

Seascape

Maritime Safety Queensland

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Volume 5 Issue 2

**YOU'RE THE SKIPPER
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE!**

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- Identifying approved life jackets
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Queensland Government
Maritime Safety Queensland



Captain John Watkinson, General Manager, Maritime Safety Queensland

The Christmas boating season was unusually quiet due to the abnormal run of bad weather which led up to Christmas and carried on through to February 2008.

This kept many boat owners off the water except for the more hardy PWC riders and dedicated fishermen. While inclement weather was experienced throughout the state, the Whitsunday and Mackay regions featured in the news almost daily when torrential rain and severe winds hammered the area as a result of a monsoonal low depression locating itself almost over Mackay.

The town of Airlie Beach experienced cyclonic winds which caused devastation to the local fleet of moored and anchored vessels adjacent to the waterfront and Airlie Beach Marina. Initially some 60 craft broke their moorings or dragged anchor ending up on the rock walls and beaches between the Sailing Club and Cannonvale Beach. Others have sunk and have yet to be accounted for. Fortunately no lives were lost and lessons can be learnt from this incident.

This sort of mass grounding highlights the need for boat owners to ensure their vessels are secure especially on buoy moorings or at anchor. In crowded mooring areas it is unfortunate that if one boat breaks loose or drags, it can collide with other boats often causing them also to break loose or drag.

2008 will prove a busy and interesting time for Maritime Safety Queensland. Boating registrations continue to climb with Queensland now leading the nation in registered boats. This in turn creates challenges for regulatory authorities and

enforcement organisations as new issues arise and the congestion on our waterways increases.

The Gold Coast speed limit review conducted in the latter part of 2007 has finalised recommendations after an extensive consultation phase with local industry and boat owners. Implementation of the recommendations will be phased in from July 2008.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Gold Coast's marine industry and in particular Marine Queensland, whose input and constructive feedback throughout the review process was invaluable. This was a great example of how government and industry working cooperatively together can deliver practical and safe outcomes for all.

As mentioned in the last issue of *Seascope*, the findings of the Recreational Boating Discussion Paper and the Commercial Marine Industry Survey both launched in September 2007 will be released this year and published in *Seascope*.

It's timely to remind boat owners who by now should be aware that on 1 February 2009 the existing 121.5MHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) will cease to be monitored and must be replaced with a digital 406MHz EPIRB before that date. It is hoped skippers are heeding this advice and are switching over to 406 well in advance of the February shut off date. Remember to avoid the last minute rush and don't risk being caught without a functional EPIRB.

As boating grows in popularity the responsibility of the skipper to take charge and act responsibly when out on the water is paramount to safe boating and keeping accidents to a minimum. Remember you are not only responsible for your own safety, but that of your friends, family and other waterways users. Remember 'You're the Skipper – You're Responsible'.

Safe boating

Captain John Watkinson
General Manager

Pilots and tug masters retrieve runaway carrier

Maritime Safety Queensland Pilotage Services, Mackay have been commended for their handling of an unprecedented shipping emergency at the Port of Hay Point in February.

Strong northerly winds snapped mooring lines on the 200 metre bulk cargo carrier, *MV Devprayag* about 4am on 12 February blowing it off the northern Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal Berth (DBCT).

At dawn marine pilots Bryce Bathe and Graham Ring were landed on board the ship by helicopter where they assessed the situation and determined that four tugs would be needed to recover the vessel which had suffered some hull damage.

The removal of the ship took six challenging hours of close quarters pilot manoeuvring in winds of 35 knots and gusting to 45 with flood tide across the opening that led to safe water.

The pilots highly commend the assistance from the tugs Belyando, Broadsound, Kungurri, Koliyo and their respective masters.

A letter from BMA General Manager Port, Russell Grech to Maritime Safety Queensland's Manager Pilotage Services Graham Ring summed up the widespread respect earned by the participants.

"I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for your efforts regarding the incident involving the *MV Devprayag*," said Mr Grech.

"The incident was serious and placed our coal terminal at significant risk. Your skill and experience greatly contributed to the successful relocation of the *MV Devprayag* without injury to personnel or damage to BMA property."

"Hay Point Services highly regards the expertise you exhibited and again praises you for your efforts," he concluded.

His sentiments were echoed by Maritime Safety Queensland's General Manager, Captain John Watkinson.

"The calm professionalism of the pilots and tug masters in a perilous situation undoubtedly carried the day," said Captain Watkinson.

Our cover this month shows a near-disastrous attempt to cross the Maroochy Bar. See more photos page 9.

Marine Studies meets industry needs

There was a time when the 'Three R's' ruled in schools, when reading, writing and arithmetic were the staples that laid the foundation for lifelong learning.

Today, students are spoilt for choice. With broad options for tertiary education, they can elect to study subjects that interest them, or enter the workforce straight from high school.

Marine Studies is an example of a modern syllabus that offers such diverse subjects as aquaculture, ecology, oceanography and marine safety and conservation. The first accredited Marine Studies syllabus was developed in 2003 by a group of enthusiastic teachers in consultation with Education Queensland and marine industry bodies.

More than 400 of these passionate educators from primary, secondary and tertiary level are members of the Marine Teachers' Association of Queensland, a non-profit organisation that coordinates activities and resources to support the teaching of marine education in Queensland schools.

The association has ten branches from the Gold Coast to the Papua New Guinea border.

More than 30,000 Queensland primary students and 8,000 secondary students studied marine studies subjects in 2006. The popularity is not surprising considering the subject's correlation with issues such as climate change and sustainable development that are increasingly on the national agenda.

For this reason, Marine Studies is also a good option for students when considering future employment.

The course promotes a strong sense of responsible and safe boating among students. Students that are of age come out of the course with a recreational marine driver licence and some basic navigational skills, preparing them for possible future careers in the maritime industry.

The current syllabus includes subjects such as the Reef Guardians Project which engages students of all ages to work together for the sustainability of the Great Barrier Reef.

Marine and Aquatic Practices combines vocational and life skills and is designed for students aiming to get a job after leaving high school. Marine Studies also caters for



students who want to undertake tertiary studies in the field.

Simone Baker, a marine studies teacher at Holy Spirit College, says creating a career path in marine studies is something that the teachers' association continually works towards. "Parents ask us where this will lead, and people tend to think narrowly: 'marine biologist'. But there are other avenues," she says.

"Skills shortages are prevalent in every sector – there are always jobs available in the sectors associated with the marine environment and sector industries."

The variety offered through marine studies opens doors for students to proceed to further leisure, vocational or academic studies associated with the marine environment, including tourism, fisheries and boating. An interest in the sea inspired by a start in marine studies could result in a person becoming the captain of a cruise liner some day.

A member of MTAQ for the past nine years, Ms Baker says coming together as an association gives members the power to develop successful training models.

"Working in with Maritime Safety Queensland, the Department of Primary Industries, Quarantine, Tourism and Recreation, and other organisations is a great networking tool for building bridges



between schools, communities and the environment."

Despite being Queensland-based, the organisation's annual conference attracts like-minded teachers from New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand.

This year's event will be held on Stradbroke Island in the final week of the September school holidays, with discussions central to the theme of climate change.

Central to the organisation's focus is meeting the challenges of industry in preparing their students for the workforce.

Human interaction with the sea involves the wider community, sparking genuine interest about topics of local, national and international significance.

The importance of marine studies to the community ensures its broad appeal. Living in an island nation, the study of the sea and how people interact with it is relevant to all Australians, and all of us must share the responsibility of managing our relatively unspoilt marine environment wisely.



Bill Ewing, former Marine Superintendent, talks about his memories of the marine operation of Queensland Cement and Lime Co.



For twenty years Bill Ewing was at the helm of the marine operation of the Queensland Cement and Lime Company (QCL). As the marine superintendent, it was his job to oversee the ships which carried coral from the dredger in Moreton Bay up the Brisbane River to the Darra cement factory.

Despite living in Australia since 1960, Bill Ewing still has a broad Scottish accent. He is wiry and tanned, having spent most of his life on or around the sea. In his home he is surrounded by piles of photographs and boat plans, model yachts, and ships' instruments including a rare astro theodolite, a sextant, an astrolabe, a barometer and a large telescope which looks out to Moreton Bay.

Bill's passion for boats started in his early youth when he sailed his yacht, *Thistle*, on the River Clyde and off the west coast of Scotland.

His early working years were spent as a draftsman and ship builder in a Glasgow shipyard, Denny Dumbarton. At the invitation of Evans Deakin, Bill travelled to Australia, initially to help with the building of the multi-function passenger ship *MV Kangaroo*.

After more than six years with Evans Deakin, Bill accepted a position at QCL as Marine Superintendent.

"Now this job of running ships was vastly different from building them. It was a whole new ballgame, and when I arrived in the company there were no dredging programs.

There was nothing to tell you where the ships were or what they were doing. They could do anything they liked and knock off when they liked. My first task was to produce an operating schedule showing dredging times for each vessel, which some of the skippers rejected at first and some accepted," Bill said.

"But at least now we knew where the ships were and we could calculate the number of loads of coral they were carrying."

The dredging operation produced about 30,000 tons of coral a week or about one and a quarter millions tons annually. This coral, dredged up in Moreton Bay by the dredger appropriately named the *Coral*, was loaded onto two ships, the *Darra* and the *Cementco*, which then transported it up the Brisbane River to the cement factory at Darra on the incoming tide. There the coral and additives were kiln-fired into clinker and crushed to make cement.

QCL started operating in the mid-1920s. The cement factory was built at the end of the railway line at Darra, as close as possible to deposits of lime which provided the essential main ingredient for cement manufacture, calcium carbonate. After it was suggested that coral could provide a viable alternative, the company transferred its attention to Moreton Bay and the marine operation was born.

The coral dredged in the bay was taken from a reef of old coral, up to 25 feet deep.

"The reef wasn't pristine, white, with fish swimming around it. It was dead coral, and covered up with mud," Bill said.

"At that time Queensland Cement was the cheapest in Australia, or very close to it.



Cementco on the Brisbane River. QCL produced all the cement for the city buildings at the time.

Even with the cost of running the ships, it was still cheap."

Because the building industry was going ahead so rapidly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, QCL could barely produce enough cement for the industry's needs.

The dredger, *Coral*, stationed off Mud Island, was originally a wartime Landing Ship Tank (LST) with large bow doors to enable the military tanks to roll on and off. Built in 1944/45, coincidentally by Denny Dumbarton, it was converted into a suction coral dredger by removing the bow doors and adding a huge 80-ton hinged ladder with pipes, massive coral cutters, and two 36 inch Warman pumps driven by two 1,000hp engines.

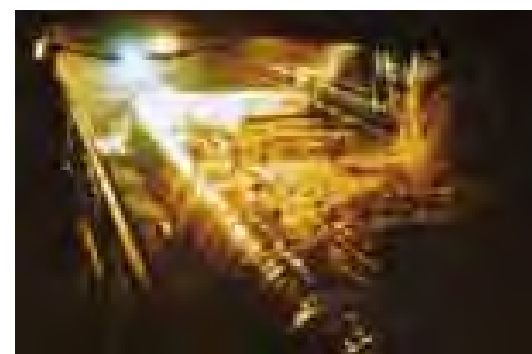
"These pumps were the largest pumps in the southern hemisphere at the time, and when they were really pumping, they produced a tremendous volume. In fact we could load something like 1,000 tons of solids an hour.

"The *Coral* was open at the bow. There were no bulkheads, nothing between the open sea and the engine room for example, but being in calm water it didn't matter all that much," Bill said.

After QCL ceased operation, *Coral* was sold to a company in India but they ran into trouble in the open sea by towing the ship bow first.

"She actually sunk off Smoky Cape, near Coffs Harbour in about 300 feet of water. So she's lost. Very sad. They should have towed it stern first", Bill said.

Every year the three ships, *Coral*, *Darra* and *Cementco* were completely overhauled at the Cairncross drydock in five weeks.



Dredged coral being loaded onto the *Darra*.



Cementco in her heyday, mid-1970s.

“It was really frantic to get the three ships done in that time. At any time I would get calls on my radio. It was really a seven day operation,” Bill said.

“And the money was always tight. The overhaul cost more than one million dollars. At that time, in the early 1970s, that was a lot of money.”

At least eighty-five people were employed in QCL’s marine operation. All trades and unions were represented: skippers, engineers, crew, cooks, stewards, winch drivers, boiler makers and ironworkers. And each profession was represented by its respective union.

Originally named *Crusader*, the coral carrier *Cementco* was a flat-bottomed wartime vessel also designed to carry tanks. Local companies Evans Deakin and Evans Anderson and Phelan were jointly employed to refurbish the ship. Hopper doors were added to the tank top, the shell plating was cut open, and the existing double bottom structure was completely renewed to enable the coral to drop into the river at the factory. Fully loaded, *Cementco* could carry 2,000 tons of coral. Later, the stern was extended to allow every crew member a single berth.

When Holderbank took over QCL in the mid-1980s, they also bought an ANL ship to carry the clinker from Gladstone, the new factory location. *Cementco* was no longer needed. For some months she lay alongside Mary Street wharf and was offered for sale. Eventually the decision was made to sink her. The name was changed back to *Crusader II* to avoid confusion with the new *Cementco*. Bill obtained permission to sink her at

Flinders Reef instead of the proposed site at Tangalooma among the other wrecks.

“It’s such a pitiful sight to see these once proud ships now rusting away. I was quite determined she was going to have a decent burial,” Bill said.

“We took her out to Flinders Reef and sank her, without knowing too much about sinking ships. When she was going down, she actually rolled over and went down upside down. It was a tremendous sight to see and hear the air rushing out the hull as the water came in. Nothing you could do to stop it, it was going down regardless.”

The *Cementco* (aka *Crusader II*) is now a favoured diving spot.

“Being upside down, all the open spaces are accessible through the hatches and the fish in their hundreds have taken over the whole place,” Bill said.

The *Darra*, the only ship still operating, was sold and now carries cargo on the Brisbane River.

Bill has a wealth of memories. He remembers the dance hall on Bishop Island, the artificial island created when the channel was dredged to give access to the port of Brisbane. He remembers *Cementco* being trapped in the 1974 floods, and having to fasten wires from the boat to the pylons of Story Bridge to save her from being washed downriver. He remembers when *Coral* ran aground on Mud Island and everybody, even the cooks, turned out to help free her. He remembers a different Brisbane, a seaport before the upmarket coffee shops, and a time when the Mary Street AUSN berth was full of tug boats.



The annual overhaul at Cairncross drydock.

He tells about the time the landmark cement factory at Darra was demolished.

“I went up to see the chimneys coming down. They blew a hole in the bottom and the chimneys came down...very sad. It’s an era that will never be repeated. QCL was a way of life.”

These days Bill has time to pursue his passion, sailing.

“I acquired *Typhoon*, a yacht, built to the international 30 square metre rules and I’ve had that boat now for 27 years. It’s been thoroughly enjoyable and interesting.”

As you leave his house, Bill points out that the door to the garage is a door he salvaged from the *Cementco*. And fixed to the door there is a small plaque from his cabin on the *Coral* which reads ‘Superintendent’.



Cementco being towed out to Flinders Reef to be sunk.



Cementco listed before she turned turtle and sank.