A maritime service that receives very little recognition from the general public is that body of men known as The Torres Strait Pilotage Service, officially termed The Coast Pilots.

The distance from Cape Moreton, where the Coast Pilots take over, to Goode Island close to Thursday Island is about 1,260 miles, and is the longest stretch of pilotage waters where one pilot only is employed in navigating ships by day as well as by night. A longer pilotage may be found on some of the lakes in the U.S.A., but no comparison can be drawn, as there, relief pilots are engaged and many stops are made to land passengers and cargo, thus relieving the strain on the pilot.

Many years elapsed after Cook, Bligh, Flinders and other navigators pushed their way inside the Barrier Reef (first called the Barrier by Flinders), before steps were taken to ensure the safe navigation of the 1,260 miles of the tortuous channels through the many reefs, shoals, and hidden dangers that constitute what is considered the most dangerous waterway used by shipping; and to beacon at least the Inner Route and make the passage safe.

Our early charts and surveys by Flinders, King, Stanley and Blackwood were shown to be greatly in error for some years after publication, and it was admitted by The Hydrographic Department and Commanders of Naval Survey ships, that the corrections made later were partly due to the enthusiasm and interest displayed by the Masters of the various merchant ships using the Inner Route.

Various names could be mentioned, but probably the best known were Captains Mackensie, of the schooner “Herione,” Longmuir, barque “Rifleman,” and Ashmore, master of the brig “Hibernia.” These men made many trips during the 1830’s and 1840’s, and on arrival back in Sydney forwarded the results of their
observations to the authorities. They also contributed many articles to the Nautical Magazine and thus disseminated their knowledge far and wide.

Captain Mackensie traded to the Far East and was a great advocate for the use of the Inner Route. He was commissioned by the Government on various projects, and he relates that he left Timor on December 29, 1845, with orders to call at Port Essington, Northern Territory, and there found Dr. Leichhardt and party, one of whom had been killed during his sixteen months' trip from Moreton Bay. The party was embarked on the "Herione" and landed safely at Sydney. On the next trip of the "Herione" from Sydney towing the small cutter "Ariel," and in company with the ships "Enchantress" and "Sapphire," she struck a small reef a few miles north of the Percy Isles.

Captain Longmuir met a tragic fate, when, off the coast of Brazil, he was stabbed to death by his German steward Krauss, who for his crime was subsequently executed at Sydney in July 1873.

Captain Ashmore's charts were so highly thought of that ships leaving Sydney in the 1830's depended largely on them for the passage outside the reefs. Ashmore as well as being a shipmaster was a shipowner also, and his name, like many of the early Masters, is perpetuated in one or two of our Northern shoals and reefs. He first arrived in Sydney in 1810 in the brig "Harrington" and made many voyages between India and Australia and his charts were in use for many years not only for the Barrier, but for other Eastern Seas nearer India. After leaving the sea, he became a Marine Surveyor, and acted as Lloyds Agent at Sydney.

During the early 1800's, the principal bulk of traffic using Torres Strait travelled in convoys, most of the trade being between Sydney and the East to India and China, and many troops were also being transferred to India. H.M.S. "Crocodile" left Sydney on July 3, 1830, with eight ships in convoy, the passage to Booby Island, a few miles west of Thursday Island, taking twenty-three days, a very good passage for sailing ships, and despite the fact that several anchorages were made at night.

Opposite the Palm Islands, north of Townsville, a
glance at our present-day charts shows the Slashers Reefs well defined. The name was derived from the H.M. Regiment of the 28th Battalion, or the Slashers, who embarked at Sydney on June 19, 1842, and consisted of 26 officers and 700 men bound for India. This convoy, comprising the "John Brewer" (headquarters of the staff), the "Kelso" and "Arab," proceeded by the Inner Route, and off Cape Bowling Green were joined by the "Hopkinson," but on June 29, at daybreak, all four grounded on a reef off Palm Island, which is a detached reef with various channels between. Each ship took up her position on the several outshoots which are shown on our charts as the "Arab," "John Brewer," "Kelso" and "Hopkinson," and after six days' strenuous effort, they were safely floated and proceeded to Palm Island and made things shipshape to continue the voyage.

I have tabulated nearly 500 wrecks between Cape Moreton and Thursday Island and its surroundings, but when we take into consideration that no lights or beacons were erected until the late 1870's, and that no attempt was made to ensure the safety of lives at sea, it is surprising that more wrecks did not occur.

I have stated that ships travelled by night as well as by day before lights were installed, and this has been disputed at times. I can mention the s.s. "Quetta" which at 10 p.m. on February 28, 1890, struck an uncharted rock off Adolphus Island. There was not a light in that vicinity, yet she had travelled for some hours through dangerous waters before she found Quetta Rock. A barque, "Thales," had struck this rock previously but no notice was taken of the master's report. Pilot Keating, who was taking the "Quetta" through, and whose licence was No. 19, seems to have been rather unlucky, as, on January 9, 1902, the Marine Board of Queensland suspended his certificate when the s.s. "Duke of Devonshire" was wrecked on Hunter's Reef just north of Hannibal Island, on the charge of being asleep at 11 p.m. whilst piloting.

The Ducal Line's demon of ill fortune seemed to be dogging their footsteps as at 4 a.m. on September 12, 1901, the s.s. "Duke of Sutherland" grounded on Lizard Island and, as radio was not in use, it was six days before this mishap was discovered. These
cases should convince anyone that ships had used the Inner Route by night, as at that time the only light installed between Thursday Island and the Lizard Island were two light vessels, one at Piper Island and the other at Channel Rock, off Pipo Island.

The "Corea," of 50 h.p., Pilot Graham and Captain Ussher, grounded on Eel Reef at 10 a.m. in August 1893, but they were both exonerated. Evidence was given that Graham had made over 200 trips as pilot through the Inner Route without accident. It must be remembered that hundreds of ships had traversed this route without accident, and the pilots working under those conditions established the tradition which is still being maintained by the members of the Pilots' Association to-day.

As the Inner Route, during the early days, was not too well surveyed, the passage mostly used was outside the Barrier, and then through one of the many gaps leading to smooth water after what was considered the greater part of the dangerous waters had been negotiated. One of these openings may be seen on our charts, marked Bligh's Boat Journey (erroneously dated by the Hydrographic Department 1780, instead of 1789, the year Bligh entered the Barrier after his famous Bounty Mutiny exploit).

It is surprising how many have erred in thinking that what we to-day call the Great N.E. Channel, or Bligh's Channel, was the channel used by him on that occasion. Several accounts state that he entered by the Great N.E. or Bligh's Channel whereas the N.E. Channel is some hundreds of miles further north. Edwards and Hamilton's book "Loss of The Pandora" and other books perpetuate this error. Just inside Bligh's Boat Journey Passage may be seen a small rock, Restoration Island, which was the first Australian soil he landed on, and which was named by Bligh. The N.E. or Bligh's Channel, much further north, was used by Bligh when he passed through it in the "Providence" accompanied by Portlock in the "Assistant" in 1791.

Bligh's boat journey has always been described as one of the most remarkable feats performed, but this was eclipsed by the escaped convict Bryant, who with his wife and two children, and eight other convicts,
voyaged in a stolen boat from Sydney to Timor in sixty-nine days, and during the first thirty-five days nothing but heavy, continuous rain was experienced. They passed through the Torres Strait a few months before Bligh, but were arrested at Timor and sent back to England for retrial.

The most contentious question at that period was whether Torres Strait or Barrier Reef Passages used by ships trading from Sydney and Melbourne to India and the East were safer, shorter and cheaper than the passage round the south of Australia and Cape Leeuwin, and across the Indian Ocean. Statistics produced by shipowners revealed that the Torres Strait passage held a great advantage over the southern route, but Insurance Companies still insisted that all policies for ships using Torres Strait be endorsed "Warranted not to use Torres Strait." By doing so shipowners were charged a further $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. on all premiums, but, owing to the numerous wrecks taking place, there may have been some justification for this action by the Insurance Companies.

It may not be amiss to here relate just a few of the lesser known wrecks, for sake of our historical records:

I need not mention the "Charles Eaton" or "Stirling Castle" as they have already been dealt with and books published on these wrecks.

In August 1859 the "Sapphire" loaded horses at Gladstone and left that port bound for Calcutta, but on September 23, 1859, she was wrecked on Sir James Hardy Isles (inside of the most used passage at that time, Raine Island Entrance). A cache of provisions had been established at Booby Island for the relief of shipwrecked mariners by Captain Hobson in 1835, and these were stowed in a cave on Booby Island, or as it was then called The Post Office. It had been the habit for ships going either way to leave letters or any later information they had regarding any discovery they might have made, that might be of help to other shipmasters, the letters being collected by other ships and delivered at their destination. After the "Sapphire" struck, the crew took to the boats, but she sank so quickly that there was no time to save stores. After taking stores from Booby Island, they again made
south for Gladstone, the nearest settlement, a call being made at Friday Island for water. Here the natives attacked and killed all in the captain's boat except one man who was picked up by the mate's boat, which managed to escape. Whilst the "Sapphire's" boat was getting to Booby Island, another ship, "Marina," was also wrecked at Raine Island. The master, Captain Jamieson, saved stores for his journey south, as he was of the opinion his ship was a total loss, and he eventually arrived safely at Gladstone.

When the mate's boat of the "Sapphire" arrived back at Sir James Hardy Isles they were astounded to find the "Marina" afloat, and she was boarded and made ready to sail back to Gladstone.

On February 17, 1860, the inhabitants of Gladstone saw what appeared to be a derelict ark appear outside their harbour, and on boarding they were greeted by a crew of exhausted, gaunt men who told how for five long weary months, during which they had grounded three times, they had managed to get the wreck into Gladstone. She was bought by R. Towns and, patched and escorted by the schooner "Tom Tough," she sailed for Sydney, but foundered off Cape Moreton, the crew being rescued by the escorting vessel. The salvors were awarded £600 for their efforts.

The "Thomas King" was wrecked on Cato Reef on April 17, 1859, and the captain with five of the crew landed below Double Island. As their boat was leaking badly it was decided to walk to Moreton Bay, but nearing Caloundra they were attacked by natives. The captain and one of the crew managed to reach Moreton Bay, the bodies of the three victims being later found at Caloundra.

Lieut.-Commander Yule, H.M.S. "Bramble," off Double Island on December 2, 1847, reported that, after tacking off Double Island, he picked up a boat containing the captain, with his wife, mate and seven seamen of the brig "Mary of Liverpool," who had been ten days in the boat. They were in a pitiable state from hunger and exposure, and had the "Bramble" not hove in sight, they probably would have suffered the same fate as the crew of the "Sea Belle," wrecked on Breaksea Spit on March 18, 1857.

Captain Pain of the brig "Spy" reported at Timor
on July 4, 1845, that he had picked up the crew of the "Maid of Athens," which had entered the Barrier south of Raine Island, just south of where the "Ferguson" had been wrecked a short time previous to this. He then called at Sir Everard Home Islands and there found ten of the crew of the "Coringa" packet, wrecked on the isles that now bear her name. Captain Chilcott had left the "Coringa" packet with as many of the crew as his boats could carry, and when the ship began to break up, those left on board constructed a raft and after drifting with a rag of sail these ten survivors of twenty-three who had left on the raft, scrambled ashore on Sir Everard Home Island more dead than alive, one dying the day they were rescued by Captain Pain.

When Captain Pain called at Booby Island, at the Post Office, he found a message from the master of the "Hydrabad" whose ship had been wrecked at the Cumberland Passage on May 25, 1845, and another from Captain Chilcott of the "Coringa" packet lost on May 7, 1845. These messages stated that both masters and survivors had proceeded on to Port Essington, the nearest settlement. Captain Chilcott was a well-known identity in shipping circles during the 1840's and 1850's, his last command being the paddle steamer "Phoenix" and he left her bones on Ipili Reef off Goode Island. The seven passengers and large mail, with Captain Chilcott and crew, were taken on to Batavia by the Danish barque "Cecrops," after a short wait of only four hours.

It will thus be seen that so many wrecks were taking place that the Government had to take notice of the many protests made by the public, and as many transports were hired by the Government for use between Sydney, India and the East they realised that Torres Strait was the cheaper route. The main channels or entrances by the Outer Route were The Great N.E. Channel or Bligh's Channel and the Raine Island Entrance.

On May 27, 1844, Captain Blackwood left Sydney with H.M.S. "Fly" towing the Government tender "Prince George" for the purpose of erecting a tower at Raine Island. He landed a working party of twenty convicts and supervisors, the tower to be of stone,
forty feet high, designed by Mr. Moore, carpenter of
the "Fly," under the supervision of Lieut. Ince after
whom Ince Point, close to Thursday Island, was named.
Timber was obtained from the wrecked "Fredrick," a
few miles to the south. After completion the convicts
were granted a remission of their sentences. This was
the first attempt to provide any help to make entry
through the reef safe for shipping, but it will be seen
that many wrecks were still taking place, as between
1840 and 1850 sixty-four wrecks had occurred, and at
that period the Inner Route had still not been surveyed
to any great extent, and information available to ship­
masters was still very limited, vague and unreliable.

It may be of interest to study the conditions
prevailing about this time regarding ships and laws
pertaining to safety regulations:

In 1868 there was no law compelling ships to
carry anchors.
In 1868 there was no law or power to prevent
overloading.
In 1840 the first Voluntary Examination of
Masters and Mates took place, although it was not
until some years later that these were made comp­
ulsory.

Under the Voluntary Examination, it is interesting
to note that the first Foreign-going, First-class Certifi­
cate was granted to an ancester of Commander Norman
Pixley, M.B.E., V.R.D., R.A.N.R., a vice-president of
this Society. This was granted on November 10, 1845,
to Captain T. W. Pixley, a member of Trinity House,
by the Board of Trade, London. Up to the loss of the
"Titanic" in 1912, no regulations existed for the safety
of passengers or crew on ships of over 10,000 tons, but
after that disaster regulations were then drafted com­
pelling ships of any tonnage to carry sufficient life­
boats to ensure the safety of all passengers and the
crew.

It was not until 1877 that the Board of Trade
allowed Colonial Certificates to be issued, the first
issued in Queensland being:

January 15, 1878: First Foreign-going Certificate as
Master was issued at Brisbane to William A.
Inman. Born Hampshire 1848.
January 30, 1878: First Home Trade Certificate was
issued to Alex. Goodall, born Fifeshire, Scotland, who for many years was employed by the Adelaide S.S. Co. at the Northern Ports, and whose sons and daughter still live in Brisbane.


As late as September 29, 1891, the Marine Board of Queensland was notified from 10 Downing Street that “Holders of Colonial Certificates as Master, Mate and Engineers, who may wish to make use of these certificates in this country (British Isles), must present them as soon as they arrive, to the Superintendent of a Mercantile Office, and have them stamped to show

The first proposal for the establishment of a postal service by steam, via Torres Strait, may be found in Governor Sir George Bowen’s despatches, No. 26 of March 14, and No. 64 of August 15, 1860, forwarded to England. His Excellency returned to the subject in several successive years. In 1865 a Select Committee met on May 22. The Chairman, the Hon. R. G. W. Herbert, reminded them that as early as 1846 a Select Committee of the N.S.W. Legislative Assembly had then met and discussed the same matter. Among the witnesses called were Captain G. P. Heath, Portmaster, Captains Longmuir, J. M. Banks, R. Cairncross, and R. O’Reilly, the latter being Agent for the A.S.N. Co. He had considerable experience between Sydney and India and through Torres Strait. Captain J. M. Banks, late master of the Blackball clipper “Cairngorm,” stated that he had been wrecked in Torres Strait, but no mention of the ship’s name was given. He later took the small, obsolete Government s.s. “Thetis” in 1870 to effect the rescue of the crew of the schooner “Colonist,” which had been wrecked on Elizabeth Reef. In 1916 he was described as “that Ancient of Ancient Mariners.”

Captain J. M. Banks suggested that a lifeboat be securely moored, and a cache of stores placed at this spot, owing to the numerous wrecks taking place there. His suggestion was carried out, but unfortunately a cyclone swept the reef shortly afterwards and the boat and stores were completely lost and were never replaced.

Captain R. Cairncross had been master of the
Blackballer "Queen of the Colonies," a very well known trader to Brisbane. A gravestone was erected at Caloundra to mark the resting-place of a passenger who had died in Moreton Bay. Captain Cairncross later joined the Queensland Harbours and Marine Department, and was responsible for mooring the first lightship at Proudfoot Shoal, West of Thursday Island. He died whilst in charge of this lightship, in 1888.

The writer, in 1918, followed in his footsteps by mooring and dropping the anchor of the first light-vessel at Breaksea Spit, one of four steel light-vessels constructed at Cockatoo Island for the Commonwealth Government at a cost of £30,000 each.

The evidence given at this committee meeting is too long to quote here. Briefly, it may be said that the evidence in favour of the Inner Route induced the Queensland Government to call for tenders for the carriage of mails through Torres Strait. Tenders offered were: "Hero," "Souchays," "Southern Cross," "City of Melbourne," "Eagle" and 'James Patterson." The latter ship's hulk is still visible in Ross Creek, Townsville, being one of the few steamships with screw behind the rudder. The "Souchays" tender was accepted at a rental of £440 per annum—speed 9 knots, net tonnage 436 tons, h.p. 150 and rigged as a three-masted schooner, crew 33, owners Woodville, Jarret and Co., Melbourne. The description of her (by the owners) reads as a palatial liner, equal to the later Queens of modern times. The contract was signed in January 1866. Owners supplied 610 tons of coal and two months' stores and provisions. On April 17, a little over three months, an expenditure of £6,998/8/8 had been incurred. An inquiry showed the "Souchays" was not as gilded as painted.

Wages for crew, including master, officers, engine-room and catering staff, from January 1, 1866, to February 28, 1866, amounted to £829/18/- for the fifty-six days. This would to-day pay the salary of the master and three deck officers for a vessel of the same size. This then was the inauguration of the Torres Strait Postal Service, subsequently followed by contracts between Brisbane, Rockhampton, Mackay, Bowen, Townsville, Cairns and Cooktown, and a contract being entered into with the A.U.S.N. Co. for a
mail and passenger service between Cooktown and the Gulf ports, via Thursday Island. With traffic becoming heavier through Torres Strait, the Government and the Navy, seeing the advantages of the Inner Route, found it necessary to employ pilots, to relieve the masters of ships of the heavy strain of negotiating the long stretch of pilotage waters. The Insurance Companies still being adamant on the question of insurance (and there may have been some justification for the apprehensions of these companies as until the employment of pilots in 1854, no less than fifty-one ships were reported lost on or around the Barrier, with a proportionate loss of lives) therefore ships using the Torres Strait had their insurance policies endorsed "Ships not to use the Torres Strait route." "Warranted not to proceed via Torres Strait."

In the early 1860's a small group of Master Mariners held a meeting to persuade the Insurance Companies to take a more sanguine realisation of what at that time was considered better aids to navigation conducive to the safety of lives and ships. More beacons had been erected, more extensive surveys had been held, and great advances had been made since the days when the most reliable charts were those issued by that keen observer, Captain Ashmore of the merchant brig "Hibernia," who, at the end of many trips, handed in his sketches, plans and notes to the authorities at Sydney. One factor that detracted from more prompt action being taken was the opposition of the shipping companies in Britain and the Southern States, who thought it would not be in their best interests to have shipping diverted through Torres Strait, thus cutting out the ports of Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, etc.

But from that small body of men, which had its inception in 1860, sprang the Joint Select Committee of 1865 which stirred the Queensland Government to inaugurate the first postal service with the s.s. "Souchays," via the northern route instead of around the south coast of Australia.

A very comprehensive survey was carried out by various ships of H.M. Navy, portion of the cost being borne by the Queensland Government. In the late 1880's the Inner Route, being then considered so safe, there seemed no valid reason why it should not be used
in preference to the Outer. The services of some of the men who had traded as masters, principally in vessels trading to the East, were availed of by various local shipping companies. The Insurance Companies had insisted that Japanese ships, of which there were at that time many, must carry British masters only, thus a wealth of experience was gained by various masters so employed. These banded together and formed a Pilots' Association in 1884. Wellbank's and Pugh's Almanacs issued sailing directions for Torres Strait during the eighties and nineties and give the names of the first licences issued. These were Captains James Archer 1, Thos. Chapman 2, John Pebbles 3, T. W. Darke 4, T. Binstead 5, J. Riddel 6, J. Lowry 7, J. Miller 8, Wm. Hannah 9. These were granted in 1884 and were to a certain extent under the direction of the Marine Board of Queensland. The Board, however, found that the pilots were appointing their own members, therefore on May 26, 1884, the Queensland Government, in Clause 3 of the Regulations relating to the Torres Strait pilots, laid down a law that anyone acting as pilot through the Inner Route, without being licensed would be liable to a fine of £20, and Clause 10 read that any pilot licensed who was guilty of misconduct, or accident through neglect, etc., must not accept employment as a pilot whilst under suspension.

It is very easy to frame laws and regulations, but there is usually a loophole in them, and room for evasion. By the end of 1884 twelve licences had been granted, and the organisation entailed so much work for the Queensland Marine Board, apart from disagreements among pilots themselves, re the allotting of turns, that it was decided among the breakaways to form another association on their own, and in 1901 the new association members consisted of the following pilots: Captain J. W. Ussher, D. Reid, J. Michael, F. C. Lea, F. Keating, F. Binstead, R. D. Harvey. These were the initial signatories at the formation of the new association.

Shipping companies claimed the privilege of appointing their own preference pilots, a practice still carried on in British waters by British companies. Jno. Graham was selected by the A.U.S.N. Coy. Only small ships were employed by them, and the selected
pilot lived at Cooktown where he boarded the ships. He left them at Thursday Island and they proceeded to the Gulf ports. On returning to Thursday Island the pilot again boarded and disembarked at his home port, Cooktown.

In connection with these captains, Ussher and Graham, in 1893, when the former was master and the latter was pilot, the "Corea" stranded on Eel Reef when on her way south. The "Corea" was of 606 tons gross, and had the enormous horsepower of eighty. Both master and pilot were exonerated, and evidence was given that Graham had made 200 trips through the reefs without mishap.

Pilots selected by the British India Company were W. B. Hannah, who had been master for many years in the E. & A. Co. He piloted the first B.I. mail s.s. "Merkara" from Thursday Island to Brisbane, arriving there on April 15, 1881. He was buried at Toowong cemetery. Other preference pilots for the B.I. co. were Captains F. Binstead, E. P. Keating, and M. A. Jones. Pugh's Almanac for 1892 gives George Kerr and J. McArthur as licensed to pilot sailing ships through the Great N.E. Channel, and E. L. Brown had a licence to pilot ships from Thursday Island to Moreton Bay. He reared the child survivor from the s.s. "Quetta," wrecked on February 28, 1890, whose parents were unknown and who died only a few years ago in Brisbane.

Captain J. McMaster had a provisional licence for vessels using the Inner Route between Thursday Island and Cooktown. Captain W. A. Inman, living in Brisbane, was licensed for sailing ships only. Inman's Certificate for Foreign-going Master was the first issued in Brisbane.

The late Captain Salt was the last preference pilot engaged by the A.U.S.N. Co. between Cooktown and Thursday Island. Later he was enrolled in the Services, and during the late war had the unenviable experience of featuring in two episodes, first the sinking of the "Anchun," when she was bombed and sunk at Milne Bay, during the time the Japanese tried the invasion of that port; again when piloting the "Centaur," torpedoed off Cape Moreton with heavy loss of life. He
died at, and was buried at, Sydney only a few years ago.

In 1892 the name and address of the secretary of the Pilots' Association was given as R. A. Hervey, Clarence Street, Sydney, but after attempts by various others to place the Association on a firm and business basis which proved unsuccessful, an appeal was made to Commander G. J. Banks to take over the control of their affairs. Commander G. J. Banks must not be confused with another Lieut. Banks, master with the Union S.S. Coy., who was tried at Sydney and Brisbane with evading the pilotage regulations of both States, by using his exemption certificate, and having his name on the register of the "Waikato" at Newcastle on November 14, 1893.

Commander G. J. Banks was a worthy chip of the old block. His father had shown he was endowed with progressive ideas, and his son proved he was a worthy successor, and that he was a tenacious fighter for what he considered a worthy cause. In 1901 he, in a business-like manner, started to lick the whole concern into shape and to wipe out the prejudice the Shipping and Insurance Companies still held. The latter were still insisting that 2½ per cent. surcharge be added to premiums on ships using Torres Strait. He practically, at his own expense, fought tooth and nail for the eradication of what to seamen at that time was considered most unjust and unfair. Many meetings were held with the Shipping and Insurance Companies and his brother, Mr. T. Banks, joined with him. So successful were their efforts in Australia, it was whispered to them, that if personal contact could be made with Lloyds at London good results might accrue.

In 1907 Commander G. J. Banks went to London, saw Lloyds Underwriters and Shipping Companies and he produced sufficient evidence to prove that the Inner Route was quite as safe as any other laneway utilised by shipping. Data produced by him of casualties on the Australian coast (exclusive of the Outer Torres Route) gave a total from 1895-1899 of groundings, etc., as fifty-seven—total via the Inner Route of Torres Straits three, without a single total loss. So convinced were all interests in Britain, that the clause endorsed on ships' policies pertaining to a surcharge of 2½ per cent. on
cargo and ships using the Inner Route was deleted. This was a great victory won solely through sheer pluck, and the determination of Messrs. Banks Bros.

In the early nineties criticism arose in the Press as to whether the Marine Board of Queensland had power to punish any pilot whose licence had been suspended. The “Courier” on January 14, 1902, had an editorial stating that, in the opinion of many, “the suspension of three months imposed on Pilot Keating may mean something or nothing, according to the pleasure of that gentleman, or those who may be disposed to employ him.” Keating, who had piloted the “Quetta” when she was lost on February 28, 1890, with loss of 133 lives, cannot be blamed for that tragedy as the rock she struck was uncharted, although a ship previous to the “Quetta” had reported having struck the same obstruction. However, on January 9, 1902, the Marine Board gave its verdict and suspended his licence for being asleep whilst piloting the s.s. “Duke of Devonshire,” which was wrecked on Hunter’s Reef just north of Hannibal Island at 11 p.m. on December 15, 1901.

As Pilot Keating, whose licence was No. 19, continued to accept employment whilst under suspension, the Press and shipping community brought the matter to the notice of the Board. As some of these pilots had received their Masters’ Certificates in Victoria or New South Wales, and as pilotage was and still is not compulsory, the argument was raised whether the matter was outside the jurisdiction of the Queensland Marine Board, who could not prove a charge against master or pilot, as both could maintain the latter was a passenger.

It was also suggested that the pilots be brought under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. It was some years before Commander G. J. Banks, still fighting hard to have the Pilots’ Association placed on a solid basis, succeeded in persuading the Marine Board to bring in stricter laws to surmount some of the problems they were surrounded with. Subsequently, when Captain Rossiter died from a heart attack at Thursday Island in 1912 (I had been speaking to him shortly before his demise), G. J. Banks donned the gloves once more and entered the arena of the A.U.S.N. Coy.’s preserves and won the final victory of abolishing
their's and the B.I. Coy.'s preference clauses, thus eventually, after years of hard and bitter struggle, getting the sole control for the Association of all pilotage matters and administration of same, and under the benevolent eyes of the Marine Board of Queensland. It must be admitted the men at that period certainly held no sinecure of employment, for although Captain Wm. Collin, under contract with the Queensland Government, had erected beacons in 1874-1875 from thirty miles south of Cooktown to Thursday Island, these marks not being visible at night were of no assistance to the navigator. Up to 1912, when the Commonwealth took over from the State Government, there were only three lights installed between Thursday Island and Cooktown. These were light-vessels at Piper Island, Claremont, and Piron Island. For the pilots who negotiated these unlit waters at night, with few accidents, I have the greatest admiration.