

## Book Reviews

### **The International Maritime Language Programme**

By Peter C. van Kluijven – 2003

Published by Alk & Heijnen Publishers

Alkmaar, The Netherlands

ISBN 90-5961-006. Pp 416. €39.00

Meanwhile it goes without saying within the shipping industry, that, whenever the "international maritime language" is referred to, Maritime English is meant. According to the STCW 1978/95, future deck and engineer officers have to render a well developed command of this specialised language, otherwise they will not be granted a certificate of competence as a great many accidents at sea and in ports happen due to communication deficiencies.

English monolingual textbooks reflecting accepted standards in methodology and being abreast with current developments regarding the requirements on Maritime English in modern shipping are badly needed by teachers and students alike but are still rarely found on the market. That is why P. C. van Kluijven's course is highly appreciated by the Maritime English community.

The quite voluminous textbook comprises seven maritime fields, called units, of which the author rightly assumed that they would cover safety related and communicatively highly relevant facts, situations, processes, etc.: Maritime Communication, General Ship's Knowledge, Engineering, Navigation (incl. cargo handling), Safety, Documents and Correspondence. All these complexes are broken down into a number of related sub-areas witnessing the careful needs analysis the author has undertaken in this respect. It should be noted, however, that at least an intermediate level of English language competency is necessary to successfully cope with the requirements of the course.

The methodical approach applied in the different units follows the principles of the so-called Content-based and Communicative Language Teaching. This is an effective and appropriate method of language instruction best suited for will-be seafarers to acquire the necessary communication competence for their prospective careers aboard. It is noteworthy and appreciable that the course also includes the teaching/learning of the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) the appropriate application of which is one of the requirements of the STCW 1978/95 for ship's officers. The SMCP are embedded in a convincing and trade-related maritime context so that a boring, isolated rote learning of the phrases is avoided. At the end of each unit the learner is required to do a final project where he/she is expected to

apply what he/she has learnt and to demonstrate the progress made in acquiring Maritime English proficiency.

The accompanying CD-Rom is of great value as well. It does not merely attract students and cadets because they like this form of learning, it is first of all a well considered means of instruction. It is not only perfectly suited for individualised group working in the classroom but also for self instruction in private PC-assisted studies wherever, e.g., on board vessels.

The last unit covers selected problems of practical grammar, which foreign learners of English often feel are hard to properly master. This unit stands, however, somewhat isolated at the end of the textbook in "tow" of the other units, but not really "fastened" to them. Its various well selected grammatical items could probably better be dealt with when split and harboured in those preceding units in the language in which they appear as typical grammatical features, but this remark does in no way diminish the value of the course.

Maritime English teachers would be well advised to assign this teaching/learning aid a prominent place in their daily work in classes, and when they wish or need to improve their maritime background knowledge, this course also offers valuable and easily understandable information in this respect. It would be extremely desirable for a probable second edition of the course in the form of a ring binder, allowing instructors to copy individual pages to be distributed as handouts among the students. Naturally a copyright solution would be necessary.

It does not require much prophecy to foresee The International Maritime Language Programme in the leading position of the convoy of Maritime English teaching resources.

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## A Nautical Odyssey

A history of the Nautical Institute, 1972–2002  
Its people, policies and presence

By Michael J. Plumridge – 2003

Published by The Nautical Institute  
202 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7LQ

ISBN 1 8700 77 67 9. Pp iv/317. £28.57 non-members, £20 members; plus postage

The presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award by Lloyd's List to Julian Parker, the Secretary of the Nautical Institute (NI) from 1973 to 2003, was not only a personally richly deserved honour but also an acknowledgement and appreciation of what the NI has accomplished since its inception in 1972.

The NI's work and achievements are well documented and described in Mike Plumridge's book on the NI's first 30 years, 1972–2002. The book's title "A Nautical Odyssey" is an appropriate choice in view of the challenges with which Odysseus had to cope during the about 10 years on his way back by sea from Troy to Ithaca and Penelope. However, it has probably been much easier for Homer's hero to set sails than it was at the outset for what eventually became the NI. Shipowners association and seafarers union, and a few others, were united in their stand against what they saw as an intrusion in their territory and a disturbance of the balance in their inter-relationship. The memorandum of June 1967 by the Marine Society – always a strong supporter of the NI – on "Regarding the need for a nautical professional institute" was not appreciated at all. The NI had to be formed against considerable odds in a mostly hostile environment. It showed the firm belief in a worthy cause, the committed perseverance and the extraordinary diplomatic skills of Founder Secretary Ticky Malins (who drafted the memorandum when he was Secretary of The Marine Society), Founder President Sir George Barnard, Julian Parker and their "co-fighters" that the NI came into existence against a formidable opposition. Today, the NI enjoys amiable and cooperative relationships with its former opponents and is the professional association for nautical officers and masters worldwide.

Mike Plumridge, Deputy-Secretary of the NI from 1984 to 1998, who has made himself a substantial contribution to the NI's development and growth, describes the astonishing, impressive and admirable success story of the NI in his book that he dedicates to Ticky Malins and Julian Parker.

The author shows that the right choice, masterly handling and pursuance of nautical subjects has been (and is) a particular feature of the NI that has helped to ensure its success. Moreover, there is the guaranteed link with seafaring members by the constitutional provision that two thirds of the governing council have to be active seafarers.

The following random selection (in alphabetical order) from many more subjects shows the broad range of the NI's activities, which are pursued always with the nautical profession firmly in mind:

Bridge Procedures, Bulk Carriers, Cargo Care, COLREG, Command, Computer-Based Training, Harbour Masters, Life Saving Appliances, Marine Pollution, Mariner's Role in Collecting Evidence, Maritime Accident Reporting (Scheme, MARS), Maritime Education and Training, Maritime Excellence, Master and Maritime Law, Nautical Surveyors, Pilotage and Shiphandling, Seaworthiness, Substandard Ships, Vessel Traffic Services.

The subjects have been (and are) covered in the series Nautical Briefings, the Master and Maritime Law, Monographs, and in books and major reference works (in connection with certification schemes) and in SEAWAYS, the globally respected international journal. They were presented and discussed in working groups and at conferences, beginning with the first conference that was held on Maritime Education and Training in London in 1975. The NI was then a solely British association, but already two years later 5 master mariners from abroad were elected into Fellowship. In the same year, the first international conference took place in Bremen, on European Maritime Education and Training.

It was a pleasure to read Mike Plumridge's well presented factual, most interesting, occasionally humorous and for a nautical person even thrilling account of the development and growth of the NI, on what has been done and achieved, on the people behind it, particularly the Presidents, professionally active captains from various sectors of the maritime field who freely gave their time and provided important guidance for keeping the NI on its successful course.

The book shows how the NI has given (and will continue to give) the nautical profession what it set out to do: "To promote high standards of knowledge, competence and qualifications among those in control of seagoing craft". It has provided up-to-date and applicable knowledge on best practice and a most valuable service to the industry by keeping safety, environment protection and efficiency standards of those in command high through ships and their officers and, what can not be underestimated, the NI has maintained and promoted self-respect and pride in a profession the reputation of which has suffered from its members being too often treated as nothing more than a cost factor or a kind of commodity.

Mike Plumridge's book, with an epilogue by Julian Parker on what he sees as the reasons for the NI's achievements, is not only the success story of a professional association (see also Julian Parker's article "The Role of Professional Associations in Shipping", this issue), it is also a fair record on the role of the nautical profession in an environment of rapid industrial and societal change.

Coming back to Odysseus: when he eventually reached home, his serious problems continued, although they were not of the nautical kind anymore (as before Scylla and Charybdis). He had to take drastic measures to regain position and possessions he had left 20 years ago for the siege of Troy. This part of the Odyssey – as well as its beginning – have nothing in common with the NI's Odyssey. The NI had most of its problems in the beginning. It is now on a stable course, has 61 Branches in 38 countries and there is no end of its voyage in sight. The NI is today more needed than ever.

Günther Zade