



AUSTRALASIAN INSTITUTE
OF MARINE SURVEYORS

Shipshape

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**WORLD'S LARGEST BATTERY-ELECTRIC SHIP
POWERS UP IN TASMANIA**

A future in marine surveying

THE following article was published in the AIMS Newsletter in July 2005 by Mike Bozier, former President of AIMS. Thanks to Capt Peter Murday.

Capt Peter Murday's views...

Mike was a foundation member of the AIMS and the first President of the AIMS in 1986. He was President for a total of eight years at various times, the last time being 1998-99. Mike was also a valuable mentor to all future Presidents thereafter.

Although this article is only 20 years old, it shows the great changes the industry has gone through in this relatively short period. The description of a surveyor's lot back in the 1960s makes us wish these days would return. Alas, it is not to be.

In the last three paragraphs, Mike peered into the "cloudy crystal ball" to try to predict where the industry was headed. The final paragraph is interesting, in that the surveys described therein as being done "so little" are these days big business for many of our members.

The marine surveying industry has grown and adapted to meet changing requirements of our export-import businesses and the demands of an ever-growing recreational / DCV area. What will the industry – and the AIMS – look like in 2045?

Mike Bozier article

In considering possible future trends in our profession in Australia, a look at where we have come from seems appropriate.

At the end of the 1960s,

there were 10 private, fulltime surveyors working in Sydney, plus two who looked after oils and chemicals and two who only adjusted compasses. Three firms worked for shipping companies and shipping agencies but also worked for some cargo insurers, such as South British Insurance, that no longer exist.

Quite often, if there was a conflict of interest with the surveyors' client, the shipping agency and the insurer would agree to the surveyors representing both of them and splitting the survey fees.

The Sydney Marine Underwriters' Association employed two staff surveyors who also carried out some pre-loading inspections of grain ships. The position in Melbourne was similar, although one company dominated the shipping company work. There was also a Victorian Marine Underwriters' Association.

Marine surveying has evolved continuously. In the 1930s, a marine surveyor travelled into the wharfs by train or bus in the morning, worked his way around the ships in which he was interested, had a leisurely lunch on most days and wrote reports in the afternoon. At the end of the 1960s, the system was similar but cars were essential.

General cargo was still discharged with ship's gear, usually derricks, and stacked in a wharf shed. Damaged cargo was stored in a wharf "deadhouse" for inspection by the consignee's customs agent and the ship's surveyor. In the event of major damage, such as to a piece of machinery, a joint survey would

be held at the wharf with the cargo insurer's surveyor and a representative of the consignee.

It was uncommon for a ship's surveyor to carry out a further inspection of damage at a consignee's premises. In August and September, Christmas imports would be flooding in. There could be upwards of a hundred cartons of "Matchbox"-brand models in the deadhouse, with windows cut in the side of each, and part of the contents missing. Each carton had to be opened, the missing items identified and their invoice value shown on a Customs form to claim a rebate of duty.

In 1985, when AIMS was being set up, there were 19 private surveyors in New South Wales, 12 in Victoria, 15 in Queensland, six in South Australia and three in Tasmania. There was also a Marine Surveyors Association in Western Australia, with 10 members. Of these 64 surveyors, 56 became founder-members of AIMS.

Survey work had continued to evolve. The first overseas cellular container ship had arrived in Australia at the end of 1968. By 1985, general cargo ships were uncommon in Australia. Small geared bulk carriers were used for steel cargoes, PCC vessels had appeared, and the export of coal and wheat from Sydney had ceased.

Container shipping companies still packed small consignments in their own containers (LCL cargo) and required damaged cargo surveys prior to delivery to a consignee. The State marine underwriters' associations had gone after the formation of the

Insurance Council of Australia, as had many of the smaller insurance companies.

The work done by surveyors polarised. The majority of surveyors worked for shipping companies and agencies or for cargo insurers but none worked for both. The only exception was in legal actions, where similar expertise might be required by each party. With the increase in litigation, work as an expert witness was becoming more common.

At present, AIMS has 100 active members, working in all States and three members working overseas. Some members have specialised in one type of surveying but the majority still cover a number of different fields. The State capital ports handle the bulk of general cargo import and exports, while the out-ports handle bulk commodities.

With the introduction of IMO recommendations on packing cargo into containers and on the stowage and securing of cargoes in ships' holds, the introduction of ISM code, the increase in container shipping company expertise in the carriage of refrigerated and special cargoes, and the phasing out of LCL consignments due to the proliferation of freight forwarders, the incidence of minor cargo damage requiring a marine surveyor's report has diminished. This is reflected in the fact that a number of the Institute's older, active members in the main ports have chosen not to work fulltime.

So what is the future for a marine surveyor in Australia? AIMS has 23 probationary members, most of whom have completed or are completing the AMC course for Certificate IV in Commercial Marine Surveying. Some of these are working in the recreational craft industry. Others are working in ship construction and maintenance or

associated industries, and 10 are engaged in marine surveying.

With the reduction in Australian-registered ships and the migration of Australian seafarers offshore, together with the reduction in the numbers of western European officers, the traditional source of marine surveyors has drastically reduced.

Allied to this is the general shortage of persons with maritime qualifications for competing occupations, such as harbour and Reef pilots, port operations, ship operations, maritime college lecturing and government departments such as DoTaRS. It seems that there will be enough survey work to choose from but the type of work will continue to change. Continuing flexibility and a willingness to continue to learn will be prime requisites for a successful surveyor.

Exports of bulk commodities from Australia will continue to increase for the foreseeable future and the associated marine survey work should also increase – draught surveys, on/off hire, vessel condition inspections and damage surveys. The import and export of bulk oils and chemicals will also probably increase.

Work in the main ports on container cargoes and PCC and RoRo cargoes will probably contract, as a percentage of the volumes carried, for the reasons previously mentioned. The major potential change is with marine insurance surveying.

If the marine sections are absorbed by the general sections of insurance companies and the transport claims are "commoditised" in a manner similar to that which has started for general and household claims, then marine insurance surveyors may have to decide if they wish to remain in their positions.

Most work for themselves, handling the full range of insurance work up to and

including the giving of evidence in court actions. Surveyors of this sort will probably change to consultancy work or move out of survey work all together. Previous AIMS members now work for Commonwealth Government bodies, in port operations and in harbour pilotage.

Peering into a cloudy crystal ball, it seems likely that, over the medium term, work in the main ports will polarise further. The international inspection companies will try to expand their customer base by offering national coverage – a one-stop shop approach. This would appeal to the accountants who increasingly are pushing for immediate, bottom-line results with no regard for a long-term outlook.

At the other extreme will be small, local survey companies offering consultancy-type services that include acting as an expert witness. They will be available when a wharf hits a ship, a portainer crane falls over just as a ship is berthing, a heavy lift topples over just as its weight is being taken and other on-off events but it is unlikely that there will be enough of them to represent all interested parties

The hardest thing to understand is why there is so little precautionary survey work, such as pre-loading hold-condition inspections, supervision and certification of the stowage and securing heavy cargo in holds, stowage and securing of heavy and awkward consignments on flatracks and in containers, and the adequate protection of sensitive cargo from moisture damage. The cost of one claim would pay for a large number of preventative surveys.

Mike Bozier
Past President,
AIMS