

The year 1960 saw me departing my school days to enter the commercial world, so it was with wide eyes I embarked on my journey. I had always loved ships and the sea, having two uncles who were Master Mariners, two gentlemen who I greatly admired and held in immense awe.

An opportunity arose, thanks to my father, and contacts he had with the late Arthur Crosby a director of William Crosby & Company. It was through him that an interview was arranged with another director Theo. H. Swanton. To cut a long story short I was appointed a Junior Office Boy. My duties included collecting the mail from the G.P.O. twice a day, running errands making Tea for visitors, delivering sailing cards, posting the office mail, and for all this plus a host of other things too long to mention here, I was paid the princely sum of seven pounds and sixpence per week which included Saturday mornings.

As mentioned previously William Crosby & Co. was (on the shipping side) presided over by the late Theo. H. Swanton, a man of whom I had a huge respect , mainly because he was one of the old school who would never take prisoners, plus the fact I felt very much relegated to the lowest rung of the pecking order, as the "Boy".

Next down the order was the Shipping Manager, Stan Palmer, a chap who lived in a small office that was in a constant state of disarray. I could never work out just how he ever located anything in his little kingdom. Next came one of life's great charismatic chaps, Geoff Holmes, a man who canvassed cargo high and low and seemed for all intents to really love what he did - especially on Fridays when Geoff would announce he was off to the Wool Exchange to interact with all the "Wool Boys". His efforts were always well rewarded because by the time he had finished with his consorting, The "City" boats always departed with the wool bales 4 banded and (not a word to anyone), wool on deck under tarps, and always down to the marks.

Not to mention Doug Fletcher would be unforgivable. Doug was the Operations man together with his offsider, Lynton Vaughan. Together these two colleagues planned, documented, handled all matters in relation to the loading of the beautifully found ships of the Ellerman & Bucknall & Co. Doug made my life as office junior a happy time. Doug was always good fun and always ready to explain the ropes. Doug had been at sea for a while in his early days, serving on the old ASB (ANL) ship RIVER MITTA.

Then, as now, I am a keen ship photographer and maritime historian, a hobby that I love and cherish. Now in retirement it is possible to spend many hours absorbed in my hobby.

Many people are not aware of the history of William Crosby & Co. so I will attempt to give a small account of their history.

William Crosby & Company had a long and varied association with shipping in Australia. They Operated principally from Hobart and Melbourne. The founder of

the firm was Captain William Crosby (1805-1885). Born at Sutherland in the English County of Durham, apprenticed at an early age, by the time he was 21 he was a Master and minor shareholder in a Brig trading to the Baltic and also the West Indies.

A meeting in London with a fellow shipowner convinced Captain Crosby of the virtues of setting up a shipping business in Hobart, The development of the company was rapid, Crosby engaged in agency work importing and exporting a wide variety of primary products, including insurance agencies .In 1860 William Crosby & Co. were appointed Lloyds Agents. Through a mutual association with British firm R. Fenwick & Co. a very viable trade was established in shipowning and operating between England and Australia.

In 1858 William Crosby Jnr. Moved to Melbourne and established a branch there where he worked in close association with his brother Charles as partner in charge of the Hobart office. However in 1885 the brothers decided to dissolve the partnership operating separate businesses under the same name.

Charles Crosby conducted the Melbourne office by himself until 1909, when he took his two sons into partnership together with one William Howell Swanton who ironically started in the company as a boy in 1879. In 1926 the Melbourne firm was formed into a proprietary company, Swanton became manager of the firms shipping and associated interests where he remained until his death in 1951.He also was involved in the Overseas Shipping Representatives Association, and many more waterfront activities. His son Theo H. Swanton (previously mentioned) followed him into the company and became equally prominent in the Melbourne shipping scene.

Two very important activities set the Melbourne office separate from the other now established interstate branches, notably the agency for the Ellerman & Bucknall Steamship Company also widely known as the "City" Line, plus the Phosphate agency which eventually lead the company into steamship owning. This association prospered. When in 1936 Ellerman & Bucknall in conjunction with the Port Line and New Zealand Shipping acquired the Canadian National Steamships' service from the East coast of Canada to Australia together with ten ships, the service was reconstituted as the Montreal, Australia and New Zealand Line, then commonly referred to as the MANZ line.

The Ellerman Line agency lasted until the end of 1967, with the impending containerisation of the Australian trades. The agencies for Ellerman, Port Line, and Blue Star Line were consolidated into the newly formed Joint Cargo Services Pty Ltd. from the beginning of 1968.

It was in 1968 my association with William Crosby & Co. ceased. I had been "head hunted" by the German Airline Lufthansa to manage their air cargo and airmail operation in Melbourne.  
And the rest is history.