



MARINE ART

in Australia



Fair Wind, Warwick Webb



Ian Hansen, artist aboard *James Craig*



Peeling Away Time, Martin Campbell



Oswald Brett celebrates 91 years

John Hannan, Patron

**CURRENT OFFICERS
OF THE SOCIETY**

PRESIDENT

Robert Carter OAM
02 9913 8520
robertcarter@optusnet.com.au
.....

VICE PRESIDENTS

NSW: John Sweaney
(02) 9349 7780
johnsweaney@bigpond.com

QLD: Don Braben
(07) 3820 9492
dbraben@ozemail.com.au

SA: John Ford
(08) 8449 3987
fordmarineart@adam.com.au

TAS: Greg Guy
(03) 6297 8541
deepbayboats@bigpond.com

VIC: Julian Bruere
0419 529 390
studioartist@optusnet.com.au

WA: Ross Shardlow
(08) 9361 0170
shipart@iinet.net.au
.....

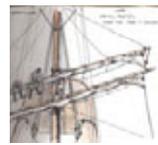
ASMA MAIL ADDRESS

Dean Claffin Editor
deanclaffin@gmail.com
27 Curtis Road Balmain 2041
or PO Box 1342 Rozelle 2039
.....

The ASMA Newsletters have grown from being a simple page of ASMA information into two publications: The Bulletin for members and the Newsletter for wider reading. To keep the numerical progress of our publications new **Marine Art in Australia** will be numbered **63**, which is what the next Newsletter would have been.

To symbolize our new endeavour we have used Warwick Webb's painting *Fair Wind* to set a new course.

IN THIS ISSUE:



James Craig voyage - artist on board 3
Ian Hansen



Writer in Residence Report 4
Janetta Russell



**Peeling Away Time,
a painting by Martin Campbell** 4-5
Janetta Russell



SS Casino – That Fateful Day 6-7
Phil Suter



Oswald Brett – Marine Artist 8-10
Bruce Stannard



President's Medal
1 – Selection criteria 11-13
2 – 2010 award 14
3 – 2011 award 15



Craftsmanship in Ship Models 16-19
Is it any longer a reliable measure of worth?
Michel Laroche



Conrad's Narcissus 20-21
Ross Shardlow



President's Message 22
Robert Carter OAM



Marine Art in Australia 23
Peter Yeomans

James Craig Voyage

Feb-Mar 2011

From Hobart to Port Jackson



I had crewed on board *James Craig* in 2005 on her initial trip to Hobart and back, I seemed to have made a reasonable impression because they invited me back for this year's trip. Unfortunately I could not do both legs so I opted for the return voyage. When I signed on I was surprised to find I was a topman in the fore-

watch. Topmen (there are two each watch) are usually the more experienced seamen who climb aloft, they coordinate the furling of sails and over haul buntlines when setting sail. This was all very gratifying except I realised my climbing certificate was now out of date. I would have to re-qualify before I could carry out my duties.

Others tasks required by the watch members are quartermaster (steering the ship) lookout, man overboard sentry, runner (taking radio communications from lookout, navigator and relaying them to the officer of the watch and vice versa) and fire party (doing a tour of the entire ship below decks checking for anything untoward.) If you were not assigned any of these essentials, you stood by to trim sails, brace, furl, and so on.

On board was another society member Hugh Cross. He was topman in the mizzen watch. Luckily for both of us, the ships runs a 3 watch system which means you have 4 hours on and 8 hours off.

This allowed us plenty of time for painting and sketching. Hugh was very organized with a fine array of paints, brushes and sketch pads. I tend to go with a very small and basic set of acrylics, my log book and a couple of brushes.



When I lost my small brush, Hugh very kindly gave me one of his. The camaraderie on board the ship has always been a wonderful thing.

We left Hobart on February 23rd in quiet conditions, but by the time we had motored into Storm Bay a fine 25-30 knot SW wind has us sailing beautifully. The master John Dikkenberg (ex RAN) is a firm believer in "*James Craig is a sailing ship therefore we will sail.*" Some of our watches were in extremely light winds, we continued to sail which really tested the steering abilities of the less experienced. When the wind is over 20 knots she is an absolute treasure to steer. Going aloft is always a great experience, even in hazardous conditions. It could be wet, cold, dark and windy but the job must be completed and by the time you are back on deck with the other climbers there is a great feeling of satisfaction.

Lookout is another favourite trick for me, at night you must stay on the forecandle deck but during daylight hours you can go out onto the jib boom which gives you a far better view of the horizon. You can look down and see the bow of the ship cleaving a path through the deep blue of the open ocean, albatross are normally gliding all around the ship, and above you the graceful curves of jibs and staysail arcing up to join the squares on the foremast. It makes you feel good to be alive and at sea.

All good things must come to an end and on March 2nd we were off Sydney Heads to end another great trip.

The majority of the engineers and deck officers as well as some crew were from the Merchant Marine. However there were a sprinkling of ex Navy personnel on board and as the merchant men posed with their red ensign t-shirts we took great delight in informing them of who were the '*Senior Service.*' As I mentioned earlier, the camaraderie on board is a wonderful thing.

The *James Craig* does take passengers, so to any member who would like to experience sailing a square rigger: you can do so, either a day trip or extended voyages. For information contact the Sydney Heritage Fleet on 02 9298 3888

Ian Hansen

Report to ASMA and the Sydney Heritage Fleet

**From *Writer in Residence, Jenetta Russell*
November, 2011**

It is my pleasure and delight to be 'Writer in Residence' for the Australian Society of Marine Artists and Sydney Heritage Fleet joint project - I consider it a huge honour to work with both organizations. My challenge has been that my full time job, as part owner of a group of companies in the Agricultural Industry, currently limits the time I can devote to this writing "passion".

So far the articles I have written included inspiration from an interview with Bill Shepherd, a great character in the machinery shop down at the Heritage Shipyard in Rozelle Bay, Sydney. He regaled me with wonderful stories of his time at sea on the aircraft carriers, HMAS *Melbourne* and *Sydney*, on boom defense vessel HMAS *Koala* and at the Naval Base on Manus Island as well as his war service at the Korean conflict in 1951. It was fun to write Bill Shepherd's story!

Artist and previous Artist in Residence Martin Campbell and I collaborated on one of his painting projects. My aim was to attempt to 'get inside the head of an artist whilst he painted'. This was a fascinating experience, where I could almost feel the paint being applied and the creative emotion flowing onto his canvas. Martin is a brilliant artist – in this work he painted a section of the hull of the partially restored SS *John Oxley*, calling it *Peeling Away Time*. His inspiration came from his growing relationship with this beautiful old pilot steamer, watching it being so lovingly restored at the Sydney Heritage Fleet shipyard. We explored Martin's use of light, colour and intricate brushwork combined with a 'splashing' technique he used to give the feel of rust, grime and bilge drippage accumulated in the *John Oxley's* long life of service. It was fascinating to watch Martin's ability to capture a microcosm in time of the old pilot cutter before she is restored to her original glory.

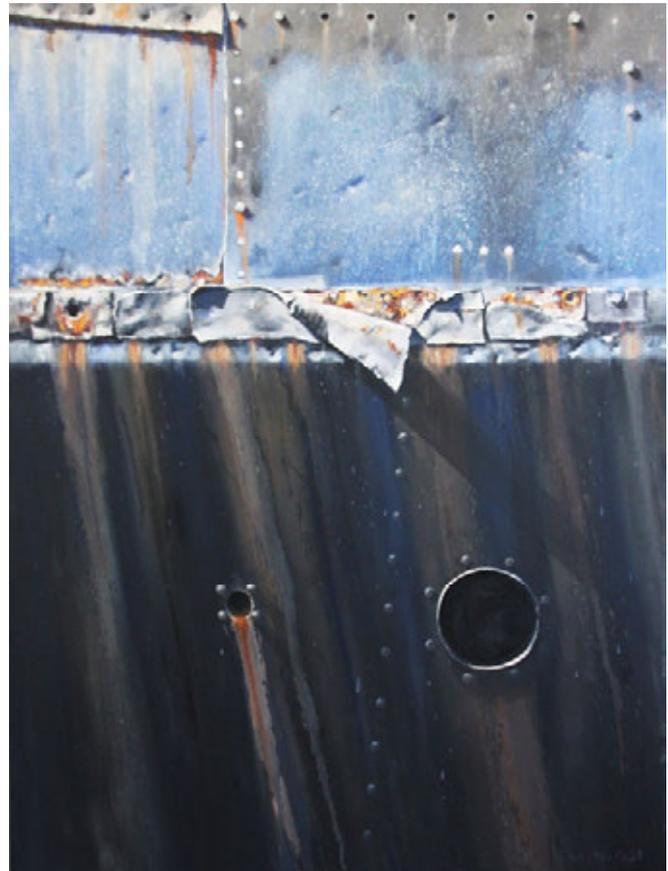
Current projects include interviews with Hugh Lander, Bob Carter and Ross Melrose as well as an obituary of the much respected historian Margaret Reid, who passed away this year. Hugh Lander and I delved into the ups and downs of his role as Public Affairs Manager at the Fleet; the challenges involved with keeping SV *James Craig* maintained and funded; and rich little cameos such as the story of the scattering of Bruce Hitchman's ashes at sea (from "the *Craig*").

Bob Carter, President of the Australian Society of Marine Artists, walked me through the Rozelle shipyards with the help of Tim Drinkwater and some of the many loyal volunteers. Bob talked, again from the eyes of an artist, about what he could see and how he would transfer that to canvas – a delicious mix of history and artistic whim. Having interviewed at length a number of artists over the years, I long ago came to the conclusion that an artist's perception of colour, shape, space, proportion and depth makes me feel like I am viewing the world in monochrome compared to the '3D technicolour' seen through their eyes. I find this concept fascinating - it is just one of many reasons I am so delighted to be Writer in Residence for both the Australian Society of Marine Artists (getting insights into the artist's mind) and the Sydney Heritage Fleet (sourcing material and human stories about those who go to sea, went to sea or are preserving our maritime history).

© Jenetta Russell, 2011

Peeling Away Time

a painting by by Martin Campbell



Martin Campbell has painted *Peeling Away Time* for the Sydney Heritage Fleet 2011 Annual Fundraising Dinner. To write this article was a not-to-be-missed opportunity to drill into the mind of a marine artist at work.

When Martin started on this detail of the bulwark (on the quarter stern, starboard broadside view, 2nd port hole from the left) on the partially restored hull of SS *John Oxley* he talked of his growing relationship with this beautiful old pilot steamer, watching it being so lovingly restored by an army of people, each and every one of them helping to assure that a small but priceless flotilla of antique boats and ships will continue to ply Sydney Harbour, maintaining the 'working harbour' atmosphere which has a history spanning more than 200 years.

"I painted this picture long rather than wide because I wanted to elongate the rust runs as well as emphasise the contrasting light and shade" Martin said. "I divided the work into thirds both down and across and placed the 'centre of interest', a sealant strip, off centre, wanting the viewer to immediately go to that point and ask themselves "what is that?" I then put a wash on the rest of the painting as quickly as possible so I could assess the tone (light and dark). I painted from the top so that drippage could be painted over as I worked my way down."

Martin likes to be able to see the painting's form coming through very early on in the process, "If you don't, you may suddenly find you are going in the wrong direction". Much of the thought process in the 8 hours it took to complete occurred in the early stages, the latter part reserved for the minute and delicate detail. Martin did not start out to paint an emotional subject but, because he felt so strongly about recording this tiny piece of history, in the end it did turn into 'an emotional subject' despite everything.

Light played a very important role in the work. Even though the paint on the ship itself is black, it has lightened considerably over time with salt, rust and grime. Added to which, the reflection of the sky onto the black metal bulwark, gave the impression of a light blue colour.

Martin starts with very thin dark paint which dries quickly allowing top coating with the lighter hues. Once the 'wash' has been applied, predominantly with black and a bit of blue, the canvas is tilted at an angle allowing the rust and salt drip marks on the sheer strake to run at an angle following the convex shape of the hull. An old brush is used to 'disturb' the surface and create downward runs. "It is 'good' if it is messy because it is an old ship which lends itself to being messy!" Although the painting starts as a copy of a photograph taken by Martin, this quickly diverges into an original creation when the wet mix is flicked with a finger across the top of the brush to splatter, first in

grey, then blue-grey, then blue and finally a yellow-green "seabird poo" colour. It was vital to put some of the blue tones into both the lower and upper parts of the painting to 'unify' it, similarly some of the colours of rust in the lower section are repeated in the upper. For greater harmony, he limited the number of colours used in the work, using only lamp black, ultramarine blue, meridian, burnt sienna, permanent crimson, yellow ochre, orange, white and cadmium yellow.

In the lower right, there is an old porthole to the pilot's accommodation, the glass is out of view as it is folded back inside on a hinge. Beside it is a drain hole from the main deck. In the upper section, one can see the sunlight through some of the rivet holes, whilst a plate behind blocks others.

For Martin, *John Oxley* is 'shedding her skin' - a pictorial history of a piece of the ship in the morning light - a modern take on an old vessel! The sealing strips of canvas and tar on the sheer strake knuckle at main deck level have deteriorated over time and will eventually be replaced, but Martin has a heartfelt desire to record 'the way it was before restoration'. The light is paramount, showing the strips curling away revealing the old fabric.

Martin feels a sadness that in time *John Oxley* will be relaunched. "For years much of Sydney's population have driven over Anzac Bridge and, looking to their left, seen this lovely old ship up on the floating dock. It has become 'part of the furniture' and symbolises the fading working harbour of Sydney. She is a beautiful rusty piece of sculpture sitting proudly above the dock.."

© **Jenetta Russell, 2011**



Martin painting *Peeling Away Time*

SS Casino Returns' and 'SS Casino - That Fateful Day'

by *Phil Suter*

1st project ~ 'SS Casino Returns'

Originally I was privately commissioned to produce a large painting depicting the *SS Casino* arriving into Apollo Bay which was entitled '*SS Casino Returns*'. The brief was for it to be as historically accurate as possible and, for me, an exciting part of the project was gathering the information about the vessel's history, including when and where it was first made, (the ship was built in Dundee in 1881 and was named after a town on the Richmond River in NSW called Casino); how it was sent down to Australia; and also researching about its active role as a supply vessel to the coastal towns of South West Victoria.

It was a vessel that had much history in the surrounding area and it sank tragically at Apollo Bay on 10th July, 1932.

The next phase was to see what kind of descriptive information I could get about the ship itself, and I was surprised and delighted to have found the original engineer's plans in Dundee Scotland. The Dundee Council was kind enough to forward them to me.

I then created a projection of the ship based on these plans received. I had to lean on my many years as an architectural renderer to achieve this, as the plans weren't that clear; and as my research continued, I found more missing elements to assist me to recreate the look of this historic vessel.

The Ship had not only caught my imagination but had also become a very engrossing story I wanted to tell to a wider audience through the traditional medium of painting.



Prelim No.1

Since it was the largest canvas I had ever worked on, (2m x 1.5m) I discovered after a while that it felt almost like building a house, meaning that I had to piece it together 'brick by brick' and that there was no ignoring of any areas. It was a matter of 'ploughing on regardless' once I had made my final selection of the direction I was going to take.

I felt that once started there was no turning back. As I was painting it also felt like I had built it, sailed it, sold it to a company in Sydney and then started my run along the coast, imagining that I was the person who was dropping off supplies to all the coastal townships between Melbourne and Port Fairy.



Prelim No. 2

Unexpectedly and to my great surprise, as I came closer to completing the painting, it felt like I was getting closer to the day it sank and closer also to all of the drama that unfolded in that beautiful bay... I felt pain for the people that died and I also felt for the vessel's 'life' ending as well. Ironically and unintentionally I completed this first painting on 10th July, 2011 - the actual anniversary of the sinking of the ship.

All of this was unexpectedly very emotional for me.

Although I paint a variety of subject matter which does have an emotional connection for me, including portraits, this was different – it felt like a dormant, collective grief was inadvertently reawakened by an outsider like myself, by revisiting a largely unsung chapter of Australia's history.



'SS Casino Returns'

2nd project ~

'SS Casino – That Fateful Day'

Completed September 2011 and winner of the WTC Peoples' Choice Maritime art award.

This first project laid the foundation for my second painting: 'SS Casino – That Fateful Day'.

From the original research, detailing and development of the first and larger painting I was so engrossed in its history (as well as in its detailing) that I felt the need to depict it the day it sank.

The morning it went down, the weather was stormy. As it was coming into port, the anchor sheared a hole in the side of the ship and the vessel keeled over and sank approximately 130 metres from the Apollo Bay shore - 10 souls died in total.

The *Casino's* importance was pivotal for the local communities along the southern Victorian coast as it was probably a very welcome sight to those who lived there and depended on it; and its loss and the loss of life would have been greatly mourned.

I feel grateful for the opportunity of having commemorated an important aspect of our Australian maritime history.

Artistic challenges

As with all my projects, I like to have some preliminary sketches of my concepts ready before working on the final artwork. This gives me a clear direction on a most basic level as to what kind of mood and layout the final result might project.



Prelim No. 1

The challenges to do this were met by treating this more like a sky and seascape rather than a depiction of the mechanics of the ship. I painted this work mainly in oils but employed mixed media to suit my detailed style.

The mood I was aiming for was 'menacing', a condition that sailors would probably be most familiar with!



Prelim No. 2

To create a 'menacing' mood, the colour selection was paramount. I chose Prussian Blue as one of the dominant colours to help express the turmoil of the moment, and it was important artistically to distinguish the sky from the sea in such weather conditions.

The sea was most difficult to do: to show depth, transparency, and light travelling through water; highlights being picked up by the lit sky; churning foam of the sea as it hits the surface of the metal hull, along with sea spray and waves, all contributed to a feeling of deep, rough water and a stormy sky.

From all the feedback I have received, I understand that the general impression was that it was a 'moody' painting and seemed to have struck a chord with the viewing public – much to my delight, as this project seems now to have a life of its own.



'SS Casino - That Fateful Day'

In conclusion

I had not expected such an emotional and thought-provoking experience when I was first given the commission to produce my first *Casino* piece. The history of this ship, the whole study and portrayal of it, the detailing and finally the completion and subsequent painting, has linked me unexpectedly with this saga; and I hope that I have opened people's minds and memory to the sad event that happened not that long ago in Apollo Bay.

Phil Suter



Squally afternoon Tasman Sea. The barque *James Craig* off Sydney shortening sail in a strong southerly breeze. The vessel is speaking to Howard Smith's steamer *Burwah*, circa 1920.

Oswald Brett, the Grand Old Man of Australian marine art, has just celebrated his 91st birthday. Still hale and hearty, he continues his life-long passion for portraying ships and the sea, a genre in which he has long been recognised as one of the great masters. Bruce Stannard spoke with him at his home in New York.

Oswald Longfield Brett is that rarity in the marine art world, a painter with a profound personal understanding of ships and the sea. Having spent much of his long life voyaging across the oceans of the world he has an intimate first-hand knowledge of the power of wind and water and their subtle and sometimes savage influence upon the ways of a ship at sea. It is this deep knowledge, borne of long experience that stamps his paintings with an unmistakeable aura of authenticity, so much so that his ships invariably seem poised to sail right off the canvas. Looking closely at his finely detailed portrait of the barque *James Craig* with her crew aloft on the fore t'gallant yard, muzzling sail in the teeth of a southerly blow, I have no difficulty at all in imagining the shrieking of the wind, in sensing the scend of the sea and in feeling the sharp sting of salt

spray on my face. It is one thing to portray a square-rigger standing ship-shape and Bristol fashion at a quiet berth, but quite another to capture the power and the glory of the vessel pitching headlong through a rising Tasman Sea. Os Brett's paintings capture the moment and give us a vivid glimpse of a way of life that has now vanished from the oceans of the world.

Oswald Longfield Brett spent an adventurous childhood on Sydney's vast Harbour, paddling about Watson's Bay in tiny cedar canoes, moseying around the towering hulk of the mid-19th century emigrant clipper *Sobroan* in Berry's Bay and always keenly observing and sketching the magnificent ocean liners and cargo ships that in the pre-war years made Sydney one of the busiest port cities in the world.

When Captain Alan Villiers sailed into Sydney in his lovely little full-rigged ship *Joseph Conrad* in December 1935, the lanky 14-year-old Brett immediately was among the first to climb aboard. He was so smitten by the ship's beauty that he resolved on the spot to run away to sea in her. Villiers, who was to become a life-long friend, would have gladly taken the boy with him on his circumnavigation had Brett's anxious parents not balked at the

idea of their only son embarking on a perilous Cape Horn passage.

Notwithstanding his parents' reservations, the sea already had a firm grip on young Brett's mind. As a child with a prodigious natural gift for drawing, he discovered early on that he could easily earn good money by painting the ships he saw every day on the Harbour. When he flunked out of high school in his early teens, his father, who was a serving army officer, World War One veteran and a strict disciplinarian, insisted that he enrol in the art course at East Sydney Tech. Young Brett never looked back. Studying art during the Great Depression he completed the five-year course in three and then went straight to work. He has been hard at it ever since.

Os Brett was still a boy when he met John Allcot, the great marine painter who was to have a profound personal and professional influence on his life. Allcot was the first to recognise and encourage his emerging artistic talent. He also shared with him the hair-raising stories of his own life as a foremast jack "cold, wet and hungry" in the big British limejuicers that sailed out of Liverpool in the South American and Australian trades. Undeterred by Allcot's tales of the "dog's life" that he had endured at sea, young Brett was savvy enough to understand that if he was to become an accomplished marine artist he had to have sea time. He had only just turned 18 when he signed articles aboard the Burns Philp freighter *Malaita*, bound for Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and the fabled islands of the South Pacific.

It was the beginning of a lifetime of voyaging. In October 1944 he joined the crew of the 83,000 ton RMS *Queen Elizabeth*, the mighty Cunard liner in which he would serve throughout the Second World War. He was aboard the drab-grey ocean monarch as an ordinary seaman, ferrying Anzac diggers to North Africa and later in her role as the so-called Atlantic Ferry, in which she transported hundreds of thousands of American soldiers to England and the eventual liberation of Nazi-occupied Europe. Promoted to Lookout, he spent untold hours in the crow's nest scanning the sea. From that lofty vantage point he saw the North Atlantic in all its moods: the furious seas of winter with massive waves as white as milk and the balmy days of summer when American GIs lounged on deck, shooting craps and blowing on the bones (dice) for luck.

In England, Brett was not backward in coming forward, especially where his sea heroes were concerned. He wrote to the Poet Laureate, John Masefield, who promptly wrote back inviting him to visit his country home in Oxfordshire. Brett, who spent

a memorable day with the great man, still recites reams of Masefield's immortal sea poetry. The illustrious British war artist and marine painter Charles Pears was another who invited him home, this time to Falmouth, the historic Cornish seaport where in the 19th century so many of the great windships anchored for orders.

During the war years Brett often fetched up in New York, but instead of roistering with his shipmates in waterfront bars, he took himself off to Manhattan's antiquarian booksellers where he started collecting books on maritime history. His highly specialised personal library must now rank as one of the finest collections of its kind in the world.

It was in New York that Os Brett met and married the American fashion designer Gertrude Steacey. They settled on Long Island and raised a family, but although he has now lived in the United States for 66 years, he still speaks with a quiet, laconic and almost undiluted Australian accent. In the delightful clutter of his studio, a cramped upstairs room in his home at Levittown, Brett is surrounded by the kind of nautical treasures one expects to find in a great maritime museum. Paintings by some of the most revered figures in marine art – Charles Robert Patterson, Anton Otto Fischer and John Allcot – jostle for space in a library that contains thousands of books, all of them dealing with ships and the sea.



Sirius and Supply approach Norfolk Island after a six day passage from Sydney Cove, 1789.

Over the years Oswald Brett has always remained busy as a specialist marine painter and many highly significant commissions have come his way. His work now hangs in some of the world's major collections including the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, the White House in Washington and the Australian National War Memorial in Canberra. He has always been extremely generous in donating his paintings to help raise funds for historic ship restorations including the *Wavertree* in New York, *Balclutha*



Running the Easting. The full rigged ship *Joseph Conrad*, Captain Alan Villiers, Tasman Sea 1936.

in San Francisco, *Polly Woodside* in Melbourne and *James Craig* and the *Endeavour* replica in Sydney.

In 1971 Columbus Lines came to him with the kind of commission that any red-blooded marine artist might kill for. He could travel the world whenever and wherever he liked as a guest in the Owner's Cabin on Columbus ships, in return for a painting of each of the vessels in which he voyaged. Os Brett made 20 such voyages over 31 years in which he logged well over 240,000 nautical miles.

His ocean voyaging came to an end in 2002 but, at 91, he thinks nothing of travelling by air to Sydney where he still has a legion of friends and admirers. Oswald Brett's life shines like a beacon for all those with a dream of the sea. "Don't wait for your ship to come in," he says sagely, "swim out after it."

Bruce Stannard



Marine artist Oswald Brett aboard the *Endeavour* Replica, 2011.

Oswald Brett's beautifully illustrated autobiography **OSWALD BRETT Marine Artist** is published by Maritime Heritage Press. The price is \$60 which includes postage, packaging and GST. Copies may be obtained on line at www.maritimeheritagepress.com

President's Medal 1 – Selection criteria

Robert Carter OAM

Some time back I wrote a commentary explaining how I judged work for the award of the President's Medal. At that time, naively, I created the limitation that it was based purely on the quality of work entered in a major exhibition. Since then I have broadened this index to include underlying factors beyond the canvas.

Many contemporary judges seek to display their 'superior knowledge of art' by mystifying their decisions at the expense of worthy entrants. They generally do not understand Marine Art. They ignore the nuance of the word 'marine' and the fact that its use over centuries, has developed an art genre within which, artists could illustrate the significance and influence of the sea in everyday life, trade, exploration, conflict and conquest. In other words, it possesses a heritage that cannot equate to the definition of art as decreed by modern day critics and academics.



Gore Bay Derek Morgan - 2000

This shunning of the textbook has become necessary, as unlike the professional judges that are recruited for open exhibitions to pick the prize winners from a group of disparate exhibitors of varying ability, I am familiar with most of our member's work: The work selected for ASMA major exhibitions is always of high quality and it is very difficult isolate a single winner. After several hours of viewing work of such excellence, one can make an impulsive decision. Therefore the President's medal may be awarded for not only a superb work but also to reflect other facets of excellence to be found within the ASMA.

My major touchstones are summarized below:

The skill in the use of materials and medium.

Unlike many judges, I have painted for most of my life. I know of the frustrations in manipulating oil paint around a canvas and the horrors of ending up with a muddy image on a piece of watercolour paper.

The level of difficulty in portraying the chosen subject.

In the same painting, a scene with so many items, is quite difficult to portray. Usually the artist crowds the painting or else a sterility is created, with each item being placed in just the right position. Christine has captured this pile of 'stuff' (left image) in a most convincing manner.



Goat Island - Abandoned Sheds Christine Hill - 2006



QGY *Lucinda* Dean Claflin - 2002

The size of the work in relation to the subject.

This is an early eliminator. The experience of the artist will determine this. A painting that suffers from inappropriate sizing of its subject relative to its external dimensions, I find irritating. A factor that also influences customers!

The newness of the work.

For this medal, I prefer to only include work that I have not seen previously.



HMS Beagle off Breaksea Island WA 1843 Ross Shardlow - 1999

Has the artist produced a work that shows a distinct improvement or freshness compared with earlier work?

Whilst I have said that our major exhibitions contain the best collection of marine art I have seen anywhere, there are sometimes paintings, while being worthy competitors in that exhibition, are not up to the usual standard expected of their creators.



Harbour Nocturne John Downton - 2004

The relevance of the subject in relation to the marine art genre or theme.

I am often asked: "What constitutes a marine painting?" My flippant answer is normally: "Any painting that has water in it." However in the painting that won Christine Hill her medal in 2006, there is no water to be seen. There is no doubt the jumble of disused equipment and materials, is of maritime origin and the title *Goat Island Abandoned Sheds* (page 13) hints at water being not too far away.



John Oxley Jeff Rigby - 2008

How the work 'sits' in amongst the other works in the exhibition.

Some paintings keep drawing me back. I noticed also that visitors seemed to spend more time standing in front of the same paintings. This is another good starting point.

Robert Carter



Tasman Chief at Port Don Talintyre - 2009



Marmong Point Warwick Webb - 2007

The President's Medal – 2010 award

Back in 1999 It was decided that a special medal should be awarded annually for outstanding work by members. It was to be named the President's Medal. A list of the recipients is shown on our website.

Our major exhibition for the year was used to determine the winner, as it was an ideal opportunity to view a large collection of our members' work in the one place.

As we boast that the leading practitioners of Marine Art in Australia are members of the ASMA it has always been difficult to select a winner. It occurred to me that another benchmark was needed, that not only exemplified excellence in marine painting, drawing, modeling or scrimshandling but reflected an unseen dedication to the subject and genre or an acknowledgement of outstanding contribution to the workings of the ASMA.



Eternal Blessings - Father Resevour

The first Medal presented with this in mind was to **John Sweaney** in 2010. John has been a member since 1998. During this time he has been a regular entrant in our exhibitions and in addition, has undertaken many administrative and curatorial tasks.

This led onto the creation of the position of Sydney Events Coordinator. In this role John was responsible for the successful staging of the Kurnell, Parliament House and La Perouse exhibitions. He has also been active in the 'Artist in Residence' programme with the Sydney Heritage Fleet and the resulting exhibitions.



Historic La Perouse

Again using this yardstick **Jane Bennett** became the 2011 recipient – for her growing portfolio of paintings depicting the vanishing commercial foreshores of Sydney and environs as much as her entry in the recent Mosman exhibition.

Previous winners of the President's Medal:

- Ross Shardlow 1999
- Derek Morgan 2000
- Dean Clafin 2002
- John Downton 2004
- Christine Hill 2006
- Warwick Webb 2007
- Jeff Rigby 2008
- Don Talintyre 2009
- Dean Clafin 2010

President's Medal 3 – 2011 award

On Saturday 10 December 2011 I had another good look around the Mosman Exhibition to decide on the recipient of the President's Medal.

As all of the works on display are of such high standard, it was difficult to judge in the manner of a person who is remote from the ASMA or not familiar with the exhibitors' work. I have an advantage in that I am getting to know most of our members' work and with it, what drives and inspires them.

I shun many of the conventions and yardsticks used by career judges to justify their choices. There is no way an excellent portrayal of a contemporary yachting scene can be compared with an equally excellent portrayal of the Battle of Trafalgar. If I relied on the hackneyed vocabulary of the art world to support my findings, I would get my moods, forms, tones, shapes and balances all mixed up and I would be unable to distinguish between the bold, sensitive, imaginative and evocative. One must look beyond the canvas!

The recipient this year is Jane Bennett.

Her painting of the ex-RAN frigate HMAS Adelaide, alongside the decommissioning wharf at Pyrmont, only partly led me to this decision. The ship is having her entrails wrenched from her belly, prior to taking up her next duty as a dive wreck off Avoca. This one 'went beyond the canvas' and reminded me of the great substance in Jane's portfolio.

Much of my decision was based on Jane's interpretation of marine art, plus my own knowledge of how Jane goes about choosing and getting her subject on to canvas. Jane is the quintessential plein air painter. Her mission has been to paint our past industrial waterfronts before they are sanitised by miles of waterfront condominiums. In doing so, she is leaving an important historical record of the 'way we were' and how commerce and industry was entwined with the waterways of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.



The ex-HMS Adelaide at Glebe Island Wharf

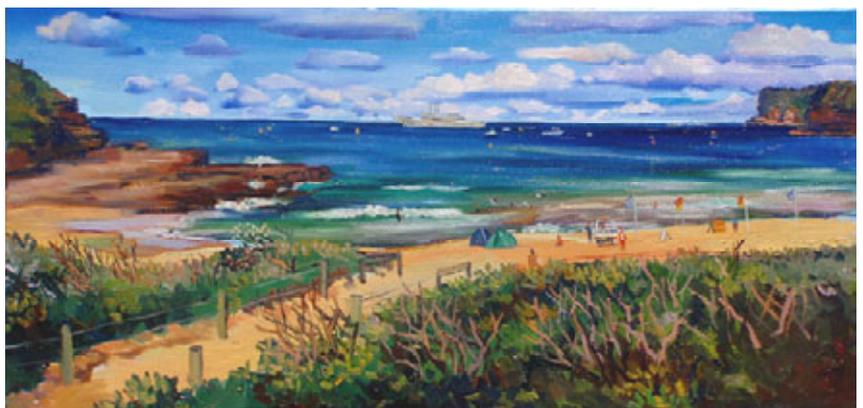
She can paint in the most difficult and challenging situations, whether it is at the Sydney Wooden Boat show, surrounded by gawking, Sunday sightseers or atop one of the 100 metre towers of the Anzac Bridge. She finds her way into disused railway buildings and power stations.

She has managed to convince the strict waterfront authorities at Port Botany, that she be allowed to trespass on Union controlled territory to record her impressions of the man's world of this container complex, via a 15 page OH&S questionnaire; one question required information about the toxicity of her paint! Her tenacity (or woman's persistence) allowed her to navigate through numerous levels of rejection before she was allowed on this hallowed territory.

She would have at times experienced the unwelcome audience of demolition workers, wharfies and fork truck drivers. The shadow of containers being manoeuvred has no doubt interrupted the view of her subjects and the dust from these environments has settled on her wet canvasses, giving them a unique originality.

Congratulations Jane!

Robert Carter



The last of the ex-HMS Adelaide from North Avoca Beach, the day before scuttling

Craftsmanship in Ship Models

Is it any longer a reliable measure of worth?

Roland Michel Laroche



*Build me straight, O worthy master!
Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle.*
(The Building of the Ship, H.W. Longfellow 1836-1909)

Should anyone doubt that models, and ship models in particular deserve representation in any serious art collections, let him examine the catalogues of leading museums and galleries, as well as inventories of stately residences throughout the world.

There is no doubt that the fascination that such models have deservedly attracted since time immemorial has much to do with the wonderful range of artistic skills displayed by those craftsmen having simultaneously mastered the dexterity of artisans and the whimsicalities of artists.

Back in 1983, if my initial intentions for writing a similar article for the *Australian Antique Collector* were no different from today's, that is to say, to safely guide the aficionados and collectors of ship models alike through some of the pitfalls this noble interest reserves, tectonic shifts have since dramatically impacted on the monetary value of ship models as investments.

Indeed, almost 20 years later, traders will tell you today that this specialised market has flatten out to put it kindly; an euphemism of sort begging a much blunter statement. More than ever, there is a real need to understand what a highly marketable ship model looks like and where the bar delineating those exceptionally desirable collectable examples stands, leaving an ever growing number of models in a limbo of their own.

Nowadays, ship models of real worth are basically as before those antiques models that were generally crafted by shipyards and dockyards of old, or those produced recently to the same very exacting level of flawless architectural beauty.

This last point is best illustrated when accessing the following sample sites, in no way an exhaustive compendium list, but perfect gateways to the discovery of worldwide links:

www.densmodelships.com

www.shipmodels.com.ua

www.amarsenal.be/01_Accueil.htm

www.arsenal-modelist.com

<http://gerard.delacroix.pagesperso-orange.fr>

www.museumshipmodels.com

Those expensive models rarely encountered outside museums but by far the most valuable – is the intemporal group mathematically constructed from architects' drawings of the vessels they represent, depicting on a small scale the superb craftsmanship of the shipbuilder's art through the medium of highly accurate scaled-down models, precise in all respects as to their proportions and finest details.

Until about 1650 the basis of all shipbuilding rested on empiric traditions that did little to improve the art of naval architecture. This was because secrets of the art of shipwrighting were passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next.

The making on a grand scale of accurate ship models was therefore essential, since it was naturally easier and cheaper to use them to extract accurate lines while arguing the finer points of structural innovations, than to finish up with an extremely costly mistake as witnessed in the well-known losses such as those of the *Mary Rose* or the *Wasa*.

The *raison d'être* for such models arose from the need of naval powers from around 1650 onward to rationalise the growing cost problem arising from dwindling supplies of timber.

If one considers that the Netherlands alone, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, had already over 10,000 merchant ships, and that 3,000 oaks, centuries old, were required for the building of a single hull of a ship of the line, one can readily understand the growing problems of logistics that the major European naval powers then faced.

Let's remind ourselves that the Royal Navy was aptly described as 'The Wooden Walls of Old England' and that its official quick march is still piped to the tune of "Heart of Oak".

Normally documented as dockyard or shipyard models, these, when pressed in the service of the various Royal Navies, mostly without any upper structures were labeled Admiralty board models, props to strategic considerations, while those others, equally elegant representative of merchant vessels, were used as tangible advertising billboards to end up cherished enticements to wealthy shipowners.

Their exquisitely fashioned timber work display offsetting grainless contrasts between the browns of pearwood, the golden tones of boxwood, white lime and black ebony; the chandlery combines fittings in brass, copper, silver, ivory or bone.

Those limited materials conformed to the 1678 French Royal Dockyards regulations to model makers. Enacted under the reign of Louis the XIV, these regulations, officialising what had already been a widely used European practice, were interestingly one of the very first attempts towards standardisation still used today a when benchmarking works of supreme excellence.

Further evidence of craftsmanship can be deduced from wide variations in concept without compromises in quality.

If those are fully planked, these must be built on ribbed frames; some are masted, some can be fully rigged and may have sails, and some others are not. When left totally unplanked, or only partially so to reveal inner details, these are commonly referred to as "bird cage" models. More often than not built to one- forty-eighth scale, such Olympian models, once seen, will forever impress our admiration, and impart our imagination with such renewable pleasures that great will be the emotional temptation of ownership.

As shipbuilding techniques and material gradually changed to metal reflecting a growing shortage of forest and seasoned timbers mentioned afore, and now even using to composite material, it is perfectly acceptable that those same changes are also reflected

in dockyard or shipyard models as long as the quality of the workmanship remains totally uncompromised.

But having said that, when wooden hulls were phased out and steel hulls became the norm, advances in naval architecture reduced the need for models. The eighteenth and early nineteenth century therefore saw the beginning and the peak of the fully planked models. Gradually they were replaced by the less costly half-block models, in which there were no frills and masting and rigging were limited to a sketch on a piece of paper.

The hull alone concerned the buyer and the builder: commercial priorities were directed towards speed in an age that saw sail and steel in cut-throat competition. Since both sides of a ship are identical it was faster and cheaper simply to make one side of a model only. These half-block types were carved from a single block of wood, composed of individual planks laminated by gluing each plank the thickness – the precise thickness – to represent a yard or metre in the model.

By alternating layers of dark and light wood the lines of the hull could be clearly seen from stem to stem (stems are upright timbers to which planks are joined at the bow). A summary of all deck fittings from fore to aft would also be shown. Such models were so built that the measurements could be taken quite simply with the aid of dividers.

Although half-block models became commonplace from around the beginning of the nineteenth to the early years of the twentieth century, there are numerous exceptions – those that adorned the waiting rooms and boardrooms of the various shipping lines, for example. Prosperous individuals and steamship companies went far beyond the utilitarian bounds of the half-block models for the sake of the company's image and prestige. Such models, faithful replicas of their giant counterparts, are superb examples of continued model-making craftsmanship.

Exceptions to that generalisation concerns early votive models, on the one hand, and on the other, the prisoners of war models. Both of more naive renditions are in most instances far from being less valuable.

Votive models are those hanging from church naves, fashioned by grateful sailors whose souls had been reprieved, if only momentarily, from some unspeakable watery end. The second are those models build by prisoners of mainly the eighteenth and nineteenth century's wars to alleviate their meagre conditions when only talents could be bargained for the bare necessities of life.

The common denominator between these aforementioned categories resides in the fact that without exception they are all built from scratch, a time consuming pursuit, and that each of them epitomises an absolute uniqueness.

It is therefore very clear that models built in spite of those treasured criteria, no matter how well they are assembled, being kit built, kit modified, or kit bashed models have now dramatically lost the financial value they once held in view of the growing plethora now available on the open market.

So what has changed so dramatically in this relatively short period of time between my two essays?

This downwards trend has now been observed in sales room worldwide for a while as a result of several compounding factors:

- **Technologically** speaking, in most parts of the world manufacturing refinements afforded by cheaper precision tools like those new generation, computer based, laser cutting and milling machines have given access to stunning mass produced scaled down ship chandlery and model kits of all types. Those, perfect platforms for the more exacting model makers, allows them to produce their own marvels much faster while striving for greater excellence. www.shipmodels.com.ua
- **Socially**, one has witnessed an exponential swelling of the model makers' fraternity joined by a growing number of gifted retirees and unemployed producing unsustainable numbers of ship models to be commercially viable however good these are.
- **Economically**, the ongoing effect of the financial crisis has adversely impacted household's discretionary spending further exacerbated by the dual trend of a downsizing drive by our greying population coupled to the more minimalistic approach of a casualised workforce affecting our younger generations.

From the stand point of a collector, models worth looking at must always answer to the finest descriptions already listed previously. If they do not, one would be well advised to give them a wide berth. This is an important warning and, with it firmly in mind, we may attempt to decide if a model being considered falls into the desirable or not. Of course, the quality and the prices of models can vary considerably. Each must be treated on its merits.



A first step in any ship model purchase is to date the model accurately. Models in bottles are the easiest to date, since the earliest appeared not much before the 1830's. It was not until then that opaque and dark glass began to give way to clear glass, and the shape of the bottle began to change to a shorter and wider neck and a body better suited to accommodate a model ship. The manufacturer's mark, the quality of the glass and the type of ship are enough for accurate dating

With proper reference material it is fairly easy to identify vessels of different periods and of different nationalities. The models in museums, and the wealth of illustrations in printed material, should provide all the help necessary.

Dating becomes much more difficult when the precise age of manufacture is sought. That is where one needs expert analysis – 'fingerprints'- and the more so when models are profusely detailed.

For example, on the subject of marine weapons, one should know that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, in addition to canons on wheeled carriages, howitzers and carronades, mounted on shoes or sledges, were starting to come into service. These guns were withdrawn from service around 1850.

Mortars, recognisable by their very short barrels and large calibre, were used from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century for throwing bombs.

The rigging of the train tackles of all these guns employed to run them out before firing and to haul back the pieces for sponging out and reloading, varies perceptibly from navy to navy as each developed its own weaponry.

Reservations should therefore be held about any general theory; details must be checked out with the specialist literature.

Much the same generalisation can be made about planking, rigging and other subtle details peculiar to each navy. Specifically one should look at:

- the butting of the hull planks at the stem
- the style of butting of the deck planks in contact with the bow at the water-ways (these are the timbers running fore and aft on both sides, connecting the deck to the vessel's sides)
- the copper sheathing that began to be widely used from about 1770. Before that lead was used, especially for ships operating in waters where toredos (ship's worms) were prevalent
- the type and wealth of stern and prow decoration that flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
- the timbers of the head – the structure extending forward of the hull – were integrated into shipbuilding structures around the middle of the seventeenth century, with marked differences according to the country of origin.

Dutch head timbers were in the shape of a U and those for the English ships were V-shaped. In French timbers the top sections of the branches of the V were angled upwards. In Spanish designs they terminated in a swan's neck. By the eighteenth century these timbers were shaped according to the English or French design.

The beginning of the nineteenth century and the emergence of fast, clipper-inspired designs saw the head timbers abandoned.

The way in which the gratings of the prow are fashioned, or the chains of the shrouds, or the rudder-tiller-wheel group is disposed, or the presence (or the lack of) chains, the design of the rigging – these are only a few of the clues that will enable precise dating of a model and its country of origin. And it follows that the restorer (if restoration is required) must possess a sound knowledge of naval architecture as well as having mastered the various crafts employed by the original builders.

Lastly collectors and model makers would also greatly benefit towards making judicious choices from reading the standard guidelines used by the U.S Navy and Smithsonian to establish what is meant about "Museum quality" ship models.

The full set of specifications in the ***Ship Model Classification Guidelines*** – Mystic Seaport Museum Stores 1983

In conclusion the finest ship models will forever be works of great art and appreciating investments as they extol mankind's love affair with the sea and, as Longfellow put it "*The beauty and mystery of ships / and the magic of the sea.*"

Michael Laroche is an approved valuer under the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program.



The three images used in this article are of the ***HMS Investigator*** and printed with permission from Michel Laroche and the Sydney Powerhouse Museum

HMS Investigator was a merchant ship purchased in 1848 to search for Sir John Franklin's lost expedition. She made two voyages to the Arctic and had to be abandoned in 1853 after becoming trapped in the ice. Her wreckage was found in July 2010 on Banks Island, in the Beaufort Sea.

She was the fourth ship of the Royal Navy to bear the name.

Conrad's *Narcissus*



Conrad's *Narcissus* - Ross Shardlow 1999

*Last year I was finishing off a painting of the barquentine **Leeuwin** when I received a phone call from a sea captain somewhere off the coast of Queensland asking if I had ever considered doing a painting of **Narcissus**. He had recently taken to studying maritime literature and was so taken by Joseph Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus* that he wanted a painting of it. As it turns out, I am also rather taken by Conrad's *Narcissus* and what followed was on of the most enjoyable pieces of work I've done.*

Though *The Nigger of the **Narcissus*** is a work of fiction it is based on real people and actual events. Certainly the **Narcissus** was real enough; she was a handsome iron full-rigged ship of 1336 tons measuring 235' x 37' x 22'. Built by Robert Duncan of Port Glasgow in 1876 for Robert R. Paterson & Co. of Greenock, she was intended for the sugar trade, but under Captain McIntosh, ran mainly to the East.

In 1884, Archibald Duncan took over from McIntosh and it was under his command that **Narcissus** sailed to Bombay where Conrad joined her as second mate for the return run to Dunkirk – the voyage described in Conrad's book. The long passage of 136 days proved to be the last under the Paterson flag. In 1884/5 her ownership passed to the well-known firm of Colin S. Caird & Co. of Greenock. Being rather taken by Clyde built ships, Caird's fleet included no less than seven Duncan built vessels.

Towards the turn of the century Caird began selling off his fleet. In 1899, Captain Vittorio Bertolotto purchased **Narcissus**, registered her under the Italian flag at Genoa and put her on the Pacific, Australia run. Some accounts claim that Bertolotto cut her down to a barque but Lloyd's Register still has her listed as a ship right up to 1907 while a photograph from the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, clearly shows her ship rigged under an Italian flag.

In 1907, while on a voyage from France to Chile, **Narcissus** took such a pounding off Cape Horn that she had to put back to Rio for repairs. Eventually, she managed to get back to Genoa but only to hulked – not scrapped as some report state. With the shortage of shipping during the First World War, **Narcissus** was brought out of retirement, sold to Paulo Passos & Co. back in Rio, re-rigged (this time as a barque), renamed **Isis** and put back into service. In 1922 she was involved in a collision and sank! It is a testimony to the strength and durability of her iron hull that she was raised, repaired and put back in service under the new ownership of E.G.Fontes & Co. it wasn't until 1925 that she was hulked for the last time.

In *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (renamed a *Tale of the Fo'c'sle* in the USA), Conrad describes how Captain Allistoun "loved his ship, and drove her unmercifully" eventually knocking her down on her beam ends for some thirty hours before being able to apply his skills and experience to righting her again! This, of course, is only part of a story that is an account of the sea, seafaring and humanity.

Alex A. Hurst accurately describes it as “one of the (few) great novels of the sea”.

Conrad’s mixture of fact and fancy is amusing. Captain Allistoun (in real life it was actually Captain Duncan) is probably a play on Captain Allistoun who wrote *Seamanship; and its Associated Duties in the Royal Navy* – and gave specific instruction on what to do in the event of a knockdown!

The real Negro’s name in the book was not James Wait but Joseph Barron; Wait, on the other hand, was a Negro shipmate on an earlier Conrad voyage aboard the Sydney wool clipper **Duke of Sutherland**. Old Singleton, who steadfastly hung onto the wheel, was actually Sullivan; and young Creighton was Conrad himself.

As far as I know Conrad never visited Western Australia but of the eighteen or so ships he sailed on, three have touched our shores; the **Highland Forest** doing so rather aggressively, for she piled up on the Murray Reef near Long Point on April 29, 1901 while on a voyage from New York to Fremantle. She was an iron barque of 1040 tons built at Leith, Scotland, in 1884 for Crane Colvil & Co.

Conrad sailed on her as first mate, joining the ship at Amsterdam in February 1887 on a voyage to Java, where he arrived in June 1887. Conrad was seriously injured by a falling spar on this voyage, left the ship at Semarand, Java, and spent six weeks in hospital in Singapore.

Another vessel to touch here was the famous **Otago**, famous because this was the only vessel that Conrad was ever master of. She was a small iron barque of 346 tons, built by Alexander Stephen & sons of Glasgow in 1896. From 1871 she was a colonial trader registered in Adelaide, traded up to the Dutch East Indies, South China Sea, Mauritius and Colonial ports. Conrad joined the ship in January 1888 when she called into Bangkok after Captain J. Snadden died and was buried at sea. Snadden & Simpson were owners of the vessel at that time. Lloyd’s Register records the new captain’s name as KOIRNEOWSKI, recognisable as Conrad’s original Polish name of Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz KOIRNEOWSKI. After making Singapore, where nearly the entire crew was hospitalised with illness, she arrived in Sydney in May 1888 with a cargo of teak. Later that year she did a run to Mauritius, returning to Melbourne in January 1889. She went on to Pt. Adelaide where Conrad left the ship on March 26, 1889.

Otago, under Captain Jameson, first put into Fremantle in October, 1895. She was bound for Melbourne from Mauritius with a cargo of sugar but sprang a leak and had to put into Fremantle for repairs. She returned in happier circumstances in 1896, not under the flag of A.E.Howard, beginning her run as a timber trader calling at Fremantle and Hamelin Bay.

In 1903 she was purchased for Huddart Parker Ltd to be converted into a coal hulk at Sydney and later, Hobart. She remained in this role into the 1920’s before being sold to Mr H. Dodge in 1931. What he didn’t sell for scrap was picked to pieces and sold off as souvenirs to Conrad fans around the world.

Conrad’s **Otago** is sometimes confused with another vessel of the same name built at Port Glasgow, also in 1869. However, she was a composite built and ship rigged, although later converted to a barque. She called into Fremantle from London with a general cargo on June 4, 1886, sailing in August for Colombo. She was eventually sold to Portuguese owners, renamed **Emelia** and was sunk by a German submarine in 1916.

The third “Conrad” vessel to call here was the **Palestine** although in his book “Youth”, Conrad cryptically disguises her as **Judea**.

Palestine, a wooden barque of 427 tons and built at Sunderland by G. Booth in 1857, was one of Felgate’s “Swan River Line Packets.”

Between 1863-76 she traded regularly from Fremantle to London with wool and ore, or to Asian ports with sandalwood. She was actually owned by J. Wilson & Co. until 1881 as William Felgate chartered his Packets, nearly all of which were owned by Wilson. In 1881, however, she is listed as being owned by H.P. Felgate & J. Wilson, sailing from Newcastle upon Tyne, November 29, with a cargo of coal and Joseph Conrad as second mate, bound for Bangkok. They had to put back to Falmouth after sustaining considerable storm damage and didn’t put to sea again until September, 1882! While the ship was sailing through the Bangka Straits off Sumatra, the cargo caught fire through spontaneous combustion. Captain Beard and his crew spent several days trying to douse the fire but on March 14, 1883, the coal gas exploded, blowing off the decks fore and aft – and Conrad’s moustache! As the fire gained control the crew took to the boats, leaving **Palestine** a burning wreck. They made it to Bangka Island and eventually were taken on to Singapore by the **S.S. Sissie**.

Ross Shardlow

President's Message

I have been asked to repeat a commentary I made in a past newsletter, concerning traditional art and its apparent decline.

I also commented on the marine art genre and the fact that it is invisible to most contemporary judges.

These comments can be made whenever marine paintings are exhibited in open art prizes.

The ACTA and P & O Maritime Art prizes in the past, and now the ANL Mission to Seafarers Art Prize, attract all manner of artists to what was and is a sizeable award.

Unfortunately these 'maritime art prizes' attract many who have no interest in marine art, nor judges with an inherent appreciation of marine art.

A wide range of artists is attracted to this honey pot. Landscape, avant garde, abstract, impressionist and realists alike, all concoct offerings, draped in their interpretation of the theme, that they hope will catch the judge's eye and earn them riches and another chevron for their CVs.

To their credit the Mission to Seafarers has secured a sponsor whose interest lies in traditional work, hence the separation of the Traditional and Contemporary sections. The ASMA had a hand in this, although there is a considerable imbalance in the value of the Contemporary prize over the Traditional.

Noteworthy British marine artist Geoff Hunt RSMA hit the nail on the head when he stated that 'representational art has fallen below the radar'. The reason for this is that we (all traditional artists) have let it happen.

Art has come a long way since it was a form of expression and historic record for past civilisations. Whilst it is still a form of expression for most of us today, it is no different from any other business activity.

We – as artists – have a product; and it needs to be sold. It has to compete for the disposable incomes of today's generation, with all the other non-essential but 'nice to have' items that we have thrust at us.

It is no longer possible to paint pictures and hope that someone comes along and buys them. Our pictures, and particularly the marine art genre, have to be marketed.

Public awareness of representational or traditional art has not diminished because it has become an unworthy segment of the art spectrum. Rather, it is being overtaken by the natural progression and development that is all part of human existence. Contemporary art of today will be overtaken by the contemporary art of tomorrow.

Having said all that: going back 16 years, when the idea of forming this Society was still being kicked around by our founding members, we discussed what art formats should be included.

In using the term 'traditional or representational' we thought would run the risk of condemning the work of competent artists who have learned to draw, who understand perspective, who can observe, who can interpret mood and atmosphere but choose to experiment or to work in a style that suits their own personality.

We agreed that we needed variety and that membership should be open to any artist who indicated a '**strong interest in and/or affinity with the sea and maritime activity.**' This is the underlying raison d'être of the ASMA whatever the style in which its members paint.

The best way to get back onto the radar screen is to exhibit at every opportunity and to support ASMA activities. Our mission is to 'Promote Marine Art in Australia'.

Robert Carter OAM
President ASMA



The following article was written in 1998 by Peter Yeomans, a past member but still very much with us. April (2007) was the month of his passing but his ideas and his wisdom is still as profound as when first written. Some of this article is now redundant but his ideas about marine art and what constitutes art is still very valid. Remark Peter's closing paragraph.



Marine Art in Australia

In the art world, marine art is regarded as a niche market. Yet for those living on port waterfronts, or for those who use the sea it reflects the pleasure seen in the elements, a sense. In pre-settlement Australia, the aborigines recorded the seasonal comings of the praus and canoes from the west and north and later the tall sail shaped rigs and larger ships of the Europeans. The Laura and Kimberley caves we know about. Micky of Ulladulla recorded in surprising detail new rigs and new boat gear.

Australia has a long tradition of marine painting, starting with the earliest explorers of our coast. The first colonial Naval and military officers were all trained draughtsmen, some of them very accomplished watercolourists. Bligh's bird watercolours, Haughton Forrest in Hobart, Conrad Martens, and Oswald Brierly in Sydney who had clientele in England as well as here. Then came the immigrant ships with captains and passengers wanting pictures of their arrival in Hobsons Bay, Fremantle Roads, Port Adelaide, Hobart and Port Jackson. With steamships came a larger clientele with so called pierhead artists as Garling in Sydney, Gregory in Melbourne both depicting every ship that came in. Jenner painted Turner like works in Brisbane. This later led to John Allcot gained fame for this in Sydney.

Then the early Australian impressionists, following their European experiences: Roberts, Streeton, Conder, Gruner and MacCubbin painted scenes from daily life and important events on the harbour in Sydney and the river and bayside in Melbourne. Davies and Withers soft pastels and oils of Port Philip yachting are still much admired. Gruner's harbour scenes seemed to herald the later Lloyd Rees whose interpretations of the light and spatial edges of the landscape of the upper harbour and the Derwent are reminiscent of the 1840's – 50's Turner.

Gradually there came an appreciation and ability to paint the local seas, skies and weather, probably helped by professional exchanges and tuition, a better and wider range of art materials and better manufactured grounds to work on.

Then during the two World Wars, Australian Governments commissioned war artists following British practice, recording successes for home consumption and the historical record such as A. W. Burgess' *'Emden beached and done for* after its defeat by HMAS Sydney off Coco Island. Allcot painted the ships of the new Australian Squadron. When the second great conflict came Wilkinson and Norton were already well known, to be joined by Dennis Adams (revered Fellow and President of the Society) and followed later by Phil Belbin and Ray Honnisset.

But between the Wars, the tourist brochures and posters attracted many to the South Seas and Europe with most harbourside residents knowing the liners and their comings and goings.

In the 1950's Jack Earl built his yacht *Kathleen* and circumnavigated the world painting his way of the people and places. Amongst the eight members of the society are those who love the great days of sail, painting tall ships and long seas. Ian Hansen is represented in many collections. Robert Carter has just had a one man show in Marienhamn, Finland where they used one his paintings on their postal stamp. Ross Shardlow of Perth, our 1998 President's Medal winner, was also selected to do a stamp series by Australia Post. So there are many who love depicting the detail and many collectors look for it, especially in the UK and USA Galleries. Realism goes with the market for nostalgia and with the historic book-jacket market. Yet there are many members who are very competent watercolourists who enjoy the challenge of that media. Others who do pastels and who seek to bring out the drama and leave out the details. There are those who paint seabirds, paint the shoreline, and those who paint the skies.

The society is represented by ship miniaturists Karl Marquardt an Marquardt an internationally known expert on early rigs and ships; Ian Hunt an equally known expert on the making and manufacture of rigs and rigging; and Dean Claflin best known for his models of the *Lucinda* made to commemorate her role in the Federation or Australian states.

Some artists like Adelaide's Penelope Hillam and Joanna Burgler from Northern NSW work "plein aire." But in most cases the marine artist works from drawings, photographs, video footage and written descriptions and memory. In many cases paintings are done years after the event. This brings out fresh composition, elimination of extraneous detail to focus on the subject be it place or ship. But these modern aids do not make a better painter. It is essential to be able to observe, take notes and do lots of gestural drawings. There is no forgiveness for a poor arrangement between ships, and indifferent sky, waves that are unrealistic, or a vessel not sitting right in the water. This does not deny the place of naive expressionism or abstraction, as long as the end work conveys the feeling of being at one with the sea or marine scene.

Peter Yeomans, 1930-2007 – In Memoriam