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Articles for publication in the Newsletter are always welcome.
Deadline for next Issue - 30 August 2011

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I live in a coastal community south of Sydney – between the Royal National Park and Wollongong. Early settlers, with their convict servants, started arriving in the early 1800s, for timber-getting and farming, and then coalmining.

The story of the coalmining operations in the Wollongong area and how they progressed from groups of men hacking at the bushland and carrying their sacks of coal down to the settlements, to the building of great wooden jetties to load coal onto sailing—and then steam—ships, is fascinating.

Of course, the arrival of the railway line and then modern roads changed everything, but little reminders of the old stories are still there to see.

At Thirroul Beach there is a memorial to the eight people drowned when the brig Amy was wrecked on the beach in 1898. Local libraries have a photocopy of a picture of the wreck. It seemed to be a worthwhile project for a painting, and I started investigating...

Surely someone’s Grandad took them to the beach and described how the ship was wrecked there when he was a boy? I asked every 80 to 90-year-old I met, but no. I resorted to the local library’s newspaper records, and Trove at the National Library in Canberra.

There was a lot written at the time; various papers local and national carried the story, each journalist highlighting different aspects of the event, so that I was able to gradually build up a ‘picture’ of the scene.

I précis the story:
On the morning of Sunday 13th February 1898, the brig Amy left Wollongong Harbour with three hundred tons of coal aboard, in fine weather. Around midday a gale blew up and by late afternoon she was lying broadside in the surf about a mile and a half north of Bulli Jetty, at Thirroul.

Mr William McCauley saw a ship very close in and looking as if it had ‘had a bad time’, and with two of his sons and Mr Thomas Kelly raised the alarm and went to the beach. They were the first to reach the scene, where they saw both ship’s boats launched and lost in the tremendous waves. Mr Kelly, with a rope around himself, nearly reached a survivor who clung to a plank for over an hour before finally being claimed by the sea.

**Men were seen clinging to the spars and rigging, then falling or jumping off.** Captain McKee, his wife and child, and all the crew drowned that day, to the horror of everyone watching helplessly from the shore.

**It was reported that within an hour and a half the Amy had completely broken up.** (A witness to the subsequent Inquest stated that the hard-wood masts would not have snapped at the base, but would have ripped open the deck and hull when they fell.) Captain McKee’s body was recovered the following day, one lifeboat was washed up unscathed two days later, and later in the week other remains were discovered along the shoreline. There was little to be seen of the three hundred tons of coal.

**The schooner Malcolm and the brig Marion Fenwick were also lost off the South Coast that day;** the wreckage which gradually came to Thirroul and Austinmer beaches over the following week was likely to have been from the Malcolm as well as the Amy. People said that such a storm had not been seen since the Dunbar was wrecked at The Gap in 1857. (It was recorded that 13 inches of rain fell at Clifton, just north of Thirroul.)

**The jury at the Inquest recommended that lifesaving apparatus should be placed at frequent intervals along the coast.**

A public subscription was raised and the memorial of this tragedy was erected on the main Thirroul beach the following November.

It is not known whether any lifesaving apparatus was set up at the time, but eventually a Surf Life Saving club was established at Thirroul.
How the painting was conceived and composed

The painting was composed as shown on page 1 for several reasons:

- I did not want to be “copying” the old image by 'Unknown Artist'.
- I wanted to show the whole scene: I know this beach!
- A storm happened while I was working on the ideas, so off to the beach in wind and showers with my sketch book, trying to picture the scene as it might have been. The water was white with foam. I sketched two different positions for the ship, but had to go with the correct way she would have lain on the beach in that hurricane, in that surf.
- After half a day of stormy seas I knew the dunes would have been washed out and the beach flattened. The waves would indeed have been huge; the crowd watched and the kids collected coal while all this drama went on.
- It’s midsummer, so although wet and windy, women would have been wearing their summer blouses, with perhaps a shawl for protection against the rain. The kids of this rural settlement mostly went barefoot anyway.
- Details of the ship were provided by studying rigging on James Craig, and photos of Amy, which were not very clear. ASMA President, Bob Carter, was very helpful with advice on how sails should have been furled in such a storm.
- Bob also had a photo of a painting he did as a commission long ago, of Amy in her heyday, at sea outside the port off Newcastle NSW. That also was helpful, especially when telling the story of the ship.

Early sketches

Christine Hill is a Fellow of the Australian Society of Marine Artists—an artist and book illustrator.

She lives by the ocean—for many years on Pittwater, north of Sydney, where her paintings reflected the area’s picturesque waterways and sailing lifestyle. She now lives on the NSW South Coast and the sea and its surroundings continue to influence her art practice.

Her work could be described as being of a narrative contemporary style, illustrating modern and historic maritime life, and often reflecting her interest in traditional wooden boats. Drawing is a strong basis for works in pencil, watercolour, oil, pastel, or acrylic.
The International Fleet Review Official Commemorative Artwork

by Ian Hansen

In August 2013, with the upcoming International Fleet Review fast approaching, I started seriously thinking about the best way to record this historic occasion. The vast numbers of ships invited to participate, and the size of Port Jackson, made me realise an aerial view was the best way to depict the Review. To this end I wondered on the possibility of hitching a ride on a Navy helicopter to gather the necessary reference.

I phoned Lt John Perryman in Canberra, who had looked after John Downton and myself when we were sent to East Timor as official war artists and later was part of the search team for the HMAS Sydney II wreck. He provided me with photographs which enabled me to do a painting of her as she is now. I was put through to the IFR people and put in my request. They took my details and said someone from the ‘Art Committee’ would be in touch. The next communiqué was from QinetiQ, a Defence Contract Company, thanking me for submitting my application to paint the ‘Official IFR Commemorative Artwork’. I had no idea such a project existed.

Within a couple of weeks I received the happy news that I was the Official Artist for the IFR Commemorative Artwork. I think the things that helped me over the line were not necessarily my ability (as we have great depth within ASMA), but I was able to meet their deadline, I had served in the Navy for 12 years, I had gone to East Timor (the paintings are now hanging in Fleet Headquarters at Garden Island) and I was comfortable painting large works.

The commission was to replicate John Allcot’s painting of the original Fleet entry on 4th October 1913, showing the 2013 version of the event. After a bit of scouting around the Middle Head area, I determined John had painted from George’s Head (there went my helicopter ride) with the 7 ships steaming up the western channel in line astern. I anchored my yacht on the western side of Bradley’s Head to have a perfect view of the review and fireworks on the 5th and be within walking distance of Georges Head.
I immediately hit a snag: the Australian division of the Fleet entry on the 4th were to proceed up the Eastern channel—on the opposite side of the harbour—with a second reenactment on the 5th up the Western channel, on the opposite side of the harbour.

So I contacted the Navy: “What do you want me to paint, 100th Anniversary or 100th plus 1 day?” It was all too hard. “Ian, you decide.” So I opted for continuity with Allcot and let later historians debate the issue.

As I am a studio artist, I am a firm believer in sketching the subject when possible; your brain absorbs far more information when you spend twenty minutes creating a small thumbnail image as opposed to holding up a camera and clicking. I do use a camera to record the fine detail: warships are complex shapes and angles and moving past you at harbour speed is impossible to get it all down, but I do try to get the basic shape in the sketch.

By Sunday I had all I needed, weighed anchor and headed home. I had already stretched a Belgium linen canvas 1.5m x 1m and went straight to work while it was all still fresh in my mind. I initially paint a light alizarin crimson wash over the whole canvas—this gives the painting a subtle warmth—and as I had Allcot’s painting to follow, composition was already established.

I did very little drawing on the canvas, just the horizon line, the basic outline of the land mass and the main subject HMAS Sydney. I always paint the sky first, most times three coats over 3 days and blocking in the background land mass at the same time. Once I’m happy with the sky, I start at the horizon and work forward. The more I put down the more I jump back to previously painted areas and add or move things, make tonal corrections or whatever. This is an instinctive thing and your eye tells you when it’s not quite right.

Even though I was painting an historical event ‘artistic licence’ still comes into play … The Manly ferry on a scheduled run would have been in the middle of my painting amongst the warships—you will note the ferry in the painting a couple of cables to the east of her real position. The Seahawk helicopter towing the large White Ensign had been flying around all morning (my potential position. The Seahawk helicopter towing the large White Ensign amongst the warships—you will note the ferry in the painting a couple of cables to the east of her real position. The Seahawk helicopter towing the large White Ensign had been flying around all morning (my potential

The commission was completed well before the deadline, which gave me plenty of time to live with it and remedy any small flaws. It was meant to be on display at the ANMM for a month with the IFR art show and photographic display, but sadly this was reduced to a weekend. Makes you wonder what would take priority in

in our Government-funded Maritime Museum over such an historic event as the NAVY’s 100th Anniversary Celebrations?

The NAVY were delighted with my efforts. The painting—along with Robert Carter’s version—now hangs outside the Admiral’s Office at Fleet Headquarters, Potts Point.

Born in Bordertown SA 1948, Ian’s childhood years were spent on the foreshore of Hervey Bay. It was here that his deep love of ships and the sea developed. By the age of 8 he was actively painting with watercolours, moving to oils when he was 11. His first oil survived and hangs in his Hunters Hill studio.

Joining the Royal Australian Navy at 15 as an apprentice shipwright, he served 12 years reaching the rank of Chief Petty Officer and saw active service in Vietnam 1967-68. Ian painted continually in off-duty hours, recording the ships and scenes he observed during his travels. He became a full-time artist once his service time expired in 1975.

After a brief stint of cruising and painting on board a 38 foot yacht, he built a studio overlooking the Whitsunday Islands, but this ideal location was too far from the art world and he returned to Sydney in 1981. Married with 3 children Ian lives in Hunters Hill, Sydney, his studio the converted stables in the rear garden.

In 2000 Ian was invited by the Royal Australian Navy to go to East Timor and record the Navy’s involvement during the crisis. He spent time on several ships sketching and painting, the resulting paintings now hang in the Navy’s Fleet Headquarters. In 2002 Ian joined the Ice Ship Sir Hubert Wilkins on a 5 week voyage to Antarctica.

Ian works mainly on commission. He exhibits with the Maritime Gallery at Mystic Seaport. In Connecticut USA, the Gallery hosts ‘The Annual International Art Exhibition’ and since his first acceptance in 1987, Ian has won 6 major awards. In 2002 he was appointed one of the Gallery’s ‘Premier Artists’ – only 20 are appointed worldwide. Ian is a member of ‘Kevin Hills Top 10 Australian Artists’ who exhibit their work several times each year.

Ian is a Fellow of The Royal Art Society, a Fellow of The Australian Institute of History and Arts and a Fellow of The Australian Society of Marine Artists.

Drawing the Line

by Earl Hingston

I like to sketch and I find time spent doing so to not only be relaxing, but also beneficial in analysing and subtracting information, should any drawing be developed into a painting. I find drawing in line to be particularly challenging and pleasing at the same time. I also find pencil sketching enjoyable, with its wide tonal, light-dark range and textures. These are not so applicable to line work. Hence the challenge to make the line sketch work with controlled use of open and hatched lines. I do not pre-draw but instead go straight in with the pen. This, I believe, helps to train the eye more. If the drawing is not working out, it gets discarded and I try again.

My approach is that of suggesting the subject matter – total accuracy is not my goal. What I place more importance on is the design and rhythm of the linework as well as showing definite, confident stroke marks; I try to get some ‘life’ into the lines.

Ink drawing is a medium that offers a variety of implements, from the old style steel nib through sharpened bamboo, toothpicks, twigs, quills, to felt, fibre-tipped, gel pens, and, of course, brushes. As well as black ink, sepia gives a pleasant result to a drawing.

At times I use a non-permanent pen and with a controlled use of brushed-on water produce some interesting, loose effects. Something to be alert to, though, is the use of the word “permanent” in as much as the ink may not smudge but seldom is it lightfast.
Travelling around the country has provided opportunities for varied subject matter (not all boats) but I think that the time I got most excited was when I came across a hidden estuary at Yeppoon, near Rockhampton.

The tide was out and a number of types of boats in various stages of repair were lying at odd angles on the mud. Helen, my wife, became quite concerned because I was away so long. When I did return, she observed that I had a smile on my face not unlike “a little boy in a lolly shop”.

Earl Hingston has a passion for watercolour painting, especially landscapes, marinescapes and nautical scenes, boats and buildings, generally subjects with character.

His watercolours have an emphasis on brush calligraphy and design, this coming from his professional career as a graphic designer for advertising and corporate visual communication. He believes in the importance of drawing skills, an often neglected (far too long) aspect of painting. Examples of his design and artwork have appeared, together with articles, in national and international magazines and books.

He was elected a Fellow of the prestigious Chartered Society of Designers, London and is a Fellow of the Australian Society of Marine Artists. Whilst his focus is on watercolour he also paints in acrylics, pastels, line and wash. Always acknowledging that there is more to learn, he nevertheless tutors for art societies which enables him to share his knowledge with others.
Muloobinba Floating Dock
Newcastle history sails for foreign shores

by Gwendolin Lewis

Living near Newcastle Harbour there is always a constant source of excitement and inspiration on the waterfront, seeing the large container ships and tugboats coming and going, the colour, the shapes, the activity and the greatness of the spectacle—and the manpower needed to make it all happen.

Newcastle Harbour is one of the largest coal ports in the world. I’m privy to seeing these large vessels coming and going in the harbour. These industrial scenes are ever-changing and the colours are inspiring.

On 22nd December 2012 it was an exciting day on Newcastle harbour as hundreds of people gathered on the shoreline to watch as Muloobinba—the floating dock that had been in Newcastle Harbour for more than 35 years—was towed out to sea on its way to Singapore, to be refurbished and then moved on to its new home in Namibia, Africa.

As I stood watching and taking photos for over an hour I overheard conversations nearby of men who had worked on the dock most of their lives talking about their mates and situations they had experienced. There was a sadness among them as well as excitement to be part of the spectacle.

As the cannons on Fort Scratchley fired a salute, Muloobinba passed down the harbour under tow to a large red tug. It put a lump in my throat to realise how important the working dock had been to so many people, for so long.

I looked at the images I had taken and loved the colour and shapes that were there in front of me. It was a month later in January that I started painting this series.
More than 4 years ago I had painted the floating dock with ships aboard. I painted it differently then. The two brightly coloured images 6520 and 6522 are from that time.

Gwendolin Lewis is an Exhibiting Member of the Australian Society of Marine Artists
Capturing a Moment in Time

by Don Braben

My favourite way to produce a painting is from the subject that is there in front of me.

Finding a subject, whether a group of boats, a dock scene or boatyard and so on, can take some time, deciding on the best position, light and atmosphere... Then to record it and work on the result on the spot or back in the studio, modifying this, moving that, and so on, until the composition is just right.

And adding to all of this is serendipidity, the chance happening, or just that moment in time which adds so much to the painting.

Here are a few examples of this which I'm sure all artists have experienced at some time.

.....

The painting (shown above) of the yacht Wee Barkie, a timber double-ender, was for the owner. The plan was to make a few passes near the end of the jetty so I could get some good images and hopefully some good compositions for an oil painting. The day was blustery and sunny and the sea had a lot of chop. As Wee Barkie drew closer to the jetty several views presented as worthy compositions, some showing lots of sail, other with a pronounced heel. At the end of one pass Wee Barkie reversed the course and was going to pass closer to the end of the jetty. Just as the yacht was level some youths’ fishing lines were uncomfortably close and some choice comments were directed at the helmsman and me.

At this point the owner, at the helm, looked directly at the end of the jetty where I was crouching to get a lower level viewpoint and focus on the hull and water. This was the moment when I could see a good composition showing only half the sails but all the hull, and picking up the Moreton Bay slop.

.....

For this dockside scene (below) I had discovered the approximate time the EW Everest would be arriving at the wharf, so I was sitting waiting and watching. As the freighter with a tug alongside drew closer I was waiting for a good angle when a group of wharfies arrived to take the lines. I hadn’t considered adding figures to the composition, but when one chose to sit on a bollard while the others stood around watching, and then one tilted his foot on a rail, I knew this was the moment in time to capture which would give the composition that bit extra.

I hadn’t considered adding figures to the composition, but when one chose to sit on a bollard while the others stood around watching and then one tilted his foot on a rail I thought this was the moment in time to capture which would give the composition that bit extra.

New arrival Watercolour 440 x 550mm

Wee Barkie Oil 510x760mm
Recording the crew of the lighthouse tender Cape Grafton on a routine trip from Gladstone was a fascinating experience. The crew carried out maintenance on beacons, lights and the lightship at Breaksea Spit off the northern tip of Fraser Island.

One of the many opportunities for painting was when the crew in a workboat came alongside to take on equipment and more crew. I was contemplating a view of the workboat with the lightship in the background when one of the crew was just about to find his footing and all the other crew members focused on him, and this was the moment in time.

Suddenly the PB tug Murrumbidgee which had been obscured on the port side came surging into view with a huge bow wave, and there was the moment in time to capture.

This painting of the ANL Explorer was the result of a long day out but well worth the wait. I had checked the time of arrival at Fisherman Island Container Terminal at the mouth of the Brisbane River and allowed for early arrival but it was late. The forecast was sunny periods with showers and a late storm. The only good vantage spot was on the north bank of the river accessed by a walk along a beach, then across a tidal creek—using stepping stones some fisherman had placed there—then along the edge of a wall which carried the outfall from a water treatment plant, and near the end of this was a view across to the berths.

The ANL Explorer was late and it was growing cool and rain threatening just when I could just get a glimpse of the top of the mast and funnel over the wall. The tugs came from their berths and slowly the container ship came into view, and the lead tug took the tow line at the same time as the sun came out again—and this was the moment in time to capture, just in time for a snapshot view, which cut off the superstructure but in my view enhanced the composition. Meanwhile the tide had risen and the creek was much wider with no chance of crossing except further upstream; and then the rain came, but it was worth it.
**Don Braben’s** painting of troopship SS *Omrah* was selected as a finalist for the Gallipoli Art Prize 2014.

*SS Omrah* was an ocean liner built in 1899 for the Orient Steam Navigation Company, for the passenger service between the United Kingdom and Australia.

During World War I, the ship was taken over for use as a troopship. On 12 May 1918, while headed from Marseilles to Alexandria, *Omrah* was torpedoed and sunk 40 nautical miles (74 km) from Sardinia, by German submarine *UB-52*. One person aboard *Omrah* died in the attack.

Don is a foundation member, vice-president and Fellow of the Australian Society of Marine Artists. He is also a member of the International Society of Marine Painters and the Australian Guild of Realist Artists in Naval Vessels.

He was born and educated on Merseyside, England in 1937, growing up when Liverpool was a very busy port which gave him the interest in ships and the sea. Deciding on a career in art instead of the sea, Don graduated with NDD and ATD (1960) and later an MA, taught and lectured in art at schools, colleges and university until 1997.

His teaching career took him from UK to Nigeria, Zambia, Canada and finally Australia where he spent most of his career lecturing in art at Griffith University. Among his interests in teaching were developing drawing courses for distance education students and illustrating for texts and scientific publications.

He continued his interest in marine art with voyages by sea as artist in residence with CSIRO, Australian Maritime Safety Authority and RAN Hydrographic Service. These voyages depicting the crews and ships at work resulted in exhibitions in Hobart, Brisbane and Wollongong. His interest in the last of the conventional cargo ships, *Capitaine Wallis*, led to an exhibition of the ship’s history in Sydney and Noumea.

Don’s paintings have won many awards and his work is in many public, private and corporate collections worldwide. Published articles have appeared in Australian Artist and he is listed in Painters of New Caledonia C20.
Tilikum
‘The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss’
by Jack Woods

Most mariners are familiar with the voyage of Captain Joshua Slocum’s Spray but less know about the lengthy voyage made by Captain John Voss in the Indian dugout canoe Tilikum a few years later.

I only learned about the full extent of the voyage after I picked up a secondhand book, ‘The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss’, in which I saw some photos of this intriguing craft and read about his trip from Victoria, British Columbia, via the Pacific to Australia and then on to New Zealand, South Africa and South America. He finished the voyage in London where the vessel was exhibited at Earls Court, which was reportedly arranged by Sir Earnest Shackleton, who had heard Voss speak at a public lecture in Wellington, New Zealand.

Tilikum was a 38ft by 5ft dugout canoe purchased on Vancouver Island from Nootka Indians. The draft fully laden was only 2ft and Voss strengthened the hull, fitted a cabin and three small masts with a total sail area of only 230 sq ft. All the running rigging led back to the cockpit, enabling all sails to be set or taken in by the helmsman.

Captain Voss set sail on May 27, 1901 from Victoria B.C. with one crew member; three years later he completed the voyage in London. Most of the voyage was with one other crew member, but on the leg from Suva to Sydney, Voss reported that his crew member was lost overboard in heavy seas. There was significant controversy over this incident which remains today.

Tilikum’s visit to Australia and New Zealand was widely reported in the media of the time and created much public interest. While in Melbourne it was exhibited at the Melbourne exhibition building and following the exhibition, when Tilikum was being raised onto a wagon for transporting, the tackle broke and Voss found “...splits in five different places, one crack extending from the top and down the middle of the stern and along the bottom nearly as far as the forward end, and four more cracks, two on each side running from aft to forward to about the same length.”

Voss took the carrier to court, claiming the failure of a lifting hook, and after a 7 day trial, won the case, with the proceeds paying for necessary repairs to the vessel.

One thing that stood out in his book was his excellent seamanship, and handling the ship during severe weather including using his own version of a sea anchor.

I wanted to paint Tilikum off the coast of Australia to show that aspect of his voyage, and I finally decided to show the vessel off Tasman Island, bound for Invercargill, early morning, with fresh westerly winds as described in his book. While in Melbourne Tilikum had been transported to Lake Wendouree at Ballarat, where she was given a fresh coat of paint and presented with a new set of sails, and as such the painting shows a fairly clean vessel.

One of the biggest challenges in the painting was to represent the unusual figurehead. The restored Tilikum is now on display at the Maritime Museum of British Columbia and the restoration includes a very colourful figurehead. I opted to represent it as shown in one of the photos of the vessel on the hard in New Zealand. I provided the museum with a print of the completed painting.
After Painting...There’s Still Sailing

Thoughts about marine art

By John Adameitis

I’ve been asked to put some thoughts together about marine art, my approach, technique, and so on… things I’m not sure I’d ever be ready to pontificate upon.

One is always grasping for something beyond reach. So it’s inevitable that no matter how well the work is received, most pieces secretly fall short. It’s hard to have tickets on oneself under those circumstances.

Why paint marine art? Why paint at all may be a better question, but thankfully lies outside the present remit.

Given that one does (paint), the question of genre seems more or less linked to personal pre-occupations and passions. In my case it comes from spending a good chunk of the last 40 years, like Ratty, simply ‘messing about in boats’.

I have a current love affair with a 75-year-old wooden boat with sweet lines and an interesting pedigree, and which sails like a witch. If I’m not sailing or fiddling with it I’m painting it, Zinc White or anti-foul; take your pick.

Also, not given to abstraction, marine art is something of a safe haven for the traditionally inclined and there is no shortage of interesting technical challenges. Ironically though, painting light and water has to be one of the most abstract themes around. You can go swimming in your oils forever, just adding and subtracting till it looks right or even somewhere beyond. Reality can easily spill over into Romanticism—and does so more often than not.

When I gave up Architecture a few years ago—ostensibly to paint full time—we sold our then boat to help fund the transition. Bad move! A big part of my muse sailed off with it. I found I needed one foot in the water to bring legitimate feeling back into the exercise. Being stuck dock-side didn’t seem to work for me. So, pecuniary interests notwithstanding, I felt it was time for one last boat.

Technically, I usually start with Pentel sketches and doodles, looking for a likely composition, and then maybe a few detail studies to iron out any drafting issues. These are occasionally followed by fairly loose pastel studies for feel and colour—but almost always by a study in oils to sort out as many technical issues as possible before embarking on the Final Piece.

Not very spontaneous perhaps, but once you are chasing a specific effect there is nothing spontaneous about it. On the other hand, I suspect this might be a flawed approach as about half the studies turn out better than the final piece—or else they take off on their own merry way till something halfway acceptable emerges. But all this might need to change. If it doesn’t it can’t be expected to evolve.

I’ve been taking more time over pieces of late (playing with said boat) and spend more time ruminating over the Work In Progress than actually painting it. But that seems to allow more personal feeling to seep into the work.
I doubt I’ll ever earn a living by painting, so I guess there’s no rush anyhow. You can generally tell when a work has been rushed to move on to the next ‘performance’. They tend to look shallow and, more often than not, badly drawn.

I have no compunction about working from photos and I’m sure Monet would have given his right arm for a handy digital camera. In any case, by the time the work is up on the easel and one’s own personal appreciation and technique has been overlaid (‘style’ if you will) it can hardly be said to be photographic. The photos are merely a starting point – the raw material so to speak. The painting itself tries to go well beyond that. In my case there is a limit to what I can bring to a work sitting on the dock side – less so in the studio where you really end up painting in mind space. The subject keeps broadening beyond the immediate impressions.

My more conjectural pieces are obviously influenced by experience on and around the water. Sailing to me can be a spiritual thing, on a good day, and by now I think I have a reasonably well developed eye for sail set and boat lines. They certainly get me going.

On occasions when measured drawings are available I have reverted to architectural skills, for the fun of it, and constructed 3D CAD models to get the perspective and viewpoints right. Boats at sea are extraordinarily complex forms in an endlessly complex environment. In comparison, I find landforms an exercise in light relief. I am inspired by other artists too: Martin Campbell, for his ability to bridge the real and the abstract. I envy John Perkins’ magical loose brushwork, Bob Carter’s romantic mastery and Ian Hansen’s all round virtuosity that can only come from knowing his subject on a deeper level. And there are many others. Warwick Webb, Jeff Rigby, John Woodland, all elicit in me something way beyond envy.

It’s early days as far as my own work goes and I look forward to the journey – as long the eyesight holds.

And when it no longer does, there’s still sailing.

John Adameitis is an Exhibiting Member of the Australian Society of Marine Artists
Five Brothers Went to War
Cassidy Brothers’ War Service Exhibition at Caboolture Airplane Museum

by Mary McKelvie

My father, JOHN DAVIDSON CASSIDY, was the eldest of six brothers, five of whom went to serve in World War II.

Dad was a navigator; he flew Beaufort Bombers with the RAAF and served in PNG.

Second brother HUGH CASSIDY joined the RANVR and went to the UK. He was drafted to HMS Scylla, a Royal Navy Dido Class Cruiser located in Scotland. He trained as an anti aircraft gunner in the use of the Oerlikon gun. The Scylla was part of the escort for a convoy to Russia via the Arctic Circle.

A newspaper at the time of the operation reported: “Rear Admiral Burnett, Commander of the escorts for the convoy, had stationed the Scylla almost in the centre of the convoy where her anti-aircraft guns would afford maximum protection to the ships of the convoy. A large group of aircraft approached, all Junkers 88 or Heinkel 11, each aircraft carrying two torpedoes. They came into the attack almost at sea level and as they came in every gun in the convoy opened fire.”

In a report to the Press Hugh said this: “Three torpedo bombers penetrated the screen of shells and torpedoed a ship a few cable lengths from the Scylla. The ship and two bombers vanished in the explosion, but a third cut across our starboard quarter. I saw tracer biting into the bomber, which crashed near Scylla’s stern. Next day a Junkers torpedo bomber hit the water trying to dodge the spray of shells.”

At dawn on 14th September 1942 U Boats attacked the convoy. This was followed by an attack on the aircraft carrier by 22 torpedo bombers. Shortly afterwards, 12 planes made a high level bombing attack, followed by 25 bombers. A final attack for the day was by high level bombers. On the 15th, the convoy was subject to high and low level attacks by 50 to 70 aircraft over a three hour period, and shortly before the convoy reached its destination there was a final attack by 24 dive bombers.

Rear Admiral Burnett had to escort a homeward-bound convoy of ships in ballast back to Britain. This convoy was not attacked from the air, but on several occasions by U boats, and two escorts were torpedoed. After the homeward-bound convoy was picked up, the Rear Admiral transferred to the destroyer Milne to allow the Scylla to proceed at high speed to port. The Scylla had on board a number of survivors from ships sunk on the outward bound convoy, and some needed more medical attention than could be given on board the light cruiser.

Hugh was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM), which he received from King George VI for his service aboard the Scylla.

He went on to train for Motor Torpedo Boats. He became an officer, was in charge of MTB 295 in Gibraltar and saw many operations in the Mediterranean.
KEN CASSIDY joined the RAN but because of a weak right eye was not accepted as a seaman. He was given the position of Coder and sent to Darwin. He was there for the attack by the Japanese on Darwin on 19th February 1942.

JIM CASSIDY was a Navigator with the RAAF and served in the UK, completing two tours of Germany in Lancaster bombers. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and Bar, which he received from King George VI at Buckingham Palace.

TOM CASSIDY joined the RAN at the age of 17. He trained as a radar operator and joined HMAS Hobart before transferring to HMAS Westralia, formerly a merchant vessel, then converted to an LSI (Landing Ship Infantry). In December 1943 the Westralia sailed on the first amphibious landing in the South west Pacific. With escorts, they landed American troops at Arawe on New Britain. The landing was preceded by a bombardment of 400 tons of bombs. Westralia sailed in company with HMAS Manoora and HMAS Kanimbla and most of the time had an escort of destroyers. They sailed between Buna, Lae, Finschhafen and Madang.

On 1 April 1944 they took part in the first landing on Dutch New Guinea, and it was the largest invasion in Pacific history to that date. The Westralia was the only RAN ship in the Hollandia Attack Force. Three landings happened simultaneously – also at Tannah Merah and Aitape. RAAF units were also involved. The RAN landing ships Kanimbla and Manoora were in the force landing at Tannah Merah. The cruisers Australia and Shropshire, and the destroyers Arunta and Warramunga with USN units, escorted the force. General MacArthur went to the landing in a US cruiser. When the whole force, which included aircraft carriers, was assembled, it numbered 170 ships.

The Westralia was carrying troops of the US Sixth Army, and sailed to Humboldt Bay. RAAF bombing raids took place first, followed by the three cruisers bombarding the most important targets. The Japanese fled, and the US troops landed and climbed to an elevation of 730 feet before digging themselves into foxholes.

Tom’s next operation was the landing at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. After returning to Hollandia to load up troops and stores they sailed on 9th November 1944. Aboard the Westralia were almost all of the complete staff of the US 8th Army Headquarters. A total of 25 landing ships, each an average of 10,000 gross tons, were part of the convoy that headed for the Philippines. Aboard the ships were around 30,000 US troops and 14,000 tons of war supplies. At Leyte Gulf a flight of Japanese fighter bombers attacked, but were repelled and eight enemy aircraft brought down.

The troops were landed and equipment discharged. There were 140 other Allied ships in the Bay. After unloading they headed back to Hollandia. Lightning aircraft flew overhead to escort them out.

Tom also took part in the landings at Lingayen Gulf on the Westralia before being drafted on 31 May 1945 to the HMAS Warramunga, a Tribal Class Destroyer built in Australia.

Following the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was announced that Japan was sending envoys to Manila. The Warramunga headed to Manila Harbour and arrived on 17 August 1945. Manila Harbour was a ship’s graveyard with well over 50 ships sunk there and masts, sterns, and bows sticking up above the water line. The Warramunga joined the Australian Squadron to sail to Tokyo Bay in Japan for the signing of the Peace Document. Tom had his 21st birthday while en route to Japan.
The Peace Treaty was signed on 2 September 1945 on board the USS Missouri. Tom was demobilized on 30 January 1946.

The youngest brother **GAVIN**, was too young to join up.

**The exhibition**

The 'Cassidy Bros War Service' exhibition was held at the Caboolture Airplane Museum for two weeks, from 18 August to 1 September 2013. I completed 29 paintings and drawings for the exhibition.

_Dad having some R & R in Madang_

Mary McKelvie is a member of the Australian Society of Marine Artists

**Convoys in World War II: The system of a number of Merchant Ships escorted by Naval Units** by Captain Bill Thomas (ret’d)

The ships were formed into columns numbered from the left. All ships had numbers: for example, a ship in the 4th column and 3rd from the front of that column was numbered 43. Columns were generally half a mile apart and ships a quarter mile astern of each other in their columns. A rescue vessel followed the convoy to hopefully pick up any seamen from ships sunk from the convoy, a particularly dangerous occupation in heavy seas and without an escort. Stragglers were left behind and given a course to the nearest landfall or a course directly to the convoy’s destination.

Ships were generally armed with a four inch gun aft and a twelve pounder for’d, and various machine guns for anti-aircraft protection; these guns were mostly manned by Army or Navy gunners (DEMS) when available, otherwise by the ship’s crew.

An example, Convoy SC122, departed New York on 5th March, 1943 comprising 50 ships, formed into 11 columns (9 with 5 ships and the rest on either wing) and a rescue vessel astern of the convoy. The escorts were positioned 4 ahead, 2 on the wings, 2 on the quarters, and 1 astern. In the mid-Atlantic this Convoy faced 3 lines of U Boats numbering 26 in all, which were waiting for SC122 to arrive; 9 ships were lost and the following Convoy HX 229 lost 13. Tankers were placed for protection in the centre of the ships whenever possible, as they were the favourite target of the U Boats.

The Convoy Commodore was situated in the leading ship of the centre column, from where he controlled all movements with flag signals which were repeated by all ships. When plans were made for convoy ships’ positions, consideration was required for portions of convoy to split up nearing the U.K., for ships to make various ports. The whole system was very stressful for crews of Merchant and Naval ships, but they mostly returned to make further trips.

The total casualties for allied ships crews was 41,000, DEMS Gunners 3,955, neutral ships crews 6,509 men. U Boat U48 sank 54 Merchant Ships. This is a simple explanation of the Convoy System. There were other formations for particular operations.
Convoys of WWII: Recollections of the West African Run

by Captain Bill Thomas (ret’d)

I experienced my first Convoy in 1943, having joined a Liverpool merchant shipping company as a cadet. I was seventeen.

Wages were £4 pounds a year to £18 a year in my final year, and in addition we received £10 a month danger money. We were well fed and had mostly reasonable accommodation, four to six in a cabin. We received tuition when possible as future Deck Officers.

My first convoy was from Glasgow, Liverpool and Bristol Channel Ports, about 30 ships plus escorts. What a fantastic sight for a first tripper!

The convoy proceeded at seven knots, much to our Master’s disgust as we were able to make sixteen, rounded the north of Ireland into the North Atlantic taking a Westerly course, then South to pass the Spanish Coast well off shore. The convoy was heading for ports on the West and South Coast of Africa. Ships would leave the convoy when nearing their particular destination. We left the convoy and proceeded to Gibraltar and joined another convoy to Port Said. We were troubled by aircraft during this passage. On a later trip the vessel abeam in the convoy was torpedoed. The passage to India was made independently. At Bombay we joined another convoy to Calcutta and picked up survivors from a British ship in the North Indian Ocean.

I served in four of the companies’ ships during the war, mostly in Convoys—the last loaded with eight thousand tons of gasoline in jerry cans bound for Malaya for the occupation forces there.

My time at sea during the war was never boring and at times exciting. I feel fortunate in having experienced it and not to have been in the bitter battles in the North Atlantic and on the Russian Run with the loss of so many Merchant Seamen and Naval Personnel. After the war I acquired my Second Mate’s Certificate, and eventually my Masters.

Captain Bill Thomas (ret’d) is an Exhibiting Member of the Australian Society of Marine Artists.
Why Marine Painting?
A favourable slant
by Jeff Rigby

Sometimes I wonder whether I should really think of myself as a marine artist at all. For most of my painting career I have dealt with landscape and architecture, with an emphasis on Sydney and regional NSW. In that context, I have always had a strong interest in our industrial past, so perhaps my marine interests can be seen to fit loosely into that category. However, it goes much deeper than that as I cannot remember a time when I was not absolutely fascinated by ships of all kinds, especially sailing ships.

My parents, Alan and Enid Rigby, were commercial artists, trained in the 1920s when very high standards of draughtsmanship were an absolute requirement. The endless round of deadlines for the press and other publications meant that they usually worked late into the night after dinner. Brushes and pencils were very much part of our home life, and so after my homework was finished I would sit with them and do my own drawing. They would occasionally give me advice but for the most part I learned pretty much by osmosis. Much later I attended the National Art School and studied painting and drawing, but I still owe a great deal to both my parents.

We had quite a large library covering variety of subjects including history, literature and art. There were many books about maritime history and in particular, the last days of commercial sail. We had most of Lubbock’s volumes, including a wonderful book on the work of Jack Spurling and a collection of his prints published by the ‘Blue Peter’ magazine in the 1930s. His paintings were a great fascination to me; his elegant style and wonderful sense of reality seemed to be the next best thing to actually seeing a sailing ship at sea. Happily, all these books and prints are with me still.

The most interesting item in my parent’s study, however, was not a book but a little half model of a sailing ship. It was in a rough wooden case, which once had a glass front, high up on a shelf, well out of the reach of us boys. The ship sailed under grey skies on a plaster sea, some of whose waves were missing, its carved wooden sails billowing in the stiff breeze.

This was “The Ship Which Your Grandfather Rigby Sailed Out From England On” and it was made by a fo’castle hand during the passage, no doubt to make a few extra shillings from the passengers to augment his very meagre pay. This lovely, honest little model of the full rigged ship Ashmore still sails.

My father was born in Sydney in 1901 when commercial sail was still abundant. His father was born in 1869 in Liverpool, England, at that time one of the busiest seaports in the world where the family ran a ships’ chandlery. Miraculously, my grandfather’s love of sailing ships seemed to have been undiminished by the events of his family’s passage to Australia under sail. In November1887, in the middle of the Southern Ocean as the Ashmore was running her easting down, his mother died, leaving the six brothers and sisters to arrived in their new country completely on their own.

My father told me that sometimes on Sundays my grandfather would take him around the Sydney waterfront to look at sailing ships, explaining the details and technicalities of their rigging. During the evenings, Dad would draw them and so, it seems, a precedent was set!

Later, in 1915, Dad began work in the city and often went on board sailing ships when he had the chance. He was once invited down to the saloon of the six-masted barquentine E.R. Stirling by Capt R.M Stirling and was also allowed to climb to the fore royal yard of the mighty five masted barque France. He wanted to go to sea but as his elder brother was away at the war and his father was by then dead, this was not to be. Many years later, he was filled with admiration for the beautiful little Joseph Conrad as she lay in Watson’s Bay and duly added many of Villier’s books to his collection.

As a boy I drew little else but ships and it was a great introduction to formal drawing. Fortunately, Dad’s office was on the 11th floor of Kyle House, Macquarie Place, commanding a view from the Heads to the Harbour Bridge. During the holidays, My brothers and I often spent time there, in between trips to Manly, drawing and watching the constant parade of ships while Dad worked.
Every half hour or so there seemed to be the arrival or departure of P&O & Orient liners, Blue Funnel liners, steamers and motor ships of all descriptions.

I remember Dad and I were very shocked at the seemingly un-nautical appearance of the Oriana and Canberra when they first arrived in the early 1960s, much preferring the older ships such as the Orion and Strathnaver and the very few remaining old-timers with their tall, commanding funnels, straight stems and counter sterns.

Sometimes Dad would take his eye off his work and quickly draw the newest arrival if she was of sufficient interest. I would watch spellbound, as the ship seemed to materialise from the tip of his pencil, quickly and precisely, immaculately delineated. In my parents' trade, time was money and you did it once, got it right and went on with the next job.

Dad's concentration, power of observation and discipline was immense and he still remains one of the most impressive draughtsman I have known. Sadly none of Dad's beautiful little sketches from the office window have survived. My mother's abilities were equally powerful but were more oriented towards the figure, which she demonstrated even at the age of 88 when drawing my portrait.

In 1959 my parents gave me an old Rollie-Cord 2a for my 11th birthday and it so was with great excitement that I climbed aboard the Russian research schooner Zarja in West Circular Quay. The crew were very kind and let me take as many photos as I wanted. They had no English and I certainly had no Russian, but that didn't seem to matter as the negotiations were completed on the basis of a smile and a nod. In my parents' trade, time was money and you did it once, got it right and went on with the next job.

A grey day

Sydneysiders turned out to farewell her, such were the sensibilities of those times. Unfortunately for all concerned, there was a dead flat calm as she motored out, all sails set.

Shortly afterwards, the Indonesian barquentine Dewarutji also visited Sydney. There was less public excitement this time, but her departure was very memorable. Dad and I watched from Bradley's Head as she sailed down the Harbour on a magnificent clear, cold morning before a stiff westerly, escorted by the veteran racing schooner Astor.

One of Dad's drawings that has survived, dates from 1922. It shows the racing yacht Sayonara built in the 1890s, on a covered slipway in Lavender Bay. Interestingly he has described the shape of her hull by contrasting it with the dark shed interior, rather than by rendering the hull itself. The drawing is very well seen but does not quite have the complete certainty of touch that he had in later years and now provides me with a tantalising glimpse of a young artist striving to understand his subject.

The drawing is of particular interest to my wife Kathy and I as we sailed on Sayonara a number of times on Pittwater in the 1980s. Our friend, her devoted owner, Hank Kossen had previously saved her from complete oblivion but sailed her on a shoe string budget. 52' long, her rig was much reduced from her early days, she was without an engine, leaked constantly and broke gear at regular intervals. She was still extremely fast and was in consequence, quite frightening to sail. When I hung on that long tiller as she lay over in the strong south-easter, wondering what would happen next, it was strangely comforting to recall that my father had drawn her nearly 70 years before. To our great delight, in recent years she has been completely restored to her former glory.

Over the years I was able to add some practical experience to theoretical knowledge. I had sailed in dinghies on Pittwater as a child but had done little sailing as an adult. There was a brief interlude with the barque Endeavour II during the Cook Bicentenary in 1970. Then, in the early 1980s, I made a number of passages on the brigantine Eye of the Wind including some extremely heavy weather on the way to Lord Howe Island. If going aloft to take in the main t'gallant while feeling shockingly seasick was one thing, watching awestruck as the big seas slid under the extremely heavy weather on the way to Lord Howe Island.

The next great event was the visit of the Chilean training ship Esmeralda in 1961. She was the first ship I ever saw crossing yards, if one makes an exception of the square foresail on the Zarja. On 25th May, in a dense, post Empire Day haze of bonfire and gunpowder smoke, I was able to see her motoring into the Harbour from the deck of the Curl Curl. When the Esmeralda departed Sydney 100,000
There was no requirement for safety harnesses in those days but we felt quite safe, while the ship, shortened down to tops’ls, seemed completely at home in those conditions. Amazingly, the desire of a lifetime had been fulfilled and I still regard the Eye of the Wind and the good friends I made through her, with enormous affection.

Shortly afterwards, I met Kathy Veel who, very unusually, owned a yacht and later sailed in a number of Hobart races as navigator with an all-girl crew, “Women on Water”. She is also thought to be the first woman to gain a Yacht Master’s certificate in Australia. Her boat Quest of Sydney was a beautiful 25 foot double-ender, built by Voss of Auckland in 1936 to a design by Dr Thomas Harrison Butler. We cruised locally and up and down the coast of NSW and Queensland over the next six or seven years and participated in the Wooden Boat Shows and Vintage Yacht races.

Over time I had painted the occasional ship in the context of the harbour, along with some coastal subjects, but in more recent years I found the desire to paint ships for their own sake beginning to re-assert itself. At some point I saw the opportunity to give some shape to this old interest and joined the Australian Society of Marine Artists.

It has been wonderful to be associated with artists with such varied marine interests. Some love sail, some steam, or both. Some love the contemporary scene, some are modellers, painters or sculptors and all in some way combine to create a greater understanding of the relationship of art with ships and the sea.

Jeff Rigby was born in Sydney in 1948 and graduated from the National Art School, in 1974. In 1975 he gained a Diploma of Education at Sydney Teachers College.

An interest in cityscape, Industrial architecture is offset by a long standing love of landscape, working in the mediums of gouache, acrylic, coloured pencil and charcoal.

He has inherited his love of the environment, built and otherwise and his devotion to objective painting and drawing from his parents Alan and Enid Rigby who were early conservationists and commercial artists from the 1920s and 30s.

Since 1976 Jeff has taught drawing and painting at various NSW colleges of TAFE, but principally at Meadowbank where he served continuously for twenty nine years. He has been a member of the Drawing Department at The National Art School since 2003. Jeff is also a Fellow of the Australian Society of Marine Artists.
President’s Medal 2012
Awarded to Marijke Greenway

I awarded the 2012 medal at the James Craig Artist in Resident exhibition. Marijke Greenway’s painting of John Oxley on the hard at Blackwattle Bay caught my eye, as viewing a ship’s hull from below her keel presents quite a challenge: the changing contours of the hull, together with the sweep of the hull strakes, plus the effects of perspective, are very difficult to convert into the two dimensions of a canvas. Congratulations, Marijke!

Robert Carter OAM, President

Other paintings by Marijke

Above: The Yellow Boat
Right upper: Golden Grove
Right lower: All Tied Up
President’s Medal 2014
Awarded to Jan Harrington-Johnson

I selected Jan Harrington-Johnson to receive the 2014 medal for her painting of the *Svanen* with the Harbour Bridge in the background. I was particularly impressed by Jan’s treatment of aerial perspective. With two dominant features of the painting—the vessel’s masts and rigging superimposed over the girders of the bridge—a difficult situation was handled with great skill. Congratulations Jan!

*Robert Carter OAM, President*

Other paintings by Jan

*Above left: Southern Swan*
*Above right: Boat Repairs, Po Tong, Hong Kong*
*Left: Spender Fishing*
Marine Art in Action

The 2012-13 Artist in Residence program

“Ladies only”
Marine Art in Action
Retrospective of the Sydney Heritage Fleet
Artist in Residence program 2012-13
by Robert Carter

Back in 2008 the Australian Society of Marine Artists established and Artist in Residence program in conjunction with the Sydney Heritage Fleet (SHF, formerly the Sydney Maritime Museum). Our first artist in residence was Martin Campbell, who was featured in ‘Australian Artist’ No. 292. The alliance between the ASMA and SHF probably started more than 40 years ago when, as a career engineer, I became a member of the museum. I was aware that my engineering skills could be used in the restoration of historic craft and at the same time would satisfy my passion for maritime history.

In 1996 the Australian Society of Marine Artists was formed. Today it is made up of artists from all walks of life, both amateur and professional, but all possessing an interest in maritime affairs, whether historical or contemporary. The Society is a corporate member of the SHF, as too are many ASMA members.

It was only natural that ASMA, while being a national society, should have evolved in a port like Sydney as it concentrated intense maritime activity into a region where there was a large artistic community.

Thankfully the Heritage Dock of the Sydney Heritage Fleet in Rozelle Bay is the last area in the harbour where ship building and restoration crafts can be witnessed by today’s generation. Even this is under threat as the foreshores are being increasingly sanitised of their industrial heritage and becoming more like those of a man-made lake.

In 2012 we wanted to enliven the program even more. We thought that having multiple artists in residence would reveal many different interpretations. As marine art has traditionally been a male-dominated domain, we also thought that we would confine this year’s program to “ladies only”. Of the 32 females in our Australian-wide membership of 150, 13 live in or around Sydney and 11 put up their hand to take part.

The waterfront location of the Fleet’s restoration site is at Rozelle Bay, just along from the Anzac Bridge. It is not possible for artists to ‘live in’ per se, but there is studio space on the top deck of the ex-Sydney ferry Kanangra, currently under restoration, where artists’ gear can be left and paintings finished off it rains. The scope of the program allows images to be captured in other locations, notably at Darling Harbour adjacent to the Australian National Maritime Museum, which is also supportive of the program.

The artists in residence spent 3 or 4 months at these locations and their work was displayed at Wharf 7, Darling Harbour in an exhibition to raise funds for the Museum. It is hoped that this program will continue. Artists who would like to take part in future programs should enquire via the ASMA website:

www.marineartsaustralia.com.au

Robert Carter OAM, President ASMA
Fellow Australian Society of Marine Artists
Fellow International Society of Marine Painters

Participating artists

Fellow:
Christine Hill

Exhibiting Members:
Suzanne Alexander,
Jane Bennett,
Monika Graf
Marijke Greenway
Jan Harrington-Johnson,
Leonora Howlett
Gwendolin Lewis
Brenda Kitteridge
Elena Parashko.

The Red Beret - Jan Harrington-Johnson
ASMA~Sydney Heritage Fleet: Artist in Residence Program Retrospective

Works of the Participants

Heritage Ship Yard - Suzanne Alexander

The ‘Carpentaria’ and the ‘James Craig’ - Jane Bennett

Seagulls - Monika Graf

The ‘Carpentaria’ - Marijke Greenway
The Lady of ‘Kanangra’ - Jan Harrington-Johnson

Caulking - Christine Hill

The ‘John Oxley’ from the Dock - Leonora Howlett
Propeller - Gwendolin Lewis

Thinking of You - Elena Parashko

Heritage Dock, Rozelle - Brenda Kitteridge
"Follow the Yellow Line!"

by Jan Harrington-Johnson

We met at Wharf 7—that is, we the artists interested in joining in the adventure of painting the Sydney Heritage Fleet met.

Initially in the shadows of the James Craig, we sat on the railway sleeper benches and introduced ourselves—for me, a little nervously, as I was not sure what I was expecting.

Christine Hill convened the meeting and detailed what was expected of us: to go to the Sydney Heritage Fleet site, meet with Tim Drinkwater, the Operations Manager, who would put us through our paces with a site induction; then paint madly to create wonderful artworks to raise awareness of the Heritage Fleet and help with sorely needed funds.

We convened for lunch with John Sweaney and Jenetta Russell—no fleet gets painted on an empty stomach—then agreed to meet at the Sydney Heritage Site to have our site induction (“Follow the yellow line!”) and gather sketches and ideas for our paintings.

Two weeks later we gathered once again at the Sydney Heritage Dock, in the lee of the Anzac Bridge. I began to realise then how wonderful this opportunity was, to have the use of the top deck of the 100 year old Kanangra for 8 weeks. To be able to sit and sketch the John Oxley, watch the Lady Hopetoun, Waratah and Boomerang be manoeuvred into place. To be part of the bustle of the dedicated Pymble Men’s Shed and all the men and women I would meet who work tirelessly to repair these Old Ladies of the Sea.

Tim Drinkwater very graciously showed us the ropes, patiently showing us the enormity of recreating these aged vessels. After some plein air sessions at the Heritage site and on the dock near the James Craig with howling winds and curious passers-by, I took my sketches home and have been creating in the studio.

What I wanted to create was a sense of the past... A landscape that might or might not exist, try to give a sense of size in relationship to the ships, you imagine them to be so big, when in fact they are so small, so hence the following—a ghost of the past—James Craig...

These vessels will not be restored to their glory without the dedicated craftsmen and women volunteers who are involved in the painstaking labour, and the much-needed funds for the equipment and materials.

So, I hope as part of the Artist in Residence group we can play our part in helping to save these vessels and our heritage.
Artist in Residence -
Looking Back
by Elena Parashko

It was an honour to be invited to be one of the artists-in-residence with the purpose of depicting the vessels of the Sydney Heritage Fleet in artwork.

Visiting the Fleet’s Heritage Dock at Rozelle Bay in Sydney was a great source of artistic inspiration for me. Moored at the dock were several ships in the Fleet in various states of repair including the inner-harbour ferry Kanangra (built in 1912) and the steam tug Waratah (1902).

The coastal steam ship, John Oxley (1927), was on the floating Heritage Dock undergoing major restoration. Donning a hard hat and climbing up the scaffolding to board this vessel during a pause in construction provided a unique opportunity to witness the painstaking work the volunteer shipbuilders of the Sydney Heritage Fleet put into this important project. Walking through the deteriorating compartments of the John Oxley gave me an insight into how magnificent this steamer once was and will eventually be again. Small details instantly caught my eye and imagination. In my artistic practice, much of my work is aimed at highlighting the beauty all around us that often goes unnoticed in the busyness of our lives. I found much fuel for inspiration here.

As painting there and then on board John Oxley was not an option, I relied on taking quick photographs to record the images that made a visual and emotional impression on me. I worked from these reference photos and my personal experience back home in the studio.

Passing by the pilot’s dining area on John Oxley I was intrigued by a locked door with a key dangling from the doorknob. I loved the colours and texture of the rich wood grain which contrasted against the tarnished silver keyhole. Again my imagination took over as I pondered the mystery of what was locked away behind that door. It was an image I was compelled to paint. I called the painting, ‘Key to John Oxley’s Heart’ as a double entendre referring literally to the key which unlocks this door and also the heart of the man John, who I nostalgically imagined the vessel was named after.

These are two of the four paintings I created for the artist-in-residence program. The third painting features the life buoy from Boomerang with a seagull perched on top and the fourth captures a view on board James Craig while at sea. The images I have portrayed in some of these paintings are unconventional and not what people would expect when they think of Sydney Heritage Fleet. However, for me they represent the intimate human element that brings this maritime history alive.
Reflections . . . Salt in the AIR
by Leonora Howlett

When I contemplated the invitation to take part as an artist-in-residence, for the Heritage Fleet at the Dock my mind leapt ahead to the vision of a final result. How would the interpretations of ten women artists be different to the previous exhibitions where the artists were men…and would there be any real difference at all?

The Dock was already a familiar place to me after some years of association with the Fleet, and I felt from the start that the subjects for interpretation were endless.

I am a slow painter so my paintings were developed from on-site sketches and photographs and then constructed in my studio.

For me each painting is an adventure. I rarely start with an end in mind and am hopefully surprised where the adventure will lead; and if fruitful the meaning of the work, which is often hidden, will be revealed.

My first paintings were focused on the boats in the Dock as they rested or were being worked on.

I wanted to capture their shapes and colours, their relationship to each other and character as they jostle in the moving waters.

I then became interested in depicting the immediate environment, the view an observer might see during a stroll around the yard, each direction leading to a new vista exposing the paraphernalia and jumble of shapes and equipment that form such an appealing conglomeration of masses and lines.

Beyond the dock, but very much part of its history, are the remaining areas of the industrial sites which are part of Rozelle Bay and which give us a glimpse of the disappearing industrial past.

I have chosen two images to illustrate these themes.

‘Framed’ depicts the old wheat silos seen through the frame of two cranes miraculously positioned. I have christened the silos the ‘Pyrmont Parthenon’ as homage to the enduring influence of Greek architecture as it persists 2500 years later in this most utilitarian of buildings.

‘Look around the Corner’—I found this area to be an inspiring arrangement of rectangular shapes and verticals and horizontals enlivened by unexpected splashes of brilliant colours contrasting with the pervading industrial greys.

The question posed at the beginning of this article was answered when the exhibition was assembled on the James Craig, and I think in a rather ambiguous way. I found that there were more similarities than differences in the interpretations of the previous artists in residence and the women artists in residence. There was a range of expression in both, from the heroic to the personal, but with a bias in some of the women’s art towards the human experience of our maritime history.
SALT in the A.I.R.
by Jenetta Russell

When ten women artists are brought together to paint the beautiful old vessels of the Sydney Heritage Fleet and create an exhibition, there are always going to be wonderful stories to tell as they take their journeys of discovery through artists’ eyes.

The Australian Society of Marine Artists and the Sydney Heritage Fleet have collaborated to run an Artist in Residence program, while Writer in Residence, Jenetta Russell, has created a book—Salt in the A.I.R.—from interviews with the ten women marine artists who make up the residency.

She tells the story of their journeys and the humorous, sad, enlightening, uplifting and stressful times experienced along the way.

Copies of Salt in the A.I.R. can be purchased from Jenetta Russell JenettaR@cobbett.com.au at a cost of AUD 17.50 The price includes postage in Australia; for overseas destinations, international postage/exchange fees may apply.
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