her building costs were only recouped when the directors of Huddart, Parker Ltd. agreed to pay £346,376 as a final bargain price.

The cost included a dry docking and alterations after her long year in lay up as the owners wanted a larger passenger complement of 408 passengers in two classes instead of the 324 passengers in three classes plus deck passengers for the West African trade of Elder Dempster.

The directors of Huddart, Parker Ltd. were present on the bridge of the new ship on her second set of sea trials, still named Achimota, and all went well, and the liner sailed from Belfast Lough on 29th November 1932 under the command of Capt. Bates, formerly Master of Westralia, bound for Sydney via Suez, and on arrival she was renamed Wanganella and was given a black hull with a white line and retained her yellow funnels. Wanganella was to serve a fortnightly service alternating between Sydney to Melbourne and Wellington, and between Melbourne and Auckland. The passenger accommodation extended over four decks, namely from the top working downwards in the Promenade Deck, 'A' Deck or Bridge Deck, 'B' Deck or Upper Deck, 'C' Deck or Main Deck, with a Sun Deck on the Boat Deck above the Promenade Deck for games and open space use.

Wanganella had a straight stem, cruiser stern semi balanced rudder, two slightly raked funnels, and two very tall masts which gave her the characteristic of similar Royal Mail Line liners of the 1920s. She was in effect a scaled down version of the liners Asturias and Alcantara completed in Belfast in 1926/1927, and her profile instantly recognised her as a traditional British designed motorship. Seven transverse bulkheads divided the ship into eight compartments and there were three complete steel decks in her hull, as well as a combined fo'c'stle, bridge deck and poop. Oil fuel, fresh water and water ballast were carried in her double bottom tanks, with cargo in four holds, two forward and two aft of the machinery spaces. Refrigerated cargo and food for passenger and crew consumption was carried in spaces forward of the machinery and below the lower deck.

The principal dimensions of the vessel were overall length of 479.0 feet, moulded beam of 63.6 feet, depth to Upper Deck of 34.6 feet, and a loaded draft of 24.6 feet. The fo'c'stle was of length 53 feet, the Bridge Deck of length 276 feet, and the poop of length 38 feet. Wanganella was measured at 9,876 grt and could carry 6,238 tonnes of cargo in four holds and worked by derricks on her two main masts. She carried sixteen lifeboats with double banked boats arranged around the after holds. The very tall foremast had a huge crow's nest halfway up, and together with the main mast had crosstrees, and both could fly long signal hoists from their tops when dressed overall. The navigating bridge was equipped with the latest navigational equipment, and the radio room and accommodation of the Master and navigating officers was abaft the bridge and in the structure below the twin funnels.

PUBLIC ROOMS of WANGANELLA The First Class Main Lounge was forward on the Promenade Deck and was finished with fine timber panelling with Grecian style carved pillars as supports, tall French windows opening on to the deck on three sides, and a central area with a high dome reaching up to Boat Deck. Large comfortable armchairs and sofas had grey fabric finishes, and the windows were offset by elegant columns on both sides with cool blue or grey curtains draped to the side. On the outer forward side of the room a large traditional fireplace gave some heat generated by electricity if the temperature in the Tasman Sea dropped significantly.

The First Class Reading and Writing Room was immediately abaft this lounge and was lined with grey wood panels, and abaft of this was a Second Lounge in a much lighter Italian style with twinned windows Wall lights and carver chairs and intricately carved

backs, and white sofas and easy chairs. At the aft end of the Promenade Deck was the First Class Smoking Lounge in a dark wood and velvet wallpapered Spanish style, for gentlemen sitting around heavy wood tables and leather backed carver armchairs. The floor was inlaid with several layers of marble, and the rear part of the room overlooked the Verandah Café and the aft decks.

The First Class Dining Room was two decks below forward on Main Deck and was a grand rectangular double height room with a huge central cross vaulted dome, double curved lattice windows, and concealed lighting in the upper area behind groups of five adjacent small glass covers. Thirty numbered tables set for eight, six or four guests, with the larger tables in the middle, and the smaller tables on the side near the windows and in between the supporting pillars. The children's playroom was entered from the forward end of the Dining Room. The First Class Staterooms were 'midships on Upper Deck, with a lesser number on Main Deck, and were luxurious twin bedded cabins that converted into a lounge during the day. In addition, there were a number of First Class Suites with a higher standard of comfort.

The Second Class Main Lounge was on 'A' (Bridge Deck) and was finished in old oak and plasterwork, and was adjacent to the Second Class Entrance, Card Room, Games Room and Library. These room were smaller in area than their equivalent in First Class, with the Second Class Dining Room finished in modern colourful tones and cheerful for the three and a half day crossing of the Tasman Sea.

MAIN PROPELLING and AUXILIARY MACHINERY Wanganella was twin screw and propelled by two sets of eight cylinder single acting four stroke cycle Harland-B. & W. air injection diesel engines of 8,500 bhp at 108 rpm to give a service speed of seventeen knots. The engines were continuously supercharged on the Italian Buchi system by means of Brown-Boveri turbo-blowers driven by the main engine exhaust and discharging directly into the inlet manifold. The main engines each drove their own air injection compressor from an extension of the forward end of the crankshaft. The pistons were cooled by oil, with the cylinders, covers and jackets cooled by fresh water. The super-chargers were located at the forward end of the engine room on the port and starboard sides.

The three 250 kilowatt diesel driven generators were also located at the forward end of the engine room and were six cylinder four stroke cycle air injection diesel engines built at Belfast by the shipbuilder. These were equipped with oversize compressors, which in addition to starting the engines supplied the necessary air for manoeuvring. The air was stored in four large reservoirs, arranged two on each side near the bedplates of the engine. The three generators supplied the electric current for the lighting, heating and power of the vessel. There was also an emergency plant, consisting of a 50 kilowatt diesel generator for use at any time that the main generators were out of action. The main switchboard was at the forward end of the machinery spaces above the generators. The engine room also contained two 300 gallon centrifugal purifiers for dealing with the lubricating oil. The main engines exhausted into separate silencers or to a thimble tube exhaust gas boiler for use in port and were arranged in the casing leading to the aft funnel, the forward funnel being a dummy. The upper decks were thus only interrupted by a very small trunk way, resulting in more space for the passengers in their staterooms and public rooms. The engine room was very compact, occupying 34 frames spaces of hull, but there was plenty of room for engine repairs and overhauls. All the deck equipment such as windlass, cargo winches, steering gear, pumps and the twin hall carbon dioxide refrigerating machines were electrically driven.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Wanganella at Port Twifik Suez

021 225

CAREER of WANGANELLA Wanganella was named after a small village in the Billabong Creek on the Cobb Highway in southern New South Wales. Twelve days after her arrival at Sydney from Belfast on the last day of 1932 after a fast voyage from Belfast of only 29 days and 22 hours, Wanganella was ready for her maiden voyage across the Tasman Sea from Sydney via Melbourne to Auckland and Wellington and return to Sydney. The 12th January 1933 heralded the start of Huddart, Parker Ltd. Trans Tasman Express service with her earlier near sister ship of Westralia, and Zealandia built in 1910. On this maiden sailing, Wanganella showed herself off to some of those living on the South Island of New Zealand by sailing down the west coast to the Fjord lands of South Island and then sailed up the majestic Milford Sound with its high mountain peaks. Wanganella always berthed at an adjacent dock to the USSNZ berth in Darling Harbour in Sydney, with their twin funnelled Trans Tasman flyer of the distinctive counter stern of Monowai of 11,037 grt dating from 1925 and their other passenger liners, waiting to compete with Wanganella, Westralia and Zealandia.

The outbreak of war in Europe on 3rd September 1939 had little impact in Antipodes until the ANZAC troop forces of Australia and New Zealand were mobilised and took ships to the Middle East. However, the arrival of the German raider Orion, the former Kurmak of Hapag, in the waters of the South Pacific in June 1940 saw her lay long lines of mines across the sea lanes to the north of New Zealand. The USSNZ liner Niagara entered Hauraki Gulf during the night of 19th June and struck one of these mines at 0300 hours and settled by the head during the next two hours and sank at 0530 hours. Wanganella took on board her 136 passengers and 205 crew members, and took them safely to Auckland. Three minesweepers plus the cargo-liner of United Baltic Corporation were lost before the sea lanes were declared safe again.

WANGANELLA



Wanganella in McIlwraith, McEacharns's colours at Sydney in 1961

Wanganella was converted in Melbourne in April, May and June of 1941 into a hospital ship and given a white hull with a broad red band interrupted by Red Crosses at intervals on both sides of her hull and on her stern and both sides of her twin funnels. She was fully operational and complete with operating theatres, medical equipment and staffed by fully trained surgeons and nurses. She had beds for 434 patients, which was increased to 550 in 1943, and carried a medical staff of 110 from the Australian Army Medical Corps, as well as 123 crew members. She sailed from Melbourne as HMAHS Wanganella on 21st July 1941 after her commissioning ceremony earlier that day for Singapore via Sydney. She carried several Australian General Hospital (A.G.H.) units to Singapore and returned with Australian troops who had fallen foul of tropical diseases, together with 216 civilians and Government representatives.

Wanganella served as the Australian Hospital Ship 45 in many war theatres of the world, and survived bombings and machine gunning from German planes. The first voyage to Suez to load and treat British wounded troops from the Egyptian campaign saw her bombed at Port Tewfik. The Japanese thrusts into the Pacific from the Philippines and the savage fighting in Papua New Guinea and the Solomons meant Wanganella often loaded her wounded at open anchorages in the Solomons and off Papua New Guinea as well as Port Moresby. She made several voyages from Suez to Australian ports with wounded troops and in mid-November 1942 on one of these voyages she took onboard several wounded men from the Dutch Shell tanker Ondina when 200 miles north west of Fremantle. Blood transfusions were needed by some of the wounded to save their lives, as their tanker had been badly damaged by shells from the Japanese raiders Aitoku Maru and Hokoku Maru. This pair were converted OSK passenger and cargo liners, but justice was done when shells from the after gun of Ondina and her escorting corvette Bengal caused a direct hit and masses of flames on Hokoku Maru, which sank with the loss of much life.

On 14th April 1944, Wanganella was at anchor off Bombay when the terrible ammunition explosion onboard the standard cargo ship Fort Stikine ripped through Bombay Docks, sinking many ships and causing a gruesome loss of life. The local hospitals were overcome by the rush on injured people, and Wanganella was asked to help. The medical team treated many people with serious burns and wounds over the course of one week, with the surgical team working without a break.

After all had been cared for and on the mend, Wanganella discharged her patients and sailed for the Mediterranean. In late May 1944, after Wanganella loaded badly wounded troops at the Anzio beach head, they were cared for by her medical teams until she arrived in Wellington and Lyttelton, and she then returned to Sydney in June 1944 to berth at the main passenger berth at Circular Quay under the famed Sydney Harbour Bridge.

After the Japanese were cleared out of Borneo, Wanganella was sent on two voyages to Kuching, Labuan and Balikpapan to take onboard and repatriate Australian prisoners of war, part of the two thousand men that had been interned by the Japanese on the island, and she transported them to Morotai Island in the northern group of Dutch East Indies and then back to Sydney where she arrived on 23rd November 1945 to end her hospital ship service. There is a memorial to HMAHS Wanganella in a cemetery on St Kilda Road Melbourne to remember the many wounded troops she brought back home to Australia.

By the end of her hospital ship service in late 1945, Wanganella had cared for and treated 13,389 wounded and sick troops and evacuees, particularly Australian, New Zealand and American troops. She had sailed 252,000 nautical miles on these mercy missions and need a complete overhaul of nine months at Melbourne to restore her to commercial service condition. The opportunity was taken to increase her passenger complement to 424 passengers from the previous total of 408 by fitting extra cabins at the rear end of 'A' (Bridge Deck), which was also glazed over, and by fitting a two deck structure on her poop for improved crew accommodation and facilities. Above on the Promenade Deck, canvas covers could now be raised to give shelter in gale force conditions. On completion of her refit in September 1946, Wanganella made a 'one off' voyage to Vancouver from Sydney via Auckland and Honolulu, returning to Sydney on 28th December 1946.

DISASTER on BARRETT REEF at WELLINGTON Wanganella then made her first post-war Trans Tasman voyage from Sydney and Melbourne to Auckland in January 1947. In darkness on 19th January at 2330 hours, Commander R. Darroch mistook the channel marked by the flashing buoy in front of Barrett Reef and took Wanganella on the inside of the buoy causing her to pile up on some nasty protruding rocks and become firmly wedged. She had two long massive tears in her plating below the waterline at her bow, but thankfully no injuries were caused to her passengers and crew and all were safely taken off. The damage to her forefoot and forward double bottom tanks was massive and it took eighteen days for tugs to free her from her rocky predicament. An exceptional high tide with her engines full astern and a very powerful tug named Toia towing at full power finally broke her free on 6th February and she was towed into the harbour and berthed at Aotea Quay just before midnight. She was placed into the floating Wellington Floating Dock for inspection, with the surveyors finding that she was very badly damaged indeed, and a new forepeak, forefoot and forward double bottom units weighing 400 tonnes would have to be ordered from her builder at Belfast to make the necessary repairs.

The big repair job was able to get underway in the late summer of 1948 when the new sections arrived at Wellington from Belfast on cargo ships, and with Wanganella kept afloat during this long wait by compressor pumps at her berth or safely placed in dry dock. The top of the bow had to be propped up by steel supports to prevent sagging while the new steel sections were inserted below, and the repair was finally completed on 29th October 1948 under the supervision of a Harland & Wolff Assistant Works Manager. This remarkable piece of ship surgery and engineering enabled Wanganella to cheat the scrapyard and sail on for another 22 years until the end of her career. The USSNZ ferry Wahine was later wrecked on the Barrett Reef on 10th April 1968 with the loss of 51 lives.



Wanganella aground on Barrett Reef

THE FINAL YEARS Wanganella resumed her Trans Tasman service after sea trials in late November 1948 and sailed from Wellington to Sydney on 9th December 1948 after an absence in the Australian port of nearly two years. She also operated occasional cruises to the Southern Fjordlands of New Zealand and into the Pacific until a further refit in 1952 gave her a glazed in forward part of her Promenade Deck to better protect First Class passengers in gale conditions. She had a successful cruise season in mid-1958 in the Southern Fjordlands of New Zealand and into the Pacific, while operating her Trans Tasman Express for the remainder of the year. However, passenger numbers were dropping from late 1959 due to air competition across the Tasman and Huddart Parker Ltd. had to decide to offload their passenger division to McIlwraith, McEacharn Ltd. of Melbourne in the autumn of 1961.

The twin yellow funnels of Wanganella were painted in the dark red colours of her new owners in Sydney on 27th October 1961 and she resumed her Trans Tasman services. Passenger numbers continued to drop over the following six months, but a shutdown disabled port diesel engine at the end of March 1962 en-route to Auckland signalled that the end of her Tans Tasman service was nigh. She returned to Sydney on her starboard engine while the port engine was repaired, but a further engine explosion on 12th June 1962 while manoeuvring in Sydney harbour convinced her new Melbourne owners to offer her for sale. She was repaired again and made a last few weeks of service on her familiar Trans Tasman services until the last sailing returned to Sydney on 25th July 1962 under the command of Capt. William Uttley, her master for many years. She was taken over by the Hung Fang Shipping Company of Hong Kong, and her twin funnels were now painted black with two central thin silver bands.



Wanganella at Deep Cove in her final days as an accommodation ship for workers on a tunnelling job in the late 1960s

Wanganella then operated cruises from Auckland to the South Pacific and Australia for her Hong Kong owners and was a hotel ship for the 'Perth Empire Games' at Perth in late 1962. The Pacific cruising ended in January 1964, but she was then sold to Utah Construction Inc. of America as an accommodation ship at Doubtful Sound New Zealand, serving until the end of 1969. She was moored against a rocky shore with a permanent pedestrian connection for her workers to reach the hydro electric scheme tunnels and roads they were working on. Doubtful Sound is to the south of the more famous Milford Sound, and the hydroelectric scheme provided waterpower for the Manapouri Power Station commissioned in 1972 to supply electricity to Tiwai Point aluminium smelter near Bluff one hundred miles away. Wanganella was taken over by the New Zealand Government (Ministry of Works) when Utah Construction finished their part of the contract.

She was sold at the end of 1969 to the Australian Pacific Shipping Company of Hong Kong, but had been idle for six years and her twin diesel engines could not be restarted, so her last voyage was under tow to Hong Kong, where she was found not worthy of reconditioning. She was sold to Kaohsiung scrapyard for breaking up, arriving on 5th June 1970, still as Wanganella. Towards the end of 1970 nothing remained at the Hong Kong scrapyard of Shyeh Sheng Fuat Steel and Iron Company to show that a very great Australian liner had ended her days there

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