**SHIPS OF HOBART HARBOUR:REVIEW**

***Ships of Hobart Harbour* by Rex Cox is an encyclopaedic account of the many vessels that have visited Hobart from the earliest days of the colony to the towering cruise ships of the present day.**

**As explained in the introduction the outline of the book was prepared the late George Cox (listed as co-author) and partly written up to his death in 1992.George Cox’s daughter, the late Margaret Withington gave Rex Cox the opportunity to finish the task, with Ron Withington as the publisher.**

**The book covers a wide canvass, lavishly illustrated by many photographs of the sailing ships, whalers, London traders, ferries, passenger liners, research vessels, cruise ships and warships. Rex Cox notes that Hobart has been particularly fortunate over the years with numerous ship photographers including himself from the age of 13.**

**In the context of the early explorers both Bruni d’Entrecasteaux, and subsequently Lieutenant Sir John Hayes , with no knowledge of the Frenchman’s expedition, are credited with navigating the upper reaches of what the latter named the River Derwent.**

**Hobart and harbour and its industries and the early foundation of Hunter Island are traced with the creation of the Marine Terrace and warehouses with the completion of the New Wharf in 1834 followed by Constitution Dock in 1850 and Victoria Dock in 1891. By 1914 Sullivan’s Cove had reached its development limits and in 1920 following reclamation of Macquarie Point allowed the location of oil tanks. Over time the timber yards, abattoirs, jam factory, grain mill and ships providores and chandlers no longer remain. The development of related shipping is meticulously covered servicing IXL, the Zinc Works and the ANM paper mills(now Norske Skog).Early shipbuilding to the rise of Incat are well documented.**

**Hobart’s Antarctic connections have seen explorers Biscoe(1831),Dumont d’Urville (1839-40),Ross(1840-41),Borchgrevinck((1898-1900),Mawson(1911-1913),Shackelton(1914).These were followed by the increased activity in the Antarctic post World War II with ANARE transferring to Kingston in 1982.**

**Whaling and its supportive vessels are recorded in detail. In 1804 Port Officer William Collins recorded up to 60 whales in the Derwent. At its peak there were 40 locally owned whalers. In 1964 the arrival of the Russian ‘Sovietskya Ukraina ‘with a tanker was followed in 1965 by the ‘Slava’ and three more units of the Russian whaling fleet anchored in Storm Bay. The Japanese ‘Kyo Maru’, described as a ‘whaling survey ship’, entered Hobart Port in 1970.Japanese fishing vessels were frequent and numerous visitors from 1966 until they ceased in 1996.**

**The importance is stressed of the trading sailing ships that maintained a regular link between London and Hobart. These were overtaken by the larger and faster steamers brought in by British shipping lines from the 1880’s.These liners, given detailed coverage, were in turn were eclipsed by containerisation in the early 70’s.Passenger liners and cruise ships are chronicled with the Orient Line’s association with Hobart from 1889 until P&O took it over. The large passenger liners are noted such as the ‘Strathdene’, ‘Orion’ and the Cunard liners such as the ‘Carinthia’ and the ‘Franconia’ in the 1920’s and the ‘Queen Elizabeth II’ in 1978.The increase in the current giant cruise ships include the ‘Star Princess’(2003) and ‘Diamond Princess’ (2006) and the largest to date ‘Voyager of the Seas’.**

**In World War II the Port of Hobart came under military and naval control with local steamers such as ‘Mongana’ and ‘Marana’ operating as harbour patrol vessels. One of the more unusual occurrences the book records was the overflight of Hobart and the Derwent on March 2 1942 by a Yokosuka E4Y reconnaissance float plane piloted by CPO Fujita. The plane flew from Great Oyster Bay where the Japanese L25 submarine was stationed. The battery at Risdon is alleged not to have fired at the plane as the key to the ammunition supply was mislaid or (as an alternative explanation) those in charge were concerned about the plane returning fire.**

**The fruit trade is described as a former important port activity with summer memories of wharves lined with vessels loading apples and pears for the UK and European markets. The ships were mainly British; Port Line, Blue Star Line, Shaw, Savil Lines, Clan Line, P&O, Federal Steam Navigation and New Zealand Shipping Company. By 1990 only 4 overseas ships were trading with a final shipment in August 1996.All Tasmanian fruit exports from then are containerised and shipped via Melbourne.**

**Coastal trade between Hobart and the mainland ports is outlined. By the 1850’s the locally owned Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company was operating cargo/passenger steamers to Melbourne and Sydney. Despite calls by Tasmanian shippers the State Government refused to return to interstate shipping as shipowners found ageing tonnage and competition with ANL difficult to tackle. By the early 1960’s RO/RO vessels operating Bass Strait had an impact on Tasmanian trade with fruit in 1959 being railed to Devonport for the ’Princess of Tasmania’ .The Sydney passenger service was ended in 1976.The withdrawal of Coastal Express lines ‘Searoad Tamar’ in 1998 ended Hobart’s coastal general cargo trade.ANM ended its transfer of newsprint by barge to Hobart in January 12 19996 by transporting it by rail to Burnie.**

**‘Ships of Hobart Harbour’ is a very well researched and written contribution to the wealth of maritime literature. The index in both general and for ships has been carefully compiled and rewards anyone seeking specific information about a vessel or a topic. However, in the Introduction, there is a comment on the decline of Hobart as a trading port. This could have been better placed at the end of the book as a synopsis. Given the activity and diversity of the Port of Hobart as covered the book would have benefitted by a drawing together by the author in commenting on the forces, both market and political that have led to the current state of the Port.**

**John Livermore**