

THE TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION OF
SURVEYORS

CAPTAIN BARRY THOMPSON
MARINE CONSULTANT
AUCKLAND

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By Captain C.B.Thompson, Marine Consultant.

It had long been a source of surprise to those concerned with ships and cargoes who do not have an intimate understanding of the shipping industry, that frequently there is no requirement for marine surveyors to be licensed by any government, quasi-government or even professional body. This applies in many parts of the world, including those involving many of the foremost maritime nations, and the wider public is often even more astounded to find out that there is generally no qualification requirement before surveyors can 'hang out their shingle'.

In many countries, property valuers, land surveyors and others offering their services to the public in a similar manner to marine surveyors have to undergo a course of study, sit exams and demonstrate some degree of competence before they can practice. They generally have a professional association with whom they are registered and which exercises at least some control over their activities. But generally this is not so for the marine surveyor.

Even some attending this conference may find this rather surprising and may well wonder how this situation has prevailed for so long. Perhaps the answer is that many marine surveyors have been seafarers for many years before coming ashore to practice as surveyors. By and large, mariners tend to be reasonably honest and conscientious with the result that not too many of the unsuspecting public have been let down and failed by predatory or even incompetent surveyors. But it can and does occasionally arise.

Of course all this apparent freedom to practice does not mean that in the traditional situation marine surveyors have usually been unqualified. They often have marine qualifications which have a close relation to what they survey but it is a fact that there has not been widely available any study course to prepare them specially for their new role as surveyors.

Now however, the generally strong trend of the past decade towards greater professionalism is having an impact upon the marine surveying profession too. A need has arisen for more specialisation as ships have become more sophisticated and cargoes more varied. This has seen a need for surveyors to be better prepared for their role in a maritime world which is everyday becoming more complex. Furthermore there has probably never been a time when the shipping and insurance industries have had to rely more heavily upon the competence of surveyors and their reports.

The Surveyor's role

Surveyor, experts in their particular field, are usually required in any specific situation, to use appropriate expertise to observe, advice, record and report to the party appointing them. Their reports may sometimes also express opinion based directly upon these observations and may contain recommendations too.

From this it will be seen there is a twofold component of a surveyor's role, namely :

- (a) To apply expertise in a primary discipline
and
- (b) To observe objectively, record and report impartially (with opinion
and recommendations if required)

For the first requirement there has usually been a period of training and frequently also an examination to determine a level of competence. In the latter there will very often be neither training nor examination.

The International Institute of Marine Surveyors

It was initially towards raising standards and then towards correcting this deficiency, the shortcomings of which are often apparent in the early stages of a surveyor's new career, that the London based International Institute of Marine Surveyors (IIMS) was formed during the early 1990s. After a slow start it has developed most satisfactorily and now has a truly international membership of surveyors practising in a wide range of nautical survey fields.

In 1998 the International Institute of Marine Surveyors, the National Sea Training centre and IBC Global Conferences Ltd. came together in the United Kingdom to offer a distance learning course leading to a **Diploma in Marine Surveying**. It proved to be an immediate success and the candidates worldwide doubled in numbers for the second course the following year. The year 2000 is developing in a similar way.

One of the problems arising from the depressed shipping activity of the 1970s and 1980s with its lack of recruitment to the industry is the effect on the number of experienced people now available to become surveyors.

Lloyd's Register of Shipping has, in recent years, taken steps to supplement the number of experienced marine engineers joining the ranks of its surveyors by recruiting university graduates and training them to the requirements of classification surveyors. Some ship

surveyors too have, for many years, come from a university background being qualified naval architects who have gained their practical experience in a shipyard.

The provision of the IIMS Diploma Course is a first and very significant step forward for recent and past entries to the survey field for most of its present members who tend to have a predominately nautical, as distinct from engineering, background at sea. It heralds great opportunities for the future and the beginnings of a huge swing away from the traditional avenue of recruitment and lack of training for marine surveyors.

The close links being forged between the IIMS and its partners with the University of Greenwich and the Greenwich Maritime Institute have resulted in plans for further qualifications at graduate and post-graduate level aimed at recruiting non-seafarers who have the academic ability and interest in learning marine surveying skills.

Marine surveying involves a wide spectrum of marine operations and the present course at diploma level can not expect to provide any great depth of knowledge. It is aimed at giving a broad understanding of the subject. However there are six specialist subjects which appeal to those seeking greater depth in the field of their particular interests in addition to the more general subjects which help to broaden their understanding of the wider surveying role.

The compulsory papers in the award of a Diploma are (all from a surveyor's perspective) :

- The surveyor's client base and the profession's role and management
- An outline of marine surveying practice
- Report writing
- Information technology
- Naval architecture
- An outline of law and insurance
- Accident investigation
- Safety surveys incl. LSA & Fire appliances
- Navigation aids and equipment
- Hull & structural surveys
- The fundamentals of marine engineering surveys

There is then a requirement for the candidate to pass one specialist paper. There are six to choose from and include :

- Non-liquid cargoes and claims for loss or damage
- Liquid cargoes
- Marine engineering surveys
- Small craft

The marine environment
Mobile offshore units

Other developments

The advent of women at sea in merchant ships, largely a product of the last thirty years, has, not surprisingly, seen some qualified female mariners enter the survey profession. There are others too, lacking seagoing experience but sometimes with a background of marine insurance, who have become cargo surveyors and marine loss adjusters.

Other initiatives include those of the Nautical Institute, Lloyd's and the British Association of Cargo Surveyors.

Several years ago the Nautical Institute in London introduced a fairly basic Diploma in Marine Surveying based largely upon the study of its excellent Handbook. It did little more than provide an insight into the surveying profession for seafarers contemplating a move in this direction but it served a useful purpose at the time. It has tended to be surpassed recently by the more intensive IIMS course to which the Nautical Institute has given it general support. The Institute's handbook, however, remains one of the books of recommended reading for the IIMS course.

Quite recently the Controller of Agencies at Lloyds put out a handbook through his Agency Department for a "Certificate of Cargo Surveying Proficiency". Although not requiring lengthy periods of study this course too serves a useful purpose and is intended to assist surveyors appointed by, or operating from, Lloyd's Agencies around the world. It will unquestionably help in raising the standard of their surveys and will give them a better understanding of the cargo surveyor's role and modus operandum.

As has already been indicated in the comments about women joining the survey profession, some cargo surveyors and a number of yacht surveyors too (often engineers and boatbuilders) may come from a different background from that of seafaring. Although master mariners number relatively high amongst the ranks of cargo surveyors there are also specialists with a very different training such as those with expertise in certain commodities (tea, coffee, cocoa etc) or in specialised manufactured goods (computers, steel etc.)

In the United Kingdom many cargo surveyors are members of the British Association of Cargo Surveyors (BACS). This Association is concerned to some extent with the conduct and competence of its members, and entry into this professional body calls for the passing of its examinations which are only available to those wishing to join the Association.

Conclusions

The future of marine surveying has some positive and negative aspects. On the one hand there is likely to be a significant decline in the number of experienced mariners entering the profession but the past few years has seen initiatives which will help to raise surveying standards with specialised training and education. Many future surveyors will be trained especially for the role and will not enter the profession by chance or without a good understanding of its requirements.

It remains to be seen just how widely the International Institute of Marine Surveyors' diploma course becomes recognised but it is off to an excellent start. There are certainly clear indications that many surveyors, and a number of superintendents and owners' representatives, see value in the structured study and the worth of an international qualification in the subject.

At Auckland 7 July 2000

E-mail : shipmaster@clear.net.nz

Tel : 09-521-1204 Fax : 09-521-1648