

PORT CHATTER

MARINE RESCUE NSW

PORT STEPHENS UNIT

FEBRUARY 2016



Exhausted Crew of the Danial Thain after the January 6/7 incident from left: Ron Lighton, Laurie Nolan, Mike Smith, Richard Pizzuto, Paul Sullivan, Ian Drummond and Tom Miller.



MARINE RESCUE NSW – PORT STEPHENS UNIT

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VOLUNTEERS SAVING LIVES ON THE WATER

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	Mike Smith		
	Ken Johnson		
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	Ron Lighton		
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The *Port Chatter* is the monthly newsletter of Marine Rescue NSW, Port Stephens unit. It is distributed free to all members of the unit, its advertisers, sponsors, and other interested members of the community.

Contributions are most welcome from all members, advertisers, sponsors or other interested community members. They should be accompanied by the author's name, address and phone number, and can be emailed to the editor at port.chatter217@gmail.com. Contributions are subject to review by the Executive Committee prior to publishing.

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Sponsors can make **tax-deductible** donations to Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens. All sponsorships will be acknowledged in *Port Chatter* if requested.

Cover Photographs - Roy Jeffery and Tony O'Donnell

OUR VISION

To be recognised as the most efficient and effective Search and Rescue Coordination Centre and Marine Rescue Unit within Marine Rescue NSW.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide an innovative, reliable and responsive marine rescue service to the Boating Public meeting the requirements of the National SAR policy, the NSW State Rescue Board Policy and Procedure and Marine Rescue NSW Policy and Standard Operating Procedures.

MARINE RESCUE NSW – PORT STEPHENS UNIT SERVICES PROVIDED



Category One Marine Search and Rescue Co-ordination Centre (SARCC). Located at the former Inner Light and now Heritage Site at Nelson Head, 32°42.632 S; 152°09.667 E (overlooking Shoal Bay and looking out through the entrance to Port Stephens). Accredited by the State Rescue Board.

Radio Base & Communications Centre, Nelson Head - VMR217. Operated by trained and qualified volunteers, 24 hrs a day; 7 days a week; 365 days a year. Monitoring 27MHz, VHF and HF marine frequencies, emergency and calling channels. Open during each day to the visiting public.

Apart from radio coverage generally to the local boating community, the base offers:

- Emergency support to vessels in trouble;
- Emergency and routine after hours communications for Rural Fire Service, Port Stephens Dungog and Cessnock areas.
- A Marine Radio Safety (MRS) service – Boat Register;
- Assistance and advice regarding entry to, and navigation in, the Port;
- A checkpoint and radio coverage for recreational vessels transiting up and down the coastline, in our area;
- Weather readings and local conditions observations; and
- Current Bureau of Meteorology weather forecasts, sea observations and tidal information. (These can be obtained by contacting the base by phone or radio and are also offered in regular radio skeds).

Accredited Rescue Craft Available on a 24 hr call-out basis, subject to Police tasking. (See 'Lifeboats' page).

Weather recording facility Accredited by the Bureau of Meteorology. Regular reports on local conditions are electronically communicated to the Bureau, as well as to Radio, TV and Print media outlets in the local area.

Nelson Head Reserve and Heritage Inner Light Cottage. The Nelson Bay Unit of Marine Rescue NSW is responsible to the State Government for upkeep of this heritage precinct, through its 'Nelson Head Lighthouse & Reserve Management Committee' (which includes a representative of the Port Stephens Historical Society).

A small museum is operated by volunteers and is open to the public, 7 days a week from 10am to 4pm.

A portion of the building is leased to a private operator for morning/afternoon teas/coffee and lunches.

Wedding Ceremonies. Bookings can be made to hold these in the grounds (see Lighthouse Weddings page).

Below the Radio Room, on the ground floor, is a tourist shop operated by the Ladies' Auxiliary without whose assistance and support, together with that of the local community, clubs and businesses, the Unit would find it very difficult, if not near impossible, to operate.

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Laurie Nolan - Marriage Celebrant

Hi. I'm Laurie Nolan, Authorised Marriage Celebrant, Justice of the Peace.... Port Stephens resident and Marine Rescue (Nelson Bay) member.

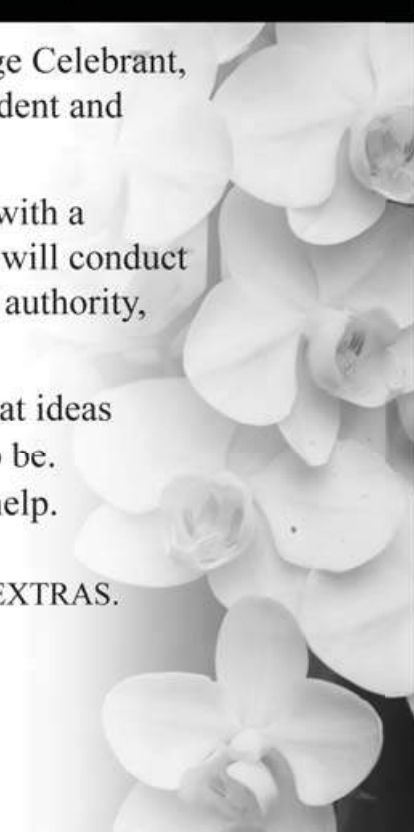
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LAURIE NOLAN CMC JP

1/18 NORBURN AVE, NELSON BAY NSW 2315
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FROM THE BRIDGE

UNIT COMMANDER

Well 2016 started with a bang. We towed the fireworks barge on NYE from Little Beach for the 9PM fireworks. Great spectacle for a small town. The "Bang" has not really stopped since then.

Our radio crews have had some extremely busy days with higher than normal log-ons and on top of that handling an extraordinary number of incidents. Twenty-three days into the month and we have handled 31 incidents at the



Radio Base of which 21 have been assisted by our vessels.

January 6 and 7 are dates which will be remembered for some time. Our vessels were on the water assisting at 0900 on Wednesday the 6th and finally logged off at 0530 on Thursday 7th.

You will be able to read all the details of the incidents however I want to acknowledge the efforts of our members on those days. Our Watchkeepers starting with Laurie Nolan on Night Shift, through Steve Alta, Ian Peacock, John Vassello, Peter Baldwin and then the long night by Colin Cahill and Mike Grover.

Mike Grover must be congratulated on the professional way he handled M3 incident - experience shows.

Then there were the boat crews who were out there where conditions were very difficult. They supported the Police and did whatever was asked of them. The Crew on DT returned towing a disabled yacht and when asked to go back out they did so, despite the fact they were cold and wet. On their return a replacement crew was waiting and DT was back out there again, chasing down the disabled racing yacht M3.

Read about the amazing efforts of our crews in Richard Pizzuto's article in this issue. He was there and experienced what happened just after midnight. Congratulations to Dave Jack and Ron Lighton who were the Skippers on these difficult jobs. Ron you have something to tell your grandkids – and they may not believe you.

You will read the names of the boat crews in Richard's article but here I want to say we are so thankful that you all returned safe and well if not bruised and exhausted. Ian Drummond we wish you a fast recovery.

Nelson Bay Water Police (who had been out there for a very long time) offered support to the DT crew during the early hours return journey, as did the Westpac Helicopter. They were met by crews from the Ambulance Service. This Unit responded as a well-trained team.

Nothing but praise has been lavished on M.R.Port Stephens since that time. The head of the MAC contacted Stacey Tannos and told him of your dedication and fine work. Going beyond what was expected. Stacey plans to visit soon. Since then:

The Dep. Commissioner, Dean Storey has visited the base and met some of those involved.

The Minister for Emergency Services, David Elliott, plans to visit the Unit on the 29th to offer his congratulations.



A director of the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Squadron has visited the Unit on behalf of his organisation and CYC to offer their congratulations on the efforts of the Unit and to offer some further support with SOLAS projects.

Many other Units contacted us to say well done to everyone.

During the visit from the Deputy Commissioner, we took the opportunity to hand out the AMSA awards which were given to the boat crew (Reef Dragon rescue) but were recalled. Mike never had his presented so we took the opportunity to make it a bit official

Such a busy month so far. Thanks to all those members who took on the early shifts and to all those who worked additional shifts to ensure our base was open 24/7.

The Gift Shop has been extremely busy setting a revenue record one day over the holidays. The Museum staff know how many visitors have been through our facilities.

Oh by the way – well done to Laurie and Frank and the two Debs for such a fun Christmas party. Seems so long ago.

Well done to everyone for a enormous effort over the holidays – and the summer continues.

Tony O'Donnell

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FROM THE BRIDGE.....

DEPUTY UNIT COMMANDER

The Year Begins

Well, what a start to the year!

So far during January we've responded to twenty one incidents which has kept both the Radio Room and our boat crews very busy.

Of course, of special note were the 6th and 7th when we were hit again with wild weather rivalling last April. Last April we all thought that sort of weather wouldn't happen again in our lifetimes but eight months later it did!

We dealt with five Maydays over that period. I won't go into the detail again here as pretty much all of us are aware of what happened.

I do want to acknowledge the work of John Vassallo, Peter Baldwin and Mike Grover in the Radio Room over those days. Great work each of you.

And what do I say about our boat crew? They just keep doing it don't they? To all of you I say thank you for what you did.

Tragically, we had two fatalities in the Port Stephens area over the period and we extend our thoughts and condolences to the families of those who lost their lives.



Of course, we weren't the only Base that responded to serious incidents during that time. And we should not forget that Nelson Bay Water Police and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter were also on the water/in the air in that extreme weather.

We're part of a larger rescue family and everyone involved displayed courage and skill and upheld the highest standards of professionalism.

We can all be proud to wear the Marine Rescue NSW uniform!

Security Cameras

A number of members have asked about the re-installation of security cameras around the Base area. We used to have them, as most will remember, but they weren't replaced when we did the Radio Room upgrade.

I'm pleased to say that we are in process of investigating what's available on the market with the view to re-installing a system. Matt Darby and Lee Ryman are looking after this and we are hopeful of getting a system that will give us vision of what's happening especially in

the carpark and stairs areas together with recording capacity.

Further advice about this soon.

Training Program

Our training program for the year is about to get underway, with the first course, Long Range Operator Certificate of Proficiency, starting on 8 February. This will be followed by SARCC Operations and Elementary Navigation plus we have several First Aid and Advanced Resuscitation courses scheduled.

I mentioned in an earlier issue some changes that we will be making to our new member training program and these will come into effect this year.

There is now a greater emphasis on self-learning by new members by utilising the MRO training material available in Otter. This contains, for example, a number of Powerpoint presentations which new members will view for themselves and then, in their own time, complete a Trainee Workbook in which they are required to answer a series of questions and complete exercises covering the various skills required of MROs. Properly and fully completed Workbooks will be part, but certainly not all, of the requirements to be met to gain MRO qualification.

However, overlaying this self-learning aspect will continue to be the requirement to demonstrate skills in the Radio Room, during courses and during an Operational Assessment before qualifying for advancement to MRO.

Our new member training program will now be known

collectively as the Marine Radio Operator Qualifying Program and, subject to a range of factors, should be completed during a new member's first 12 months.

At MRPS we will continue to provide the interim step of Rostered Second by allowing new members with appropriate experience to

undertake a first assessment covering, especially, incident response and RFS procedures.

None of this changes the very important role WOs and MROs will continue to play by providing on the job guidance and skills sign off for new members in the Radio Room.

This aspect of new member training has always been an important part of our program and will continue to be. There is no substitute for practical experience.

That's it for me for the present.

Keep smiling

Colin Cahill





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*HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF OUR MEMBES AND FAMILIES ,
MAY IT BE A GOOD, SAFE AND HEALTHY ONE FOR US ALL.*

Gwen Harris wife of our popular **Bob** had a very unexpected stay in hospital weeks out from Christmas. Gwen went in for routine checks and ended up having immediate open heart surgery. Gwen just made it home for Christmas Day to be welcomed by her family. I spoke to Gwen recently she is amazed in herself just how well she is now feeling.

Mike Brown's wife Sara Jane has also been unfortunate to have had another long stay in hospital. However, I believe that she also just made it home in time to have Christmas day with her loving family.

Geoff Moore, all going well, should now be home at his lovely Soldiers Point residence with wife Louise. Geoff has had a very long stay in hospital after a recent accident at his home. However he has been telling the doctor that his home would be better therapy than any of their medication!

Well done Geoff and to you also Louise it has been a long hard time for you both.

Bruce Shade did not get off to a good start for Christmas. Bruce had just purchased a brand new Toyota Yaris. While driving out to the shopping centre one morning he was struck from behind by another vehicle. Bruce's new Christmas present is back in the repair shop and he is on public transport again. Thankfully, Bruce was not injured in the accident, but on arriving home that evening he was involved in another accident, a visiting cat decided to trip Bruce - resulting in a large cut to his head. All is now well with Bruce, however the cat has not been seen again as it was last reported to be sailing through the air, presumably with sore ribs!

All the best Bruce just thought that I would cheer you up.

Condolences have been conveyed on behalf of members of Port Stephens unit to **Steve Chauncey** in the sad loss of his nephew recently in a motor accident. Also to **Bob Harris** who lost his younger brother Kevin to a complicated medical condition.

Joe Leach, one of the R.V.C.P. early members, also lost his loving wife **Eunice** recently after a short illness. Joe was an ex RAAF wireless operator and taught many earlier members the correct procedure for "Radio Operation. Eunice was also a tower of strength helping with fund raising for the Coastal Patrol. Joe, along with his wife, were also the "Rosters Officers" for many years.

Congratulations to **Paul Farnhill** on reaching his goal of Doctorate of Australian History and also to Ian Blackadder's partner **Linda Dewey** on her Doctorate. of Psychology.

Our Brave Rescue Crew Members All the best to you

all and I am sure that I can speak for all members in wishing you all a speedy recovery from the injuries that some of you are carrying. There were many support assists, and search responses done over the holiday period and they all carried an equal level of danger to all. Well done to all crews.

Commander P.J.Shevlin AM, RAN (Rtd) founding and life member of R.V.C.P. Marine Rescue Port Stephens.



After living at Nelson Bay for the past 40 years Peter and wife Margaret have moved to the South Coast. Peter has asked me to pass on to you all his and Margaret's farewell wishes and thank you to all present and past members whom they have been associated with over the past 40 years. Peter was a very professional instructor and many of us today owe our knowledge and possibly our safety and lives to his training ability in preparing us for our off shore heavy weather search and rescues. Peter was not only an instructor at unit and division level, he was also a **Commodore** of the R.V.C.P. and served in many advisory levels for Sydney HQ. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Peter for all of his contacts with the RAN which led to the Navy Band performing at our then 50th Coastal Patrol Anniversary Ball.

Also for Peter's Colleagues Rear Admiral David Martin (NSW Governor), Rear Admiral William Sinclair (NSW Governor) and many other State and Federal Ministers.

Peter has passed on to me their new address and I would be pleased to share this with any interested member. All the best Peter and Margaret, you may now be living down south, however you will never be forgotten and thank you for all of the work you have put into our unit to help make it what it is today.

Harold Gibson

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MEMORIAM TO PETER FISHER AND LADIES AUXILLIARY

MEMORIAM and Tribute to past long serving member at Port Stephens RVCP and Marine Rescue

The weather on the 6th of January did not allow the family of our former long time serving member, Peter Fisher, to have his ashes buried at sea as he had requested.

Thirty five members had flown in from all parts of Australia to witness this scattering ceremony. However mother nature would not allow this to be done from the Danial Thain, so another venue was set up at the Command Centre and a Reflections and Tributes to Peter's life was performed. Several of Peter's fellow boating crew were present in full uniform to pay their respect to the family. Many Tributes were read about Peter's years that he served at Port Stephens base and some of the dangerous rescues he had been involved in.

Peter had been the Chief Engineer at Port Stephens for 20 years and had been involved in many rescues. On one very wild night in 2002 Peter was part of the crew that risked their lives looking for the crew of the capsized vessel "Excalibur" that lost its keel off Seal Rocks in very stormy conditions.

Many of Peter's family spoke about this wonderful man. They also played guitars and had a singalong to let their true feelings be known of just how much they loved him.

I, along with Rod Reeson, spoke of our times working with Peter. We spoke about the good times and the other ones that we kept to ourselves on board the rescue vessel.

Unit Commander Tony O'Donnell presented Peter's wife

Iris with a Commissioners medal for Bravery and also a Long Service Medal representing all the time Peter had put into the organisation, and for his brave involvement in the night of the *Excalibur* search and rescue.

During the proceedings, the full crew complement, all dressed in blues, very quietly left the room. UC Tony O'Donnell then passed word down that the crew had been called out to assist a yacht in trouble with blown out sails. Then another May Day call came in with a man washed overboard from another yacht off the coast of Port Stephens.

These details were announced to the 40 people still present and a round of applause was given by all. As the applause was still ringing in our ears, the whole building rocked with the violent gusts of winds we were having at this time.

The violent weather and the crew call out to the two May Days had an instant effect on Peter's family. They could now understand and realise what their dear Husband, Father, and Grandfather had been volunteering for - and doing - for so many years. So much praise and respect was given to all of the crew called out at this time. Also to all our crews a much better understanding and sense of pride was realised by all at Peter's Tribute.

Our very own Jenny Fitzsimons *with only one hour's notice* put on a very nice morning tea for all. Thank you Jenny. I am sure that I can speak on behalf of all to say what a great job you were able to do at short notice.

Farewell our friend. May the seas be calm and weather fair as you Cross The Bar

Harold Gibson

COUNSELLING SERVICE

Marine Rescue has access to the RFS Counselling Service for Critical Incidents. If after a critical incident (boat, radio, elsewhere) you feel you need help contact the UC, DUC or Welfare Officer. Use of the service is **fully confidential between the member and the Counsellor. It is not a sign of weakness to ask for support – it is a sign of strength.**

LADIES AUXILIARY

The shop has been very busy during the summer period with all the holiday visitors and for this we are very thankful, as both our lifeboats have been doing a lot of work on the water. The money we raise in the shop goes towards the upkeep of both our lifeboats, so we depend on these visitors to our beautiful area.

Hoping to see you in the shop.

Helen Peterson

This photograph is of little Shania Swain who loves our cuddle bunnies so much, she returns every year. She now has five, all named 'baby'. The very first one she received, is also her favourite



KNOCKDOWN

Knockdown – the very word sends a chill down your spine. This word lives in the mariners' lexicon alongside other, similarly foreboding sounding words like 'broach' and 'capsize'. Definitions vary as to what a knockdown is, but the consensus would seem to be a broadside roll to an extreme angle as a result of the actions of wind and/or sea. Quantification of the angle would seem somewhat arbitrary and it's not the sort of thing you're likely to concern yourself with as your vessel goes through the motion. Instead, references to railings and masts in the water provide a simpler and more poetic metric. Regardless, one thing is certain: a knockdown is a decidedly uncomfortable and potentially very dangerous event; and one which the crew of the Port Stephens lifeboat Danial Thain experienced first-hand recently.

This story has echoes of another rescue performed by the Danial Thain. On 21 April 2015, an East Coast Low parked off the Hunter coast generated cyclonic winds and huge seas which combined to drive a large sailing catamaran – 'Reef Dragon' – onto rocks in Fame Cove. That rescue operation was successful and earned the lifeboat crew the 2015 Australian Search and Rescue Award. This time around, the outcome would not be so good. Another East Coast Low lashed the Hunter region for several days in early January 2016, causing widespread flooding and wind damage. This low didn't generate quite the same winds or seas as the April low, but still the winds gusted upwards of 50 knots and a combined sea and swell of six to eight metres pummelled the Port Stephens coast. A handful of sailing vessels transiting the area got caught up in this maelstrom and a dire situation evolved rapidly.

Tragically, a 62 year old sailor at the helm of the racing yacht, Amante, with five persons on board was washed overboard north of Broughton Island just before midday on 6 Jan 16. A major search and rescue effort involving two Westpac rescue helicopters, Nelson Bay Water Police and the Danial Thain failed to find any sign of the man before atrocious weather conditions forced the search to be suspended. The sight of the Danial Thain escorting Amante into Nelson Bay Marina in the early

evening was indeed a sad one to behold.

Whilst this tragic event unfolded, other yachts also came to grief in the unrelenting cauldron outside Port Stephens' iconic heads. The Marine Rescue radio base atop Nelson Head – would, over the course of this day, receive five mayday calls and the area's marine search and rescue capabilities would be pushed to their limits. The Nelson Bay Water Police had, for example, departed their berth in the very early hours of 6 Jan 16 to assist another yacht north of the Port and wouldn't return for some 21 hours, having become involved in the search for the missing yachtsman. Likewise, the Marine Rescue boats were heavily committed. The Division's smaller RHIB lifeboat 'Codi-k II' had performed one assist in the morning in Salamander Bay before conditions became too dangerous for this vessel to operate. The 52 ft ARUN-class Danial Thain had also towed a vessel in from Cabbage Tree Island in the morning, before joining the search and rescue effort for the missing yachtsman around midday. When she returned just before 8 pm that night with Amante under escort, her crew had been battling atrocious seas for more than ten hours.

Her crew would now rest, but Danial Thain would not. Another yacht, M3 Mulberry Racing, had requested assistance earlier in the day when well south of the Port, having lost



her engine and fouled her rigging. With all search and rescue assets committed to the search for the missing yachtsman, the five people on board would have to ride out the conditions as best they could whilst the Port Stephens base maintained a close watch on their situation pending the release of a rescue vessel. This release came that evening, with Danial Thain retasked by Marine Area Command (MAC) to assist M3. The unit thus activated a second full crew to take Danial Thain back out. When she arrived at her berth ahead of Amante, the second crew was there to assist with the berthing and to receive briefs from the off-going crew. It was clear to all that the conditions outside were extreme. None of the returning crew, some with 30 plus years in the maritime environment, could recall worse conditions than what they had just endured, and they had done so in daylight. The new crew would confront these same, if not worsening, conditions in darkness.



Amante leaving Port Stephens after the event.

(Continued on page 13)

KNOCKDOWN

(Continued from page 12)

The Danial's engines were left running as the crew changeover was effected. Sea sickness tablets, lifelines and personal EPIRBs were passed around and then she was off again. Position reports at this time placed M3 almost directly east of the port at about 15 miles from the port limit and drifting to the north-nor-west at 2-3 knots in a very heavy five to six metre south-easterly swell topped with a very confused and breaking two metre sea. The Skipper and navigator conferred and course was set for a departure through the northern side of the heads with a route planned out through the islands and then on a heading of 040 degrees magnetic to intercept M3. As soon as the lifeboat cleared Nelson Head however, the foaming mass of white water engulfing the northern part of the port entrance incited a change of plans; a southern departure and then south of the islands before heading north east was a much more prudent option.

The swells through the heads were large at four to five metres but longish and lazy. This changed markedly however as the Danial came around the southern headland – Tomaree – and entered what we call the 'washing machine', that area bounded by the heads and the three offshore islands where swell and sea combine with rocky reflection to produce a churning mass of water which demands your utmost respect. The washing machine can be quite exhilarating when the swell's up a little, but when the swell's up a lot it's best avoided. The conditions we encountered on the night in question as we set course to pass south of Boondelbah Island were some of, if not, the worst I've experienced. The boat was slammed by random cross swells as the skipper tried valiantly to hold her head within 30 degrees of the desired heading. Progress was pitifully slow as the boat seemed to expend more time and energy going up, down and sideways than forward, and when we did go forward it was typically off the top of a steep six metre wave into a deep trough.

It's a few miles from the heads to a point south of Boondelbah which you would expect to take 20 minutes or so to traverse on a normal day. On this night, it took more than an hour as the skipper was forced to zig zag aggressively in an attempt to lessen the impact of the boat-shuddering pitch downs.

As the lifeboat struggled to make way on an easterly course to clear the islands, the sleek hull of M3 slipped further northwest, propelled by the monstrous seas and wind. What started as an intercept quickly became a tail chase, but even on a more northerly heading the lifeboat struggled to close on the yacht. The lifeboat could make barely six knots in the conditions, compared to the M3's drift away from the lifeboat of at least three knots. With ten miles separating the two vessels and a closing speed of barely 3 knots, it was shaping up as a long and demanding chase. As the navigator on Danial Thain, I checked and rechecked my calculations, and an alarming reality came sharply into focus; at no more than six knots,

the lifeboat would not reach M3 before she would run aground on the eastern shore of the wide arc of beach several miles to the southwest of the Sea Rocks lighthouse. M3 was drifting rapidly to her doom. This alarming conclusion was relayed to the radio base who then informed the MAC. M3 had already taken measures to slow her drift, including deployment of a sea drogue and the laying of sails overboard. In a last ditch effort to buy more time for the lifeboat to get to her, M3 was now asked to jury rig a sail and endeavour to make her way east. This she managed with considerable effort in the heavy seas, and her drift towards the beach was halted and then reversed. The lifeboat had now closed within three miles of M3 and could see her lights intermittently as both vessels rose and fell in the huge seas. Having arrested her drift, M3 was now confronted by a new dilemma – a distinct lack of sea room. She had drifted into an area bounded by heavy shoaling and a very active set of bombores to her east and north, and therefore could not maintain her preferred easterly course. A tack and a jibe followed, but the navigator's radar picture and the more urgent requests for assistance from M3 told the real story: M3 was rapidly running out of time, and every wave conspired to drive her into shallower water closer to the beach, making the lifeboat's job ever more difficult.

A tow had been set on the back deck but the skipper now ordered a nose tow to be set, given the lack of sea room he had. At this point in time, the seven crew on the Danial Thain were positioned as follows: Ron Lighton, the skipper, was on the helm in the flybridge; I was beside him as safety watch and to operate the forward searchlight; Mike Smith, the engineer, was eight feet from me, manning the aft searchlight; and Laurie Nolan, Paul Sullivan, Tom Miller and Ian Drummond were on the aft deck ready to set the tow.

The situation was urgent and the margins narrow, but things were under control. And then, in one heart-stopping moment, it all changed. A massive roar was the first sign of impending mayhem, as Ron and I both looked with horror at a churning wall of white water at least 20 feet high charging out of the darkness on the lifeboat's starboard side. It pummelled into the side of the lifeboat with ungodly force and quite literally knocked the 35 tonne lifeboat over on its port side and then drove the vessel towards the beach. The flybridge was in the water, the port side railing well submerged, and every crew member just held onto whatever they could. All crew were wearing lifelines, and there is no doubt that these lifelines stopped the four crewmen on the aft deck from being propelled overboard. In the flybridge, Ron and I both got knocked off our feet. As soon as the wave subsided, the faithful old lifeboat righted herself. Survival was now the focus, and we all knew another wave would soon follow. Ron struggled to his feet and yelled quickly that we'd lost the port engine. I meanwhile had regained my feet and was

(Continued on page 14)

KNOCKDOWN

(Continued from page 13)

looking desperately for the next wave. I could see the rapidly approaching wall of water towering over the lifeboat and was yelling to Ron to bring the bow to starboard to take the next breaker head on. Ron knew what had to be done but with an overheating starboard engine only, the prospects didn't seem good. The next wave was not much smaller than the first and slammed into the lifeboat's starboard side, but Ron had succeeded in getting the bow around enough to soften the impact a little. There was no prospect of getting the port engine back in the short term. A third knockdown quickly followed before Ron managed to get the bow around. With only the Sugarloaf Point light at Seal Rocks as a visual cue, the task at hand was clear – get through these breaking waves into deeper water. I swung the forward searchlight to the front and illuminated a long line of incoming breakers. Ron just pointed the Danial Thain straight at them and held on. At this point, Laurie yelled



up that all deck crew were accounted for. What he didn't convey was that he had had to sever their lifelines with his knife to free them from the tangled mess of the aft deck and then physically man-handle them into the relative safety of the main cabin!

Laurie and I then swapped out so that I could get back on the navigation desk and guide the boat to safer water. The aft deck was abandoned but just inside the main cabin lan, Tom and Paul were slumped on the floor and in chairs; Ian had a dislocated shoulder, Tom a lacerated eyebrow. All three had clearly been through the wringer. I assessed quickly the boat's position and gave a safe heading once clear of the breakers. I then declared a Mayday on behalf of M3, having heard their last desperate call that they were abandoning ship. Finally, I provided the radio base with a situation report before leaving to check on the three crewman more thoroughly.

As I moved among them, a new threat suddenly dawned on me; the aft deck was a mess, but something was missing – about 30 meters of heavy duty towline which had been flaked across the deck in preparation for setting the tow. I ran to the stern rail and was confronted by an

unnerving sight – a mass of line swirling in the water and only feet from the starboard propeller. If this line became entangled around that propeller, we'd lose the engine and with it, any chance of keeping the boat off the beach. I yelled for assistance from the deckcrew and Tom, bloodied brow and all, responded. We worked desperately to recover the towline, heaving line and bridle – not an easy task as the boat pitched violently in the breaking seas. We eventually succeeded however, and I for one breathed a heavy sigh of relief. Mike meanwhile had succeeded in restarting the port engine, while Ron and Laurie nursed the battered and bruised lifeboat towards home, all none the wiser regarding the drama on the aft deck.

The five people on board M3 made it safely to the beach and were met there by police soon after. This was welcome news for the lifeboat crew who now faced a four hour trip home through dark and foreboding seas. The

radio base and MAC operators could sense the seriousness of the situation however and set wheels in motion to shepherd the lifeboat home. A Westpac helicopter was tasked to shepherd the lifeboat but was grounded by the weather conditions.

Nonetheless, it remained on standby to assist the lifeboat. The Nelson Bay Water Police also responded and met the Danial Thain just north of Broughton Island in their large vessel. They were

indeed a sight for some sore eyes.

The trip home was long and contemplative. The lifeboat finally re-entered its home port at 6:30, just as the sun rose and some 11 hours after we had departed. At the berth, the Unit Commander, Tony O'Donnell, and Neil



Grieves were there to welcome us. Neil, our very committed and concerned Regional Controller, had made the long journey up from Lake Macquarie in the very early hours of the morning upon hearing of the lifeboat's predicament. These two men were soon joined by a team of ambulance paramedics who wasted no time in tending to the injured crew, and by the two policeman who'd braved the atrocious conditions and shepherded the lifeboat home. I am confident I speak for all of the crew when I say it's not an experience I would care to repeat. If I had to however, I could think of no better boat than the Danial Thain to be on, and no better crew to be with than the ones I will share these memories with for the rest of my life...

Richard Pizzuto

THANKS

MARINE RESCUE PORT STEPHENS WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR SUPPORT DURING AND AFTER THE RESCUES OF JANUARY 6 AND 7.



Nelson Bay Water Police for your care and attention to the crew of Danial Thain on the morning of January 7.

Wespac Helicopters for being willing to fly to the assistance of the crew of Danial Thain.



The owners of **Bay Harbour Café** for supplying meals to our Boat Crew on January 6.



Noakes Nelson Bay for lifting Danial Thain after the Knockdowns on January 7.

Paul Jensen of Corlette for repairing a specialised boat hook which was damaged.



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Thanks for your help

RFS LIAISON

RFS LIAISON

STATS FOR NOV, 2015 : house fire 1, AFA 3, Yard 2, motor vehicles accidents 9, oil spills 1, car fire 6, fallen tree 1, structure fire 1, bush fires 3, wires down 2, smoke report 1, grass fire 6, electrical fire 2, pile burn 1, burst main 1, ambo assist 1, false alarm 1, bonfire 1 Total 43.

STATS FOR DEC, 2015: Bush 14, Grass 6, Rubbish 2, Tip fire 1, AFA 4, Car 3, Mulch 1, Yard 1, Smoke report 2, Unknown 1, Haystack 1, Assist public 1, Smoke alarm 1, Ambo assist 2, MVAs 2, Fluid on road 1, Wires down 1, Bonfires 2, Truck fire 1 Total 47

TYPE OF FIRES: Watchkeepers please remember to put the Type of Fire in the space allocated on the Incident Sheet.

BUSH FIRES AND WILD LIFE



We have all seen the videos of wildlife caught in bush fires, and it is usually pretty tragic for those animals caught in some of the blazes. However, sometimes I think we underestimate the ability of the animals to survive these catastrophes. For example a few years

before I moved to this paradise from Northern Sydney we had a fire go through the Lane Cove National Park. For those who don't know this park it is a lovely little park completely surrounded by suburbia, great for

bushwalking. Everybody was getting hot and bothered about all the faunal inhabitants of the park being wiped out. Fortunately the fauna wasn't getting hot and bothered. A few days after the fire had gone through, animals began emerging unharmed from under rocks, in caves, in hollows in trees. Usually there are areas of bush that don't get burnt. In fact I believe there are scrub turkeys in areas they hadn't been seen in in a century.

When the bush fire went through Mambo Wetlands on New Years Day about ten years ago the koalas remained relatively untouched because of the areas where the bush remained unburnt and because of the high water table, even in drought. The animals that were moved were able to be put back into the wild within three months instead of

six because the tops of the trees were still green after the fire.

Ross Debenham



MESS MEETING GUEST SPEAKERS

16TH FEBRUARY 2016

Sgt. Paul Farquharson of the Marine Area Command.

17TH MARCH 2016

Stacey Tannos Commissioner of Marine Rescue NSW.





PORT STEPHENS MEDICAL CENTRE

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Email: portstephensmcepsmc.net.au

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Dr Stan Kuchta MBBS (Sydney). Dr Kuchta practices full-time within our surgery and deals with all aspects of primary care in family medicine. His special interests include all types of Skin Cancers, Sports Medicine, Cardiology and Pain Management.

Dr Steve Illiadis BSc MBBS (FUSA). Dr Illiadis also practices full-time in our surgery. His special interests are surgical problems, Skin Cancer, Sports Medicine and Children's Health (Pediatrics).

Dr Michael O'Donoghue BSc (NSW), MBBS Dip Av Med, DAME. Dr O'Donoghue performs part-time sessions in our surgery. His special interests include Aviation Medicine and Occupational Medicine.

Dr Douglas Routley BMed (Hons), FRACGP. Dr Routley is a gastroenterologist and visits our surgery fortnightly. His specialties include diseases of the digestive system and the liver.

Australian Hearing Services provides hearing assessments and the fitting and repairing of hearing aids. They have sessions at our surgery weekly.

TRAINING

TRAINING

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas & may 2016 bring you all you hope for.

LROCP (formerly MROCP)

The Australian Maritime College now call this course Long Range Radio Operator Certificate of Proficiency and will commence on Monday 8th February with Dave Rogers as the trainer. **All new members must take this course to qualify as Radio operators**, so if you wish to continue working on the radios it is essential that you obtain a radio licence. The list is on the notice board in the radio room kitchen, so please do not delay in registering.

SARCC OPS

This course will commence on Monday 7th March with Colin Cahill and Keith Dykes as the trainers and will include all the new training and assessment requirements of Marine Rescue NSW. The list is on the radio room kitchen notice board.

FIRST AID & Basic CPR plus Advanced CPR for Crew

These courses will be held on the weekend of 5th and 6th

March which will be one full day on Saturday for radio room members plus a half a day on Sunday for our Crew who need the Advanced CPR training refresher. Your trainer is Graham Pretty plus a support person whom Marine Rescue will supply. The list is on the radio room kitchen notice board, so be quick as we can only adequately train 12 members. **For the first day of this course we need 2 or 3 volunteers to help the trainer. You will not be required to train our members just assist as "patients"**. If you can help please give Graham a call on 0417 688 209 and he will let you know the time you will be required to attend.

ELEMENTARY NAVIGATION

Commencing 4th April with Ron Lighton (one of our very experienced Coxswains) as your trainer. We have many new members needing this course so hurry and put your name on the list in the radio room kitchen as we are only able to accommodate 8 members each time we run this course.

Eileen Kelly (Assisting Mike Brown until he returns from leave)

Course	Trainer	Dates	Hours
LROCP (formerly MROCP)	DR	Monday 8 th February (8 sessions)	1900 - 2100
WH&S / Orientation	GP	Thursday 18 th February (1 session)	1830 – 2130
SARCC OPS	CC & KD	Monday 7 th March (6 sessions plus Exam) At least 3 shifts need to be attended to complete this course.	1900 - 2100
First Aid & Basic CPR Advanced CPR for Crew	GP GP	Saturday 5 th March (1 session) Sunday 6 th March (1 session)	0800 – 1600 0800 - 1200
WH&S / Orientation	GP	Thursday 17 th March (1 session)	1830 – 2130
Elementary Navigation	RL	Monday 4 th April (8 sessions) At least 3 shifts need to be attended to complete this course	1900 - 2100
WH&S / Orientation	GP	Thursday 21 st April (1 session)	1830 – 2130



Who is this smartly dressed man with a very cute dog?



REMINDER... If you want to help save the planet by reducing the number of trees being cut down for paper – then you can subscribe to receive the Port Chatter electronically (via the website (www.MarineRescuePortStephens.com.au) in a PDF format by sending your name and email address to port.chatter217@gmail.com. We now have over 203 recipients who have requested this – so come

on... you know you want to do it!

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Lighthouse Weddings

WEDDING REPORT

Saturday 23rd January was our first wedding for the year, and the weather forecast for the day was similar to the weather we had experienced over the Christmas/ New Year period, "stormy with 80% chance of rain". The wedding was at 2 pm, and at midday the decision was made to move the small wedding into the Training Room due to the inclement weather.

Erin Pozniak and Nathan Parsons were married by Newcastle Celebrant, Francine O'Brien in the Training Room and the weather did fine up enough for the photos to be taken in the Lighthouse grounds.

A reception at a relative's house in Medowie followed.



We are coming up to a busy period and dates for upcoming weddings in the next two months are:

Saturday 30 January
Friday 19 February
Saturday 20 February
Friday 26 February
Saturday 12 March
Thursday 17 March
Saturday 19 March
Sunday 20 March

Lynne Jensen



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FISHING

Fishing and the Meaning of Life

John "Stinker" Clarke's web site leads with the words "Catching Fish is easy finding them is the hard part". I'm sorry Stinker, but you have got it all wrong. There are masses of fish out there - we're just not smart enough to catch them. Let me explain the facts.

When I was a callow and feckless youth I was mindlessly immersed in the popular culture of the time. It was very



Hey Frank, another snack.

trendy to go round pontificating on such deep and meaningful questions as the Meaning of Life or why the bath water went down the plug hole one way in Brisbane and another way in London. I thought these were sure-fire pickup topics but could never understand why I always went home from the party alone. Then in 1979 Douglas Adams published *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* and revealed that the answer was actually 42, but left us wondering - what was the question? And so it is with fishing. The answer is that there are huge schools of sleek, fat whiting, bream, flathead and tailer cruising just behind the break, and so the question becomes "why can't we catch them"?

How often have you headed confidently down to the beach with your rods and tackle box, a kilo of fresh prawns, a packet of fat pilchards and a bucket of beach worms, dug up a few dozen pipis, and having cast them all out into the ocean, come away with nothing more than a couple of skinny, undersize darts? The answer I believe lies in fish intelligence. Fish evolved in our oceans over 500 million years ago and over that time they have developed an intelligence far superior to we puny *homo sapiens* who have only been around for a mere 200,000 years.

Our bureaucrats in their infinite wisdom have imposed minimum size and bag limits in the belief it will help to ensure the sustainability of the fish resource. But have you ever caught a whiting longer than 27 cm or a bream longer than 25 cm? Fish long ago figured out how to successfully maintain and improve their own gene pool so that regulatory intervention was totally un-necessary. When you cast a nice juicy piece of bait into the ocean, no matter how intricately you attach it to the hook, fish will proceed to eat it off without you noticing a thing. They have been evolving this skill over thousands of years.

However, in order to provide some incentive for the suckers providing lunch to continue to feed them, the occasional sacrifice must be made. The small, the deformed, the sick, the weak and the stupid are singled out and told, for the sake of the school and the species, to swallow that worm, hook and all. With their removal, the health of the school is continually improved, and the anticipation and adrenaline levels of the beachside caterers is maintained sufficiently high for them to continue to provide free meals.

Occasionally you may feel a tug on your line which fisherman mistakenly interpreted as a "bite", a sure sign that fish are around and are hungry. In fact it is just a hurry up from an impatient customer, sending the message that the line needs to be baited again.

Did you know that fish have a sense of humour and at times can even be playful? Why else would they hang onto a tough, inedible piece of bait and allow you to reel them in, before spitting it out just as you are about to drag them onto the beach. Just as dolphins enjoy riding the



breaking waves, fish seem to enjoy the thrill of the rapid ride in to the beach on your line. So as well as being incorrigible teasers, they also have not so subtle ways of letting you know that the bait you are using is just not up to their standards. When they really want a laugh, they will trick some other useless piece of marine life such as a dart, pufferfish or stingray into swallowing your hook.

At fishing clinics, we are told by the experts to "think like a fish". If you really took that advice to heart, you would buy a kilo of nice freshly cooked tiger prawns, take them down to the beach and eat them yourself. So, my advice to fisherman is don't expect to catch fish (they are much smarter than you anyway), don't begrudge them the occasional feed and just enjoy the existential experience of the fishing ritual. Perhaps after all, fishing is really the Meaning of Life.

Pisces

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ART UNION PROGRESS

We are now half way through our ticket sales in the Marine Rescue Art Union and while the sales results are promising, the visibility for Port Stephens Unit and recognition that our Members have been receiving has been incredible. The community at large is aware of our activities during the January holiday period and the rescues we have been involved with and want to acknowledge them to us. I encourage all Members to join us and find out first hand the support that we are getting.

So far we have been to our regular sites including the Fly Point Legacy Market, Anna Bay Market, Raymond Terrace MarketPlace, Salamander Bay Shopping Centre and d'Albora Marina. There is a full calendar of sites for February and March in the Radio Room, so please put your name down and join us.

In addition to the direct ticket sales, Col Couper, Steve Harris and Peter Phillipson have been letter boxing in their local areas to encourage people to buy tickets online. All online ticket sales which include our PS prefix will be credited directly back to us. Col Couper has just about walked all of Nelson Bay and is now focusing on Corlette and will be putting in a claim for new shoes shortly. This is an easy task that all members can take part in as you carry out your normal daily stroll. There is a map in the Radio Room kitchen which has been highlighted with the areas already covered and we have

plenty of flyers available. Once again come and join us.

We have also mailed out the flyer to all of our Radio Club members for online sales and in the next few weeks we will be arranging an insert in Maitland and Cessnock newspapers. This insert requires manual stamping of our PS prefix on 10,000 flyers. Thanks to those who responded to our call for help with the stamping.

All of these activities are a fulfilling and fun way to be involved with other members and the community at large. COME AND JOIN US.

Any questions please call Colin Foote or Steve Harris



Colin Foote

AROUND ABOUT



Bob Baldwin visiting the radio base with Brian and Maureen Wheatley.



Peter Baldwin receiving his MRO epaulets.



Bill and Elaine Ebsary from RPAYC



Jenny Fitzsimons hard at work always with a smile.



Vessels assisted during the beginning of January.



Police vessel Nemesis



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CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Christmas and Easter lighting of the cross on display at Marine Rescue Port Stephens Unit - what this symbol means to me and other serving members.

Firstly, I would like to start off by thanking our Unit Commander Tony O'Donnell and his executive committee for agreeing to have a new cross made. My thanks also to Harold Gibson who actually made the cross and his two very able assistants, Peter Merlino and Peter Fitzsimons.

This cross is not just about me, even though I may have given a good impression of a nagging fish wife! And it isn't just about trying to hang on to old times and reliving old memories. Nor is it just solely based around the Christian religion.

In 1984 one of our members mentioned that there was very little in the way of "Carols By Candlelight" celebrations around Nelson Bay, and so the following year, Christmas 1985, saw the R.V.C.P. organising the "Carols By Candlelight" - to be held at their base at Nelson Head. The Cross was also mentioned and the fact that this could have many meanings and make the night a very festive one. For many years after this first trial run the "Carols By Candlelight" was held on the lawns of Nelson Head, with the "stage area" being set aside for the musicians, solo singers and compere for the evening. The Patrol was rewarded by donations from the visitors attending the evening.

Because of the large crowds attending each year we eventually had to close this venue as we could not safely accommodate the growing numbers. The celebration was then moved to Fly Point and was run by the service clubs of Port Stephens. However the cross continued to be hoisted to the top of the flag pole every year, to remember the revitalising of Christmas Carols in the Bay. The cross, when the lights are turned on, has been the subject of so many wonderful comments over the years, not the least being from overseas passenger liners, and when the Captains of said ships take a few minutes of their time to call our base and tell us what an impressive sight it is and

congratulate us, well I just think that it is rather special.

Our own local community have always told us the same thing as well, as have many visiting vessels entering our port or transiting our coast. Because of the wonderful sight to sea of the cross we were asked if we would also help to revitalise the "Blessing of the Fleet Tradition that was held every January at Nelson Bay. Although this "Blessing of the Fleet" is an old and revered tradition which has been passed down from generation to generation, all boating people from many backgrounds and beliefs joined in with this very important ceremony.

The cross also means to me the wonderful memories and debt of gratitude owed to *Past Members* who have *crossed the bar*, or those who have just moved on with their lives, and the dedication that they and their families have put into this organisation to make it what it is today. I am not just speaking about the old guard who formed this unit, but also to all of you today who will be remembered in years to come for what you have put into our fine Marine Rescue unit here in Port Stephens.

Yes, there is also a fond belief that I have of the cross, "The Light of Salvation" to look after our brave members who go out in stormy weather conditions and often horrendous seas during Search and Rescue Missions. These volunteers put their lives at risk and if the *Cross Of Light* can make us all think and appreciate them for what they are doing then this cross is very worthwhile indeed.

I ask you all next time you view the Cross, to stop and have a little thought of past, present and loved ones and think just how fortunate we are to all be here looking out to sea, just like the cross and hoping that all mariners have a safe transit to their destination.

The cross may not be hoisted up onto the flag pole any more, Old Father Time catches up with everything - even flag poles - but its position on the fence means that it is facing out to sea on exactly the same angle as the original light on the wooden post, - so that's pretty good too.

Dedicated to all our members who have *Crossed The Bar*.

Shirley Clark



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We conduct fishing trips encompassing an area from Stockton Beach through to Seal Rocks and around the famous Broughton Island.

Kunara also provides trips for beach fishing, inside harbour and estuary fishing, dolphin watching, whale watching, diving or sightseeing trips, as well as a Ferry service to Broughton Island, recently voted "Number One" off-shore Australian Island by "Getaway".



- **Deep Sea Fishing**
- **Game Fishing**
- **Dive Trips**
- **Off Shore Cruises**
- **Twilight Cruises off Port Stephens**

A VERY PLEASANT SURPRISE AND BOAT MANAGER

A VERY PLEASANT SURPRISE

After the incidents of January 6 and 7, all boat crew members met in the training room for a formal debrief session.

The Skipper of M3, and two of his crew came to the Base to thank the boat crew for what they had done. The Skipper, Michael, told our crew what it was like for them aboard the M3.



It is not very often that somebody comes to express their gratitude for what has been done for them. Our members do not look for praise but it is certainly nice when some form of recognition comes our way.

Michael wrote on our Facebook Page:

"This team pushed themselves and the life boat to the limit and beyond in attempting to get a tow line to the



M3 Crew"

Another Thankyou on Facebook,

"A HUGE thank you to MRPS. Myself, hubby Brian and our 11 year old son were the unfortunate family that were so kindly rescued by MRPS. We can't thank the team enough for all their assistance and the constant 'check in phone calls' were very much appreciated as it reassured us. As for the cost of the rescue this has been paid for the full amount that was very politely requested." Warmest Regards

You may be interested to know that our Facebook Post on the tasking of DT to assist M3 broke our reading record. The post was delivered to 9,235 people beating our previous record by over 1000 readers.

Tony O'Donnell

BOAT MANAGER

So much as gone on in the maintenance of our two rescue vessel since the last Port Chatter that I really don't know where to start, so I thought I would just keep it to the current outstanding issues. I must mention the outstanding efforts of Bill Haskell as well as Eryl Thomas and the rest of the 'Wednesday Maintenance Crew'. Because of them the unit has not had to miss an assist because of vessels being off-line - even after the disastrous period of the 6/7 January.

Currently the team is working on the ventilation fans in the engine room of DT as well as the cooling water intake to the Starboard engine. A further mechanical problem is the case of the disappearing hydraulic steering oil. Codi-K2 is having some teething problems with the new Raymarine chart plotters and continuing problems



with the vessel's power supply. Codi's Sea Pen is also providing the skipper with difficulties in getting the vessel away from the dock.

After the knockdown on January 7 I thought it wise to lift DT and have a look at her bottom and the good news is that there was absolutely no damage.



Ken Johnson

None of the above problems have necessitated taking the boats out of service. Trust there will be no defects to report in the next edition of the Port Chatter.



CHRISTMAS PARTY

SOCIAL EVENTS REPORT –

Xmas Dinner, Tues Dec 15 2015

What a fabulous night! 70 MRPS members enjoyed a really delicious Xmas Dinner at Horizons Golf Club, catered by Will and Tanya Semmens from the Bluewater Grill at Nelson Bay Golf Club. Confused? Well, you had to be there. Festive music, Xmas carols, and popular hits were piped around the room adding to the atmosphere. A special guest appearance by our very own John Vassallo on guitar and vocals was extremely well received.

I'll give you one guess as to who won the "Best Dressed" prize – Yep..... Captain Seaweed himself. Shades of *Déjà vu*..... seems Eryl Thomas pops up wherever there is a chance to dress up. I **really** think that someone should give him a bit stiffer competition this coming year.

we were entertained by "Fred and Ginger" van Druten, and the inimitable "Sandy and Danny" Moxham.



Great venue – Great food – Great company. A good time was had by all.

Laurie Nolan



Lucky door prize was won by Brian Carroll who was fortunate enough to be sitting in the chair that had the ticket stuck underneath.

We had hopes that the mingled crowd would dance the night away to the dulcet tones of the fabulous music selection by Deb van Druten, but it seems we are **NOT** the dancing types! Maybe most members just forgot to bring their shiny patent leather dancing pumps! Anyway



CHRISTMAS PARTY



SOCIAL COMMITTEE

SOCIAL EVENTS CALENDAR – 2016

Following on from the success of the Social Events in 2015, your planning committee has been hard at work developing an even bigger and better program for 2016. Building on the popularity of the Trivia Night and the Car Observation Run, we are adding another major event – a Bingo Night. And.... To cater for those with a hunger for camaraderie over a meal, we have three opportunities this year to indulge at local restaurants. See below the agenda for 2016.

NOTE: the first event is a "Cheap and Cheerful" dinner at a local restaurant on Wednesday 2nd March. Your Social Committee is very busy sampling a few additional possibilities (at no cost to management!!!) and will advise the chosen venue very soon. Watch out for an email from the Administration Officer, and an attendance list to be placed on the noticeboard in the radio room kitchen. Numbers may be limited, so 'first in, best dressed' will apply.

Laurie Nolan & Frank van Druten

MRPS Social Committee

Month	Date	Event	Comments
MARCH	Wednesday 2nd	"Cheap and Cheerful" Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sri Malaysia, Austral St Shopping Village, Nelson Bay - \$32/ea incl full BYOG - 3 entree / 5 main courses - Bring Cheerful nature - Maximum 55 people - first in best dressed
APRIL	Wednesday 6th	Bingo Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At Senior Citizens Hall, Norburn Ave Nelson Bay - No upfront cost - Make a table, bring some friends
JUNE	Wednesday 22nd	Mid-Year Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local restaurant - Themed dress - prizes awarded - BYOG - Venue to be announced
AUGUST	Wednesday 31st	Trivia Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At Senior Citizens Hall, Norburn Ave Nelson Bay - No upfront cost - Make a table, bring some friends
OCTOBER	Sunday 16th	Car Observation Run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great fun, good time had by all in 2015 - Approx distance to be covered 95km - Finish at a park (BYO BBQ/Picnic/drinks) - Alternate finish at pub/club/café if raining.
DECEMBER	Tuesday 13	Christmas Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ever Popular Xmas Festivities - Local Restaurant to be announced.

Year 2016 Public School Holidays

Autumn Holidays	9-Apr-16	25-Apr-16
Winter Holidays	2-Jul-16	17-Jul-16
Spring Holidays	24-Sep-16	9-Oct-16
Summer Holidays	21-Dec-15	29-Jan-17



TRIVIA
Night

BIRDS AROUND THE BASE

Birds at the Base – Tawny Frogmouth (Podargus strigoides)

The Tawny Frogmouth is an unusual looking bird with a face described by some as “one that only a mother could love”.



They are large, big-headed birds, 34-53 cm long with wingspan 65-95 cm. Tawny frogmouths have three distinct colour morphs, grey being the most common in both sexes. Males of this morph have silver-grey upperparts with black streaks and slightly paler underparts with white barring and brown to rufous mottling. Females of this morph are slightly smaller and often darker with more rufous mottling. They have a strong olive-greyish to blackish bill with conspicuous rectal bristles tufts on top. The bill is large, triangular and hooked at the tip. The mouth is huge, frog-like and adapted for hunting. The eyes are large, deep yellow and frontally placed, a trait shared with owls. Legs are short and weak with greyish-brown feet.

Frogmouth are sometimes confused with owls to which they are only distantly related. While they have fringed first primary wing coverts that allow silent flight, they are weak fliers and have weak feet that lack the curved talons of owls.

The Tawny Frogmouth is one of the best examples of cryptic plumage and mimicry in Australian birds. During the day it perches low on a branch, camouflaged as part of the tree. Their silvery-grey plumage patterned with white, black, and brown streaks and mottling giving the bird the appearance of bark. They often choose a broken part of a branch to perch with head thrust upwards at an acute angle to resemble part of the tree. When threatened or alarmed they remain motionless, their cryptic plumage being the best protection.

Tawny Frogmouth are monogamous and a pair stay together for life. The species is sedentary, staying in the same territory over several years. They live alone or in pairs, and sometimes in family groups. Tawny Frogmouth may live for up to 10 years.

Breeding is from August to December and pairs reuse the same nest site each year. It is a loose platform of sticks lined with green leaves. The nest is usually situated in a horizontal fork in a tree and built by both adults. Female lays 2-3 white eggs. Incubation lasts about 28-32 days and is shared by both parents who take turns during this period; males incubates during the day and both sexes at night. Altricial chicks are covered with greyish-white down on hatching. They are fed by both parents and fledge after 25-32 days. One brood is produced each year.

Tawny Frogmouth feed nocturnally, mainly on insects but also consume slugs, snails and worms. They will also eat small mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds, hunted by pouncing to the ground from a perch. Some insects are hawked from an elevated position near a light source. Unfortunately this sometimes results in death while attempting to hawk insects illuminated by car headlights.



Tawny Frogmouth produces a loud clacking sound with its bill and have a low, resonant call of “ooo-oom-oom-oom” with up to 8 calls in 5 seconds. It can repeat this call through the night. At some time previously, the manager of the Halifax Park Caravan Park complained to Marine Rescue about equipment noise coming from the base at night. The offending noise was in fact the call of a Tawny Frogmouth. At least one pair of these birds is permanently resident on the southern slope of the hill adjacent to the base and they can be seen at times hawking insects around the lights in the car park.

The Tawny Frogmouth is not threatened in Australia.

**Neil Fraser
Twitcher**

PORT STEPHENS WEATHER

Nelson Bay, NSW - December 2015

Date	Day	Temps		Rain
		Min	Max	
		°C	°C	mm
12	Sa	19	25.7	0.4
13	Su	17.4	24.3	0
14	Mo	18.5	25.4	0
15	Tu	19.6	25.5	0
16	We	20.1	23.5	0
17	Th	17.8	25.6	0
18	Fr	18.5	26	0
19	Sa	18.3	27.3	0
20	Su	19.7	27.8	0
21	Mo	20.3	30	0
22	Tu	19.1	20.1	13.1
23	We	16.5	21.9	28.2
24	Th	18.5	25.3	2
25	Fr	19.5	26	1.4
26	Sa	19	26.5	0.1
27	Su	18.1	21.6	4.5
28	Mo	18.1	23.6	0.1
29	Tu	18	24.2	0
30	We	16.4	24.4	0
31	Th	18.3	26.8	0
Statistics for the last 20 days December 2015				
Mean		18.5	25.1	
Lowest		16.4	20.1	0
Highest		20.3	30	28.2
Total				49.8

Nelson Bay, NSW - January 2016

Date	Day	Temps		Rain
		Min	Max	
		°C	°C	mm
1	Fr	18.4	26.7	0
2	Sa	18.5	26.4	0.1
3	Su	20	26.5	0.2
4	Mo	18.1	23.1	45
5	Tu	19	21.2	38.5
6	We	18.8	19.8	78
7	Th	16.6	22.5	28
8	Fr	16.5	25	2
9	Sa	19	25.8	0.1
10	Su	19.5	28.2	0
11	Mo	19.5	27.9	0
12	Tu	21.6	30.5	0.4
13	We	22.6	29	0
14	Th	23	32.8	0
15	Fr	15.9	22	12.4
16	Sa	16	22.5	12.2
17	Su	17	23.6	13.6
18	Mo	18.2	26.6	0.5
19	Tu	18.7	28.5	0
20	We	20	29.7	0
Statistics for the first 20 days of January 2016				
Mean		18.85	25.915	
Lowest		15.9	19.8	0
Highest		23	32.8	78
Total				231

Happy Birthday

Congratulations
To the following members of the
PORT STEPHENS UNIT
with birthdays in January & February

January

Yvonne ALMGREN
Shirley CLARK
Valda MUNRO
John COOK
Eryl THOMAS
Graham PRETTY
Ian DRUMMOND
Andrew MACLACHLAN
Garry McKITTRICK
Joy DAWSON
Sandra SCHEUBER
Peter HOLMAN
Monica O'DOWD
Michael DUGGAN
Song PETERSON
Matt DARBY
Tom MILLER

February

Mary GUTRY
Peter FITZSIMONS
Mike PIERPOINT
Brian RICHARDSON
Brian HARROLD
Robert HARRIS
Neil FRASER
Angela TILLING
Bob COGHLAN
Trevor MOXHAM
Julie CHAUNCY
Janette COPPOCK
Michelle BIRD
Peter MERLINO
Gary DUCKETT
Paul HENRY
George ARCHER

Anniversaries of Service

Congratulations and thanks to all the above
members who have given their time and service
as volunteers so willingly.
Our existence depends on it.

January

Kev LANYON	22	Bruce SHADE	22
Yvonne ALMGREN	18	Barry HAYES	20
John ALMGREN	18	Ross DEBENHAM	14
Ken ROSS-SAMPSON	17	Brian CARROLL	13
Pat JOHNSON	17	Eileen KELLY	11
Barney PINNEY	3	Russell CRAIG	9
Bob CASE	1	Marian CHAPPEL	8
Ian PEACOCK	1	Bill HASKELL	8
Peter EDWARDS	1	Robert JOHNSON	8
Stephanie PARTRIDGE	1	Lynne MATHER	5
John BOOTH	1	Ian DRUMMOND	5
		Mick MILTON	2
		Graeme ABBERTON	2

February

Rod REESON	29	Peter HOLMAN	2
Peter PHILLIPSON	26	Karyn MILLER	1
Shirley CLARK	25	Gerard WOOLDRIDGE	1
John SMITH	23		

IN APPRECIATION....

Contributors to this issue of *Port Chatter*:

Colin Cahill, Shirley Clark, Ross Debenham, Colin Foote, Neil Fraser, Lynne Jensen, Ken Johnson, Eileen Kelly, Laurie Nolan, Tony O'Donnell, Helen Peterson, Richard Pizzuto and Maureen Wheatley. Other photos by Ross Debenham, Neil Fraser, Tony O'Donnell, Lynne Jensen, Penelope Highland and Frank van Druten. You too can become a contributor and you will be most welcome. See inside front cover.

Distributors of the *Port Chatter*: This Monthly newsletter does not arrive in your letter-box via the tooth fairy.

The following people give of their time (and petrol) in making deliveries. Distribution Co-Ordinator: Ross Debenham, Maureen Wheatley, Peter Merlino, Elizabeth Francis, Trevor Dowsett, Marian Chappell, and Deb Nolan.

Advertisers in *Port Chatter*: The following advertisers with paid advertisements in the *Port Chatter* help to meet most of the costs of production.

Please show your appreciation by giving them your custom.

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Shoal Bay Pharmacy

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Marina

Boating Sales & Repairs

Nelson Bay Outboard Services

Charters

Kunara Charters

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Winning Holidays, Nelson & Shoal Bay

Century 21 Paradise Waters, Nelson Bay

Rock Lobster Seafood – D'Albora Marinas

Inner Light Tea Rooms, Nelson Head



NEXT MESS MEETINGS

TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2016, 1830 hrs
TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2016, 1830 hrs

All Members
Welcome

All members are welcome to come and meet fellow members of

Marine Rescue Port Stephens.

Important information on operational matters will be discussed.

Guest Speaker: *See page 17 for details*

Food and refreshments will be provided.

Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens Lifeboats Currently in Service

The Unit has two primary rescue craft, both purpose built, specialised vessels, crewed by motivated and trained volunteers who can be called upon at anytime, day or night, to head to the assistance of those who call.

A response time of 20 mins or less is estimated from alert to heading to sea. Both vessels boast a comprehensive inventory of the latest navigation, communication, safety and rescue technologies on board.

Port Stephens Lifeboat PS-40 'Danial Thain'



Specifications:

Length:	17.1m (52ft)
Beam:	5.6m (17ft)
Displacement:	32 tons
Draft:	Aft 1.8m; Fwd 1.1m
Fuel:	Diesel, 2200 litres (500 gallons) + 590 litres (131 gallons) reserve
Engines:	2 x D343 Caterpillar 460hp
Range:	Approx 250 nm at 10 knots - 20 hours
Top Speed:	14 knots
Crew:	Operational - normally 6/7

Lifeboat PS-40 (Danial Thain) was designed in 1971 by A. McLachlan of Glasgow for the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) in the United Kingdom. She was built as 52-09 in 1978 with a glass reinforced plastic hull and fibreglass house (ARUN Class).

Originally named the 'Spirit of Tayside' she spent most of her operational career with the RNLI base at Broughty Ferry in Scotland. She was purchased in 1999 by the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, as a result of a very generous anonymous donation, to be permanently stationed in Port Stephens. All Aruns are self-righting and are considered one of the safest ocean going rescue vessels available.

For safety's sake, when going on the water, the boating public is urged to LOG ON to "Marine Rescue Port Stephens" using any of the following:

27meg channel 88; VHF channel 16.

Phone: 4981 3585

Or the free Marine Rescue App, developed specifically for NSW waters and conditions, available for both Apple and Android Smartphones.

Port Stephens Lifeboat PS-30 'Codi-K II'



Specifications:

Make / Model:	Gemini WR-850
Type:	Rigid-Hull Inflatable (RHIB)
Length:	8.5m
Beam:	2.8m
Engines:	2 x Mercury Verado four-stroke Outboards 200hp each (150kW)
Fuel Capacity:	2 x 200 litre tanks
Fuel Consumption:	Cruising speed - 50 litres / hour
Displacement:	3.2 tonnes
Survey:	2C
Crew:	4 operational
Speed:	Top speed around 40 knots Cruising speed 25 to 30 knots

Lifeboat PS-30 (Codi-K II) was manufactured in South Africa, prepared by Britton Marine of Taren Point NSW, and completed in February 2012. Her single hull is made of glass-reinforced plastic with alloy longitudinal keel reinforcement and her cabin is glass-reinforced plastic.

She boasts among her electronic equipment a Raymarine Radar/Plotter, Furuno AIS Class A and FLIR Thermal Night Vision System.

Codi-K II has been prepared to Port Stephens Unit specifications in consultation with Marine Rescue NSW, and is capable of covering all of the areas of Port Stephens; ie, the Myall River system, Karuah River, and the other shallow areas of our waterways, as well as outside waters as required.

Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol Port Stephens Lifeboats

When this Unit was first formed in 1982 it depended upon members own boats – mostly trailer boats – to proceed to the assistance of vessels in difficulties. Since 1985, the Unit has operated the following registered Lifeboats:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Beam</u>	<u>Propulsion</u>	<u>Crew</u>
1985-1994	SCOUT	7.2m	2.0m	Twin 25hp	2
1993-1997	COROOWA	6.0m	2.0m	Volvo-Penta	2
1988-2000	GIRRALONG	20.0m	4.5m	500HP diesel	6
1994-1997	KEVIN CLARK	4.2m	2.0m	30hp	2
1997-2003	YACAABA	4.3m	2.1m	Twin 90hp	2
2003-2011	CODI-K	9.2m	3.3m	Twin 212hp diesel Jet	4

Framed photographs of each of these lifeboats is displayed in the
'Assault' Room of the Lighthouse Cottage Museum at Nelson Head



“have you visited d’Albora Marinas Nelson Bay recently?....
IT IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A PLACE TO MOOR”

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Hogs Breath Cafe	02 4984 2842	Rock Lobster Restaurant	02 4981 1813
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Lets Go Adventures	02 4981 4331	Subway	02 4984 4277
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