

## REPORT ON FEBRUARY MEETING

**Speaker:** Captain Bruce Kafer: **The Australian Hydrographic Service.**

Captain Kafer opened his highly interesting address with a brief outline of the early surveys of the Australian coastline, beginning with a survey of part of the west coast of Cape York by William Jantz in the tiny ship *Duyfken* in 1606. Others surveys followed at intervals until Matthew Flinders made the first serious survey of the coastline of the continent in the years 1801-1803 and ultimately bestowed the name *Australia*.

The Royal Navy established its Hydrographic Service in 1795, developing Flinders' work in more detail, through the use of Royal Navy surveyors. For example, one Captain Denham spent nine years in Australian waters, leaving his name on a rock at Shark Bay.

The Royal Australian Navy established its own Hydrographic Service in 1920. A big expansion of responsibility occurred in 1942, with the service employing as many as 40 ships in survey work during World War II, mostly around the islands to the north of Australia, such as Torres Strait, New Guinea and the Coral Sea. To-day the Service has a fleet of modern ships, specially designed for survey work and equipped with state-of-the-art technology. These surface craft are complemented by aerial surveys from their own aircraft which is very useful for sea-bed surveys in relatively shallow waters.

“The Australian Hydrographic Service produces a comprehensive range of products that have many applications in the marine environment.

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These include traditional paper based products such as the paper chart and Notices to Mariners, which are familiar to and widely used by the maritime community.

“Paper based products are however increasingly being supplemented by digital versions. The AHS has released a variety of visual products and software (CDs) under the banner *Seafarer*. The *Seafarer* product line includes an exciting new generation of hydrographic products that use the latest technology to increase the efficiency, accuracy and safety of all that set out to sea.

“In 1997 the AHS released its first digital navigation product, *Seafarer* RNC (raster nautical chart), to satisfy the increasing demand for official navigational chart information for use in Electronic Charting Systems (ECS). Since 1997 the AHS has released a range of digital products under the *Seafarer* name.”

Captain Kafer’s talk was also presented through modern technology: a laptop computer and associated projection equipment. As one almost ready to join the ranks of the octogenarians, I marvelled at the advances in surveyors’ and navigators’ aids since Flinders’ day, with his sextant, chronometer and trigonometry tables, compared to the hand-held Global Positioning System of recent times or the more modern digital techniques of to-day. The slide showing the use of electronic navigational aids on the bridge of a modern ship really said it all!!