

A WORLD BEYOND

It is very easy to become complacent in any organisation. Exposure to those who spend their days meeting the same challenges as ours often opens the mind to new ideas, suggests new opportunities or, at the very least, confirms current practice. Even in these days of instant information, there is nothing like meeting, talking and exchanging ideas at a conference with those in the same discipline.

Distance and travel costs mean, by and large, Australians are less involved with international peers than those in, say, Europe. So in this issue of *Australian Sea Heritage*

we present several excerpts from papers presented at international maritime conferences which, you may agree, challenge conventional wisdom.

Audiences and Wild Spirits

‘Rocking the boat’ is not the norm at conferences but when someone does, it focuses the mind. These excerpts from papers presented at the International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM) 2009 Biennial Conference in Esbjerg, Denmark, are thought provoking.

1: From audience to connectives

To be an audience is a passive exercise; after all, you in your capacity as the audience at this conference will undergo what I choose to offer you. In this paper I will be sending you information that *I hope* will enter the listening zone of your brain, resulting in a certain impact leading you to conclude that the information is useful. You may, of course, tune out and consider me to be a complete waste of time.

My objective today is to challenge you, fellow museum colleagues, to look at ‘the audience’ with different eyes. I hope you will allow me to



The view of ss *Great Britain*, in the dry dock from which she was launched in 1843 in Bristol, UK, is now fairly well known. This picture shows a detail of the ship's stern. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who designed and built *Great Britain*, was a remarkable engineer, renowned for railways, bridges and other industrial wonders as well as his ships. No one had ever designed so vast a ship and of iron. And Brunel's decision to fit the ship with a screw propeller rather than paddle wheels was the most daring stroke of all. Brunel created a ship that changed history. That it survives today to allow us to marvel at the 19th century vision which created it is another marvel.

take you on a journey to become connected; for once connected, you will move from being a member of a captive audience to being a captivated audience. You will have opened up, and it will be easy for me to get my message across.

What does it take to become connected with our audience?

I would like to invite you to look at the audience experience from the *visitor's perspective*. Or wait! Let's rephrase that – I invite you to look at the audience experience from a *guest's perspective*.

Starting the journey

The journey to our museums starts and ends at home. Once we understand which path our guests follow to find their way to us, it will become easier to connect with them.

- What has inspired your guest to visit you?
- How has he or she chosen you as the destination for their visit today?
- What is their expectation from this visit?

The journey starts with the collection of information; with the building of an expectation which translates to a mental picture resulting in a positive or negative feeling.

This means that attention to *guest value* needs to be a focus point, in contrast to *content value*.

- Guests need to *feel* well taken care of.
- Even if you are offering the very best content value you can, the guest value will determine the reaction to the total visit experience.



To drive the propeller Brunel designed for ss *Great Britain*, a massive 1,000hp steam engine. It was the most powerful marine engine of its time. An operating replica of the engine – although not steam driven - has been built for the ship.

- Thus, *guest value* + *content value* equals *total experience*.

And if the total experience result is a positive feeling, it provides you the opportunity to *inspire and interact*.

- Have you ever realised that *inspiration* is actually a two-way effort? If you are not open to being inspired, there is no way I can be an inspiration to you.
- You will not be open to being inspired if you are not comfortable, or if you don't have that positive feeling.
- But once comfortable, once opened up, you allow me to be an inspiration
- And *once inspired our interaction starts*.

That is a far cry from the traditional position of the audience – usually caught in one-way traffic with me telling you to be quiet and listen to *me*. Does that sound familiar?

Once I have *inspired* my guests and I can *interact* with them, we can *connect*. And that connection

enables me to offer my guests what they came to my museum for; to feel comfortable, enthused, inspired – and *satisfied*.

From there it is a short step to encourage my guests to think themselves to be part of my museum *community* which, recognise it or not at the outset, is what they had in mind when they made the decision to come to my museum.

The audience has become the sum of all these elements. If the *total experience* is pleasant, recognisable, inspiring and enriching enough, it stimulates a repeat visit. The visitor's value to the museum is enhanced and can lay the foundations for a long-term valuable relationship being established.

Paper given by Karin Brandt, National Maritime Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM), Biennial Conference 2009, Esbjerg, Denmark.



SS *Great Britain* sits in the dry dock in which she was built, now in a climate controlled environment to preserve the ship's fabric. Visitors walk around the hull under a glass ceiling at the ship's waterline, covered with water to create the effect that the ship is afloat.

2: The entrepreneurial museum and the Wild Spirits?

Being 'entrepreneurial' is a state of mind, a culture, and one that is open to all institutions. The idea that a museum cannot, or should not be commercially sharp and effective has long since passed.

Of course many museums, not only the independent museums like the SS *Great Britain*, assume that they need a good retail shop and a nice café in order to supplement their income. Is that enough, and what does a culture of entrepreneurialism mean?

- Sir Richard Branson: 'I wanted to be an editor or a journalist; I wasn't really interested in being an entrepreneur, but I soon found out *I had to become an entrepreneur* in order to keep my magazine going.'
- Anita Roddick: 'Nobody talks of entrepreneurship as *survival*, but that's exactly what it is, and what nurtures creative thinking.'

So being entrepreneurial is all about *survival* and about *opportunity*. For an independent museum these are essential facts of life.

- Machiavelli said: 'Entrepreneurs are simply those who understand that there is little difference between obstacle and opportunity, and are able to turn both to their advantage.'

What is the essence of 'entrepreneurialism'? Kirzner said: 'A person who spots and acts on opportunities.' And Schumpeter said: 'Innovation and change come from 'Wild Spirits'.

That is wild spirits running 'commercial' charities/museums. In fact many of our best loved

museums were founded by enthusiastic and perhaps slightly mad volunteers. Certainly the amazing rescue of ss *Great Britain* from the Falkland Islands and her journey back to England was a great example of 'wild spirits' being entrepreneurial.

There are clearly differences between independent museums and the public, state-run museums. But being entrepreneurial is a state of mind, a personal culture of identifying and seizing your opportunities wherever they may lie, and it should be continuous and ongoing.

'We know it when we see it, but we don't find it' in business

plans, organisation charts, and job descriptions. Mark Twain said: 'I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one'.

In some, perhaps many museums there is an ingrained mindset against entrepreneurialism. It is about trading and being commercial, they say. And that is bad. Remember the 'Wild Spirits'! The source of creativity and adventure lies there.

Studies show that the most successful entrepreneurs 'are convinced that they command their own destinies'. But the culture of many museums does not encourage this self-assured attitude, and does

not allow people to flourish.

How can museums be entrepreneurial without compromising their integrity? Answer: Don't make compromising decisions! (although bad management decisions will).

So let's not be afraid. Instead, let us empower our people and let loose the Wild Spirits!

Lightly edited excerpt from a paper given by Matthew Tanner MBE, Director & Chief Executive, ss Great Britain Trust

International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM), Biennial Conference 2009, Esbjerg, Denmark



Dutch barges in the Harbour Museum, Rotterdam. There are more than 3,000 Dutch vessels on the historic ships' register in the Netherlands.

Handing on MARITIME HERITAGE

Maritime conferences repeatedly refer to 'heritage'. But the word can have as many meanings as there are assembled delegates. These excerpts from a conference paper attempt to shed light on the subject.

We all use the word 'heritage' freely. But a moment's thought about what it actually means may be useful.

Let me explain what I mean with a personal example. I am from Australia and I grew up with very close connections to my maternal grandmother who emigrated to Australia from England just prior to the first World War. When I was a very young boy she imparted to me her concept that heritage was a far more all-embracing concept than its literal English language meaning of 'valued things passed down'.

She used 'valued things' to spark stories and explanations which ranged across a wide spectrum - history, science, geography, social history. So I grew up with a very clear view in my mind that heritage - 'valued things' - were not just objects in isolation; they were woven into the fabric of our lives.

I particularly remember a treasured sewing box which had been with my grandmother from the time she was a girl. Apart from the usual sewing kit, in it were objects she treasured; bought or picked up on her travels. Those objects brought out stories of places and peoples, of the ship on which she emigrated, the country town



The readily recognised stern galleries of Lord Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory* in Portsmouth, UK. The ship is still in commission with the Royal Navy although a static exhibit ashore.

in which she first found herself on arrival in Australia, the clothes she made and altered for herself and her family during difficult economic times. That sewing box and its objects represented social history spanning many decades.

'Heritage' was not a narrow

concept. It described life in the round.

So I grew up with a much broader definition of 'heritage' than you will find in any dictionary. And I treasured my understanding of heritage because I believed that it was a way of bringing 'things' to life.



HMS *Warrior*, Britain's first iron-hulled, armoured warship, was launched in 1860 as the pride of Queen Victoria's navy. The ship was built in response to an aggressive shipbuilding program launched by the French, and particular the French iron-clad *La Gloire*. The British ship was 60% larger than *La Gloire* and was the largest warship in the world at 9,210 tons displacement. But by 1864, *Warrior* was superseded by faster and more heavily armed ships. By 1871 she was downgraded to coastguard and reserve services, repairs were not carried out to her rig and she was retired as a floating school for the Navy, renamed *Vernon III*. Her final indignity before restoration was to become a floating oil pontoon, once more renamed as *Oil Fuel Hulk C77*.

So where is this leading?

I believe that the population at large comes to heritage in much the same way as I did – through storytelling related to much-loved or significant 'valued things'. And perhaps we can learn from that.

Here's a definition of 'heritage' which I think supports my point: *"Heritage is all the things that make up our identity - our spirit and ingenuity, our historic buildings, and*

our unique, living landscapes. Our heritage is a legacy from our past, a living, integral part of life today, and the stories and places we pass on to future generations."

That's not a bad definition. So how does it relate to the questions about maritime heritage we are raising at this conference?

To me, it says that if we want to encourage the coming generations to understand and participate in

maritime heritage conservation, and to ensure the future of our traditional ships, then we must start by capturing the interest and imaginations of our younger generations – just as my grandmother captured mine with the stories from her sewing box.

All around the world, those of us who own and operate traditional ships stress to our governments that we are worthwhile and worth

supporting because we believe we can demonstrate that we have impact – impact in the numbers of people involved and in the economic benefits we can generate.

We stress the number of enthusiasts involved, the number of voluntary organisations represented, the large public attendances at our events, the participants in our sail training and so on. It tends to be on those grounds that we stress our relevance and worthiness for support. And in many ways, that works. But if we are talking about building and *sustaining* that support, in my view we need to concentrate much more on what I will call the *background* to our activities.

If you agree with me that heritage is as much about the things which surround a heritage object – the history, the stories, the traditions, the skills, then we need to start building a much wider knowledge and understanding with youngsters, and within the general public, of just what we mean by maritime heritage. If we are thoughtful, clever and careful about it, I believe we can create a real path of interest that leads naturally to our ships.

It is the linking of culture and custom, encouraging the realisation that so much that we take for granted in our language, lore, literature, history, geography and art has its origins in the sea – and its ships. That is what maritime heritage is all about. The interweaving of heritage with the artefacts – the ships – which made much of it possible.

If we can achieve this goal, I believe we can create another strong argument to justify our traditional ships. Our ships will not

be seen, as I think they often are now, in isolation: objects to view, to be impressed by – but then to go home, to forget and move on to the next experience. With a greater awareness and understanding of their historical context, the ships will be seen for what they are, the embodiment of our maritime heritage.

Don't we already do that?

No doubt some of you may be saying to yourselves, but that's what we do. We already promote maritime heritage. But do we really? I believe we often assume a knowledge and interest by governments and the public which, on greater scrutiny, in very many cases is simply not there.

Yes, there is the understanding that our traditional ships represent the past at sea, but the understanding is often hazy, and amongst the *majority* of people – and with the exception of just a few icons – our ships do not resonate. If we are very honest with ourselves, these outstanding objects of our maritime heritage are not taken seriously. By the public, or by governments. They are an entertainment, a diversion, or something to be tolerated, depending on one's point of view.

It is my belief that a greater understanding of maritime heritage and the part our ships play in it – by government, the public and, particularly, the coming generations – can mean that the existence of traditional ships is seen as perfectly 'natural'. That they should be preserved, encouraged and assisted would then be taken for granted. Out of that understanding could grow more sympathetic and

supportive regulatory policies, designed to ensure the practical and viable future of our traditional ships.

Ambitious? Probably. Achievable? I believe it is.

I must stress that the issues I am talking about today are not unique to any one country or continent. They are just as real in Australia as they are in Europe and other parts of the world – in fact, I would venture to say they exist wherever there are traditional ships.

What do we do about it?

First, a digression. You may have noticed that I have not used the word 'education' in relation to my proposed broadening of knowledge about maritime heritage. I am not talking here about formal structured learning. That has its place, of course, but I believe it is not our route to increasing the relevance of our ships in the public mind. We need maritime heritage and our ships to have a relevance to everyday life. They should become valued things not just because they are traditional ships, but because of what they represent – just like Grandmother's sewing box. . We need to strike emotional and sentimental chords within today's community, not structured education.

Now to be practical. I believe we can influence up-coming generations, the public at large, and the authorities, to see our ships as valued things by the way we talk about them.

Let me explain what I mean. The museum I come from in Sydney is 45 years old and we have a number of historic ships – five of them over 100 years old and all operational.



Greenwich, UK and the recently restored clipper *Cutty Sark* hangs, literally, above the floor of the dock in which it is located. Ravaged by fire during restoration, but with damage far less devastating than first thought, the ship is now part museum exhibit and part function centre. There have been many critical reviews of the way in which the ship is now presented, but there is no doubt that the presentation is striking.

Needless to say, we are very proud of the fact that our ships have been restored by our volunteers and are sailed by our volunteer crews.

Our emphasis has been on the ships, the detail of their restorations, their rig, or machinery, the fact that we have driven 50,000 hot rivets to replate a hull and so on. Largely technical stuff. Very interesting to the enthusiast, only mildly interesting to the general public and even less interesting to most young people.

So it is not surprising that many people who visit and even sail on our vessels walk away without a backward glance, even though they say it has been an interesting and enjoyable experience. Just the way they do after a trip to the zoo, or the aquarium or a theme park.

They may remember the enjoyable experience, but it did not touch their lives.

The reasons why

I have begun to realise that although our visitors leave us accepting that our collections are important, and warrant government and public support, we really weren't giving them the *reasons* why. And those reasons are *not* simply that our traditional ships exist and therefore deserve to be preserved and allowed to operate viably.

The real reasons are that our ships have a relevance to Sydney and Australia. They are part of the history and fabric of our country and its people - and real people lived real lives on and around those vessels - and still do.

Telling visitors that our Pilot Steamer *John Oxley* has had 50,000 new hot rivets in her hull during her restoration gets an interested nod. Telling them - and showing them - that the ship represents a classic example of early 20th century 'class' structure at sea, and that in her latter days of service she was labeled a 'hell' ship by her fo'c'astle crew, gets their attention, touches their imagination and gets them asking questions. A ship involved with real people, real lives and real history. Maritime heritage.

VIP and Vice-Regal Steam Launch *Lady Hopetoun* was built for the government's Sydney Harbour authority and is a superb example of an Edwardian coal-fired, triple-expansion engine steam launch.

I can see eyes glazing already, just

like many visitors.

But talk about the fact that between carrying Kings and Queens, Premiers and Prime Ministers on tours of Sydney Harbour, *Lady Hopetoun* ferried the children from the harbour island on which she was based to the mainland to go to school, and picked up residents from surrounding suburbs for the Saturday night dance on the island, and you can watch the visitor interest level rise. Or how, during World War I, the State Cabinet needed to have a top secret meeting, so they met around *Lady Hopetoun's* saloon table while she steamed up and down the harbour, with the crew gathered right for'ard out of earshot. Again real people, real lives and part of our city's history. Maritime heritage.

And one final example: Our 1874 restored Barque *James Craig* rounded Cape Horn 23 times during her working life. But one of the stories we now tell which grips attention is the response by an old crew member when asked about his most frightening time at sea. It wasn't a gale, or laying aloft to shorten sail in the southern ocean that terrified him, it was when as cook's runner he had to carry the soup pot from the galley on deck by the foremast, aft along the length of the ship and down a spiral companionway to the steward's pantry – without spilling a drop. One frightened boy. A story easy to identify with, bringing a ship from the past to life. Real people. Real lives. Maritime heritage.

So the essence of my argument today is that if, when talking about our traditional ships, we concentrate on their role in history



Built in 1841, Mystic Seaport's *Charles W. Morgan* is the world's last remaining wooden whaling ship. She has just undergone a five year restoration which involved replanking much of the hull, a task carried out by Mystic Seaport's own shipyard. The ship was relaunched in July 2013. In reality this meant lowering the ship partially into the water on Mystic's shiplift where the timber hull will be allowed to take up before the ship is fully refloated. In the northern summer of 2014, *Charles W. Morgan* will undertake her 38th voyage to ports along the US New England Coast.

and in the lives of people, rather than on just the ships as out of context objects, we can encourage people to see how our ships fit into the fabric of life – maritime heritage.

I believe that this approach works for traditional ships in almost any situation. Sail training and its character-building becomes more than just a leadership and adventure exercise if the trainees are brought during their time aboard to understand the role of wind ships over the centuries in the exploration, development of commerce, and conflicts of history.

A traditional ship still trading can appear far less of an anachronism in our modern world if those who encounter the ship come to see its evolution from another period, preserving traditions and skills otherwise lost. This can mean taking the time and trouble to talk to casual dockside visitors; after all,

their curiosity has brought them to look at the ship.

Real events, real people

For museum ships it means filling the guided tour with anecdotes about real events and real people synonymous with the ship – not just when, how and from what she was built.

For all traditional ships, it means designing literature so that the stories surrounding our ships and their reason for being – their maritime heritage - are as important as the facts, figures, sailing schedules, charter rates, or whatever else it is we are trying to impart.

And, of course, anything we can do to encourage young people to experience their maritime heritage is a given. Messing about in boats programs; sleepovers; training courses in practical boating skills; maritime language and literature



Members of the International Historic & Traditional Ships Panel (IHTS) meeting in Rotterdam. An initiative of the International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM), the panel is recognised as an important group of experts, developing international guidelines for historic vessels.

awareness programs; all play a part in creating an interest in maritime heritage and a path which can help lead to love of our ships.

Everything that I have talked about is manageable by all of us. It is the way we think and talk about our traditional ships that will increase awareness of maritime heritage. And it will create the understanding that our traditional ships do not exist in isolation. They are part of the fabric of each of the countries you represent here today. Ensuring this is understood by governments, the public and the younger generations is our

challenge. It means we must ensure that maritime heritage is seen as part of the legacy from our past; a living, integral part of life today, to be passed on to future generations.

Paper given by Alan Edenborough, Sydney Heritage Fleet. European Maritime Heritage Conference 2010, Seixal, Portugal

FOOTNOTE: Throughout the EMH paper, reference was made to 'traditional' ships, as opposed to 'historic' or 'heritage' vessels. The reason is that EMH and others battled long and hard with

the European Commission to define 'old' vessels we in Australia would describe as 'historic'. The word adopted by the Europeans to describe such vessels was 'traditional' and it is now enshrined in a European Directive, which reads:

'Traditional ships' means all kinds of historical ships and their replicas including those designed to encourage and promote traditional skills and seamanship, that together serve as living cultural monuments, operated according to traditional principles of seamanship and technique.