

The passing of Captain Jack Davies.

It is with regret that we hear of the passing of Captain Jack Davies on 20 August 2006. Jack Bowen Davies was born in Dinas Powys a village near Cardiff, Wales on 2 June 1909. His school years were spent with his older brother Harry as a boarder at Queens College, Taunton in Somerset. Twelve days after leaving school in 1926 he decided to go to sea and began a 4 year apprenticeship as an indentured cadet with the British India Steam Navigation Company. After 12 months at sea he visited his father who had retired to Sydney from his business as harbour pilot in Penang. On this visit, Jack's first in Australia, he met a teenager Gwen Wood who in 1939 became his wife.

In April 1935 he resigned from the British India Company as he chose to sail on the Australian Coast. He joined Burns Philp as 3rd Officer on the *MV Neptunia*. He then went on to join the Huddart Parker company sailing on the *MVs Zealandia, Westralia* and *Wanganella*.

At the outbreak of World War II Jack enlisted and joined the RAFA *MV Kurumba* as 3rd Officer and after his first trip was promoted to master.

The *MV Kurumba* was an oil tanker brought into service on 4 September 1939 and from then until mid 1946 served around the Australian coast and in the northern waters off New Guinea, the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines refuelling vessels. He served with the American 7th Fleet at many an action from Milne Bay until VP day then later refuelling the hospital ships bringing home the Australian POW's.

On discharge he joined the NSW Maritime Services Board in November 1946 as a harbour pilot working first in Sydney, Newcastle, Yamba & Ballina Harbours before his appointment to Port Kembla as Assistant Harbour Master and Pilot in 1948.

The first building at Port Kembla harbour for the newly set up Harbour Master Pilot Service was erected between No 3 and No 4 jetty. The structure was the old Life Boat shed from Watson's Bay Port Jackson. Dismantled and rebuilt at Port Kembla the base consisted of a main office for the Harbour Master and two smaller rooms, one for the second Pilot and the other a locker and washroom.

At the time when Captain Davies was transferred to Port Kembla the only services operating were in the outer harbour the original part of Port Kembla Harbour. The only jetties servicing ships were No 3 & No 4 and the old No 1 coal loading jetty.

Captain Davies would ease the ships into the berth without the aid of tug boats. Tug boats were mainly used to transport the Pilot to the ships awaiting safe passage into and out of the harbour. *SS Geddington Court* of 6,903 gross tonnage was the first ship piloted by Captain Davies on 24 September 1948. *PV Goonawarra* the first purpose built Pilot vessel for Port Kembla arrived on 6 November 1953. She was a wooden craft of 50 feet 7 inches in length with a beam of 13 feet and weighing only 20½ tons with a maximum speed of 8.7 knots.

The opening of the inner harbour increased the turnover of daily shipping movements with the additional berths then available. The greatest number of vessels piloted by Captain Davies in one day was seven in December 1961 when he piloted 4 arrivals and three departures.

After all the years as Pilot his final duty was to bring his 7,892nd ship the *Binsness* of 13,240 gross tons to berth at BHP Discharge Wharf in the inner harbour in 1971 ending his 22 year and 8 months service at Port Kembla Harbour.

Captain Jack never regretted going to sea saying he "was not cut out for office work" and was very proud of his time spent at Port Kembla Harbour. Jack and Gwen Davies spent 65 wonderful years together.