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Seafarers, the mission and the archive: Affective, embodied and sensory traces of sea-mobilities in Melbourne, Australia

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ABSTRACT

The Mission to Seafarers, founded in 1856, is an international organisation that offers support to the seafaring community. Recently, at its mission in Melbourne, Australia, a century's worth of records were discovered, concealed in boxes under its theatre stage. These included annual reports, scrapbooks, diaries, letters, visitors log books, newsletters, artefacts and an array of evocative photographs. Besides providing rich insights into the history of seafaring, of Melbourne as a port city and of the Mission itself, the discovery of this extraordinary resource produced profound non-representational affective, emotional and sensory intensities for those connected with the Mission. Heightened anticipation about the unknown and unexplored stories that might lie within escalated as we worked to catalogue the material. As enticing fragments were uncovered and connections made, this feeling intensified. This paper reveals the affective qualities of the archives and histories of connections and encounters that are so evocatively felt in the Mission. The retrieved archive supplements the already atmospheric space of the ship-themed Mission, a realm replete with eccentric artefacts and eclectic traces, as well as with seafarers and staff. I register this broader affective context here, while also recounting my own sensorial entanglements with the archival material. I conclude by elaborating upon a process through which I became yet more intimately connected to the Mission by contributing to this emotionally saturated archive. This involved retrieving a recently found, long-lost object and returning it to its rightful place amidst great excitement, wonder and a few tears, an object that has subsequently become a symbolically charged element within the Mission's archive.

One Sunday in January 2017, not long after I had arrived in Melbourne from the UK for an extended sabbatical at the University, I wandered around the docklands and along the Birrarung river. As I waited to cross the busy three lane Flinders Street, I saw a low-rise building designed in the Arts and Crafts style, incongruous amidst the surrounding concrete and glass skyscrapers (Fig. 1). Compelled to investigate I walked through the Spanish style courtyard and into a vast room with huge arched windows, a stage, a bar and tables and chairs. I had drifted into the Mission to Seafarers Victoria.

The global Mission to Seafarers was founded in 1856 to meet the needs of seafarers and their families, irrespective of nationality, faith, cultural background or rank. It offers support to the seafaring community through ship visits, social centres and a range of welfare and emergency support services. It has grown to provide port-based welfare services throughout the year in 200 ports across 50 countries. The Victoria Seaman's Mission, as it was then known, was founded in Melbourne in 1857 and has been transformed several times since, moving to its current location in 1917. It continues to play a central role in the life of seafarers who pass through Melbourne.[1]

Intrigued and enthralled by the building and what takes place within it, I was soon spending many days at the Mission, speaking with seafarers, visitors and staff and accompanying volunteers on ship visits and picking up recently arrived seafarers from surrounding ports. Mostly, however, I was poring over documents upstairs in a long room that had been turned into a makeshift archive. It became evident that the Mission is a place of encounters, saturated with traces of people, places and artefacts that told of

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[1] https://missiontoseafarers.com.au/history/.

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0305-7488/

Fig. 1. Mission to Seafarers Victoria. Source: Nicholas Walton-Healey.

changing relationships between ships and the sea, the city and seafarers.

My previous academic research focused on colonial mobilities in the course of which I had consulted established archives and more recently, I had been writing about the traumatic sea journeys of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean.[2] Thus, this research on seafarers, seafaring and maritime journeys, lured me in, resonating with previous work while simultaneously being unfamiliar. And so it was that I embarked on a new research project, to explore the unique space of the seafarers mission that I had stumbled across. My work there reflected an overlap between public histories and historical geographies in that it involved a form of participatory historical research practice 'of working with research "subjects" as collaborators in defining questions, selecting methods, analysing data and disseminating findings'.[3] While some scholars have noted the ethical and professional challenges of working in this way, the time of my arrival at the Mission, detailed below, mediated these tensions.

This paper focuses upon the emotional and sensory resonances of the Mission to Seafarers Victoria, and specifically on the affective qualities of the recently rediscovered historical documents and artefacts that triggered a hubbub of animated engagement in the building and a profoundly personal entanglement with the place and its rich history. For the retrieved archive supplemented the already heady atmospheres of the ship-themed Mission building, a realm replete with eccentric artefacts and eclectic traces, and busy with the comings and goings of seafarers, staff and visitors. Significantly, the affective qualities and historical resonances of the archive were enhanced since they were being sifted through, pored over and catalogued *in situ*. Accordingly, its sensory and affective power is intensified by having been rediscovered and explored in place rather than within national archives and distant collections. As such, multiple emotional landscapes energised and underpinned the affective qualities that emerging from the communal process of archiving *in situ*. As shown below, these included anticipation of what lay within the collection and the hope of connections that could be made between the past and present and between places. Alongside these emotions was the joy of rediscovery but also the fear of losing history.

The paper unfolds as follows. The next section investigates how archives come into being, the forms of conviviality and communication they can produce and what these mean for archival practices. Specifically, it illuminates the potential affective and sensory qualities of archives and how the affordances of the place of the archive reanimate historical material and often resonate with it. These themes are explored in the following three sections that detail the rediscovery of historical documents, photographs and objects in the Mission to Seafarers and the affective qualities they produced. Section three focuses on the discovery itself and the excitement and anticipation this incited. It highlights the context in which the archives were found and the practical considerations of dealing with a mass of material before reflecting on the sensorial pleasures and emotional challenges of bringing the archive into being. Section four provides a deeper understanding of the affective qualities of the archives as those sifting through the material become drawn into the lives of people chronicled within them, making deep emotional connections with seafarers and long dead individuals historically involved in the Mission. The following section shows how these connections and intimacies extend beyond the space of the archive revealing the sensorial resonances of an archive in place. The rediscovered material reverberates within the present-day Mission building, as well as the artefacts, people and activities that circulate within it, thereby extending the spatiality and temporality of the archive. The paper concludes by bringing together these multiple and varied emotional, affective and sensorial affordances by elaborating upon a prolonged episode through which I became intimately connected to the Mission and subsequently contributed to its emotionally saturated atmosphere. This involved retrieving a recently found, long-lost object and returning it to the Mission, an artefact that has now become a symbolically charged element within the Mission's archive.

The affective qualities of archives

This paper seeks to foreground how the archives in which I worked at Melbourne's Mission to Seafarers were profoundly productive of powerful atmospheric, emotional and sensory experiences. This work generated deep affective engagements with the stories, people and objects within the archive and intensified my relationships with the workers and visitors at the site, as well as forging emotional connections with places beyond the Mission.

This might seem surprising since because, as Haydn Lorimer writes, archives are often represented as 'stifled, rendered as passive, reduced to no more than a storage space'.[4] Often researchers and academics visit such realms to pore through selective documents in search of evidence that will contribute to their scholarly research. Such depictions suggest a rarefied ambience, systematic procedures, relentless scrutiny, and silent study. While the archive may be conceived as a highly organised system of managing knowledge resources, arranged and used by experts who systematically classify, file and maintain documents in a spatialised ordering, much recent scholarship has engaged with archives in a more critical manner. In Carolyn Steedman's book *Dust* she evocatively suggests that archival remains are encrusted with 'dust', 'the immutable, obdurate set of beliefs about the material world, past and present' that confines and restricts stories but that can also be

[2] T. Edensor and U. Kothari, Consuming colonial imaginaries and forging postcolonial networks: on the road with non-western travellers in the 1950s, *Mobilities* 13, (2018), 702–716; U. Kothari, Between the land and the sea: refugee experiences of the lighthouse as a real and symbolic border, *Borderlands* 19, (2020), 63–87.

[3] R. Pain, Introduction: doing social geographies, in: S. Smith, R. Pain, S.A. Marston, J.P. Jones (Eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Geographies*, London, 2009, 507–515, 512.

[4] H. Lorimer, Caught in the nick of time: archives and fieldwork, in: D. DeLyser, S. Herbert, S. Aitkin, M. Crang, L. McDowell (Eds), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Human Geography*, London, 2009, 248–273, 251.

revelatory.[5] In a similar vein, Carolyn Hamilton's collection *Refiguring the Archive* illuminates the multiple ways in which the past is not only constructed through archival work but also forgotten and concealed.[6] Furthermore, although historians have been slow to 'record their own archival stories' there are now numerous, critical accounts that include discussions about affects, emotions, and embodied responses to archives.[7] Indeed, as I found at the Mission to Seafarers Victoria (MtSV), an archive can be the site of affective enervation, social connections, anticipation and deep sensuality that enfold the researcher into its material and story-filled world.

The archive that captivated me was composed of 'selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there'.[8] Like all archives, its compilation and survival testify to wider social and political processes that reveal particular ways in which different kinds of information is used, evaluated and produced.[9] Despite these origins, archival research proved hugely emotionally engaging, and like earlier forms of knowledge organisation - cabinets of curiosity - archives are apt to 'incite curiosity rather than to characterise things once and for all'.[10] The slow, revelatory process of sharing fragments, piecing stories together and creating thematically arranged files was deeply satisfying and sensuous.

Critically, an archive is a particular kind of place that is enfolded within a larger sense of place. As Ingold contends, a place 'owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there - to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its particular ambience. And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage'.[11] As part of the life of the Mission, the activities, emotions and ideas that emerge from its archive spill out into the building and beyond, resonating with its other activities and spaces. Emphatically then, archives are not placeless. The Mission is one particular affective place that is replete with the forging of multiple connections and entanglements, a 'changeful place', a place that lies between the land and the sea, the ship and the shore and the seafarer and the port city, a nodal point in a journey, a place ceaselessly being reconstituted. As such, a sense of place emerges through the processes, encounters and connections that are fostered here. Placed *in situ*, not removed to public collections, curated and deposited among other archives, the Mission's archives constitute one form of cultural artefact that intermingles with others. And the stories it tells, objects it features and processes it illuminates transcend the limits of the building; these 'can exceed the darkened catacomb and civically administered collection, and be sought out in physical landscapes, or still less likely sorts of locale'.[12] As such, exploring the history of seamobilities through the Mission's archives invokes particular affective and sensorial resonances, uncovering multiple, transcalar encounters and engagements.

The ways in which archival research generates work to produce stories is underlined by Ann Stoler who argues for a move away from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject.[13] Critically, the archive is not an end product but a continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation, of crafting, adding to and recrafting stories. Besides identifying content, form and style, the feel and aesthetics of the documents themselves powerfully shape sensorial engagements with them and how they are interpreted.[14] Accordingly, though archival work is often seen as primarily a sedentary exercise, this has never been the case, for as Lorimer submits, while 'the body is ever present on site, thoughts are restless and nomadic. The great multitude of ideas that spring out from archival materials have a rich inner life, journeying hither and thither'.[15] Antoinette Burton highlights the relationship between archives and those using them, illuminating the generation of an ongoing 'multiplicity of interpretative possibilities' and embodied experiences.[16] She emphasises the importance of telling stories about the provenance and histories of archives, the ways they are used and importantly, how they are experienced by those who use them. Through the generation of stories and ideas, powerful connections with people and places of the past emerge, as they come to be known with greater acuity, are furnished with details, quirks and personalities that bring them to life. As a consequence, and as I will explore in greater detail subsequently, archival work forges powerful imaginary and affective relationships with figures from the past, affiliations that are shared with others in the present.

Similarly, archival objects also become enchanted and loaded with meaning, emotions become entangled with their provenance and fate, for things carry traces of the places they came from, a particular time or event or a certain person. As things are shared or transacted between people, they symbolise social relations and embody connections. Moreover, as Crang notes, things act as prompts that may allow stories to be told, opening up old and new significances in and of things.[17] Yet they also possess affordances, triggering sensory engagements that resonate with historical persons and events. John Harries describes how an encounter with old objects can provoke 'an ecstasy of knowledge felt in the tactile encounter with that which is present to hand and yet, in its presence, reveals an absent other'.[18] Here, 'touch inaugurates a more "proximal" way of knowing which recognises our sensuous being in the world' and its relational connections with long dead others.[19]

Connections and associations are also forged in the present. Archival work is often figured in scholarly accounts as something of a solitary process, taking place in a space designated for reflection on historical material. However, processes of archiving and exploring archives with others can also produce forms of conviviality and social relations. Importantly, 'collaborations and socialities' though largely absent from much discussions, are significant in shaping the practice and experience of archival research.[20] Cameron stresses the imperative to understand 'archives not as self-contained repositories where one quietly gathers the facts on

[5] C. Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Rutgers, 2002, ix.

[6] C. Hamilton, V. Harris, M. Pickover, G. Reid, J. Taylor, and R. Saleh, eds. *Refiguring the Archive*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2002.

[7] T. Ballantyne, Mr Peal's archive: mobility and exchange in histories of empire, in: A. Burton (Ed.) Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History, Durham, NC, 2006, 87–110.

[8] C. Steedman, *Dust*, 3.

[9] M. Ogborn, Archives, in: S. Pile and N. Thrift (Eds) *Patterned Ground*, London, 2004, 240-42.

[10] K. Stewart, Cultural poesis: The generativity of emergent things, in: N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Third Edition, New York, 2005 1027–42, 1041.

[11] T. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, London, 2000, 192.

[12] Lorimer, Caught in the nick of time: archives and fieldwork, 249.

[13] A. Stoler, Colonial archives and the arts of governance, *Archival science* 2 (2002) 87–109.

[14] M.S. Hull, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, California 2012.

[15] Lorimer, Caught in the nick of time: archives and fieldwork, 258.

[16] A. Burton (Ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, Durham NC, 2006, 19.

[17] M. Crang, Envisioning urban histories: Bristol as palimpsest, postcards, and snapshots, *Environment and Planning A* 28 (1996) 429–452.

[18] J. Harries, A stone that feels right in the hand: Tactile memory, the abduction of agency and presence of the past, *Journal of Material Culture* 22 (2017) 110–130, 113.

[19] J. Harries, A stone that feels right in the hand, 113.

[20] P. Ashmore, R. Craggs and H. Neate, Working-with: talking and sorting in personal archives. *Journal of Historical Geography* 38 (2012) 81–89.

individuals but rather as webs of connections and opportunities for dialogue'.[21] Indeed, working together with others and the social intimacies forged disrupt 'the boundaries of collections themselves'.[22] As Steedman contends and as I will exemplify below, sifting through archives can solicit a 'deep satisfaction of finding things', a delight that can be excitedly shared amongst others.[23]

This underlines how archives are suffused with atmospheres that shift from collective absorption to shared enthusiastic discovery and sometimes even fanaticism.[24] Importantly, these ambiences extend beyond the space of the archive, pervading adjoining and distant spaces. This resonates with Pink, Leder Mackley and Moroşanu's proposal that atmospheres should be understood as part of and as emerging from within environments.[25] Atmospheres are produced and sensed by people in everyday practice and are generative of sensory, affective and empathetic forms of engagement. This aligns with Böhme's argument that atmospheres are not 'free floating' but emerge in particular conditions and spaces, amongst specific people and in accordance with especial events.[26] The atmospheres of archives emerge according to particular modes of absorption, discovery and daydreaming in distinctive kinds of places as stories are shared, objects are handled collectively, narrative threads are connected, and mutual anticipations rise and fade.

Becoming an archive: discovery, space-making and anticipation

My arrival at the Mission was serendipitous. For, not long before, almost one hundred years of records had been rediscovered, concealed in boxes under the stage in the Mission's club room where they had lain untouched for decades. These included annual Reports from the 1890s, scrapbooks, diaries, letters, visitors' logbooks, newsletters, small objects and an array of photographs. This cache bestowed an extraordinary resource that provides rich insights into the history of seafaring, of Melbourne as a port city and of the Mission itself. Its appearance produced profound excitement amongst those connected with the Mission, firstly of surprise and disbelief at finding documents previously thought to have been lost or destroyed. Who had arranged for them to be packed up and stored away; when and why was this undertaken? Subsequently, as this trove was slowly investigated and as fragments of stories were unearthed and then meticulously pieced together and catalogued, these feelings intensified, provoking heightened anticipation about the unexplored riches that might lie within.

These documents reappeared at a significant time, as the celebrations for the Mission's centenary loomed. Facing financial constraints, staff were also contemplating how and where they could cut costs, and the reappearance of these materials in the midst of this instability, reinvigorated those who worked there, reminding them of Mission's significant role and history. More strategically, these newly discovered historical resources might be deployed in marketing and their allure mobilised in appealing for financial support. Although previous attempts to construct histories of the Mission had highlighted certain prominent personnel and composed patchy stories, historical knowledge was scanty. As Mission staff randomly delved into boxes bursting with papers, photos and artefacts, it became clear that a more systematic process of sifting and ordering was required in order to piece together more complete, less fragmentary stories. This recognition led to the appointment of a part-time Heritage Curator tasked with cataloguing the collection, assisted by a number of volunteers who came to constitute the heritage team. These volunteers were nearly all women, some of whom were retired, and who had become involved largely due to familial connections to seafaring and the Mission. This gendered space of the archive necessarily influenced what was found and deemed to hold value, although nothing was actually discarded, ultimately influencing the shape and content of the archive.

And so began the process of compiling the material into what was referred to as 'the collection'; an archive in the making. The boxes were relocated from under the stage into a makeshift 'heritage' room set up on the first floor of the Mission building. The team worked in here surrounded by boxes piled high on the floor and on shelves and spread over the long table that stretched across the length of the room (Fig. 2). This room was hardly ideal for housing an archive and afforded its own sensory challenges. As Jay Miller, the Heritage Curator lamented, 'the room … isn't fit for purpose because it's 12° in winter and over 40° in summer, wind and dust comes down the chimney and I had to buy tens of cans of insect spray as the wool carpet was infested with mites and moths – it hadn't been hovered for many years'.[27] In *The Allure of Archives*, Arlette Farge similarly evokes the sensory and physical discomfort of the archive.[28] Despite these inconveniences, as Lorimer writes, dust is 'part of the archive's atmospheric appeal. It bestows upon the research exercise an unmistakable aura'.[29] Satisfaction extended amongst the heritage team as they combatted these conditions and made the room homely as part of an ongoing, affective space-making process.

The team were initially overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand and were concerned that they may not possess the competencies or the time to deal with the sheer abundance of the

Fig. 2. Mission to Seafarers Victoria Heritage Room. Source: author.

[21] L. Cameron, Oral history in the Freud archives: incidents, ethics, and relations, *Historical Geography*, *29*, (2001) 38–44, 39.
[22] Ashmore, Craggs and Neate, Working-with: talking and sorting in personal archives, 81.
[23] C. Steedman, *Dust*, 10.
[24] R. Craggs, H. Geoghegan and H. Neate, Managing Enthusiasm: Between 'Extremist' Volunteers and 'Rational' Professional Practices in Architectural Conservation. *Geoforum*, 74 (2016) 1–8.
[25] S. Pink, K. Leder Mackley and R. Moroşanu, Researching in atmospheres: video and the 'feel' of the mundane, *Visual Communication* 14 351–369, 351.
[26] G. Böhme Atmosphere as the fundamental concept of a new aesthetics, *Thesis Eleven* 36 (1993) 113–126, 122.
[27] Jay Miller personal communication 2020.
[28] A. Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, Yale University Press, 2013.
[29] Lorimer 2009, 248.

rediscovered materials, a chaotic mass crammed into boxes. This abundance confirms, as McGeachan et al. write, that although the archive may appear fragmentary 'and does not contain everything, it can amass rather a lot'.[30] Moreover, while 'the dominant motif for discussing historical methods in geography has been on incompleteness and partiality' this 'belies what often confronts the archivist, an overwhelming volume of source materials'.[31] In the case of the Mission, the archive's unexpected appearance was welcome and so was not, at least initially, characterised as a space of absence but one of delightful abundance.

The team began by 'trawling', reading Annual reports, the Mission's *Ship to Shore* newsletters and huge scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings. They sifted through binders containing photographs, assorted images and small artefacts. The documents had a tactile and sensory quality redolent of their age and aroused by the touch and smell of the material, members of the team often found themselves drifting off, imagining the people, places and events of the past. While tempted to run their bare hands over the paper, to feel it and know it, they were required to don thin, white gloves to avoid tainting the documents and ensure that the already frayed edges suffered no further damage. The often overpowering musty smells could be stifling, yet the window could not be opened for fear of damage to the archival material. These tactile, olfactory and temperature induced sensations were compounded by tired and sore eyes; reading tiny newsprint on faded, creased material was difficult but could not be avoided for fear that if not everything was pored over, an important fragment, a key piece of a story, may never be found.

Besides these sensorial pleasures and challenges, and the distinctive material agencies that afforded both cosiness and discomfort, potent atmospheres of calm and concentration accumulated in the archive room. Far from a space of dispassionate scrutiny, it became a shifting, affective realm of enthralment, care and anticipation. The focused quiescence of the archive room was especially disclosed by its stark contrast with the busy atmospheres of the club room downstairs. Here, there is a hive of noisy activity as seafarers arrive off recently docked ships, chat and socialize, play pool and music, or hurry into the city to shop and sightsee, making the most of their all too short shore leave before being ferried back to their ships. Yet, though not bustling and animated in the same way as the club room, an equally potent atmosphere swirled within the archive.

Work was painstakingly slow, evident in the unhurried cadence of the movements of the heritage team; they carefully removed documents from boxes and set them out on reading stands, put on their white gloves and turned pages gently and deliberately to prevent them coming away from their already fragile and decaying bindings. Their deliberate, methodical movements seemed to reflect the respect towards the stories being unveiled and the leisureliness with which these tales presented themselves. As one volunteer considered, bringing an archive into being cannot be rushed, especially when the stories have lain silent for so long. For another, the search became totally absorbing: 'I was just soaking it all up, it was all consuming'.[32] As they worked their way through the archive, the room would be hushed for long stretches of time, with only the sound of the opening of boxes and the rustle of papers audible.

Anticipation was especially palpable in the archive room. There is no doubt that initially, the discovery of the archive solicited an overwhelming affective disorientation, as Jay articulates: 'when I came across this collection, I was hugely overwhelmed. They seemed to me to be so very raw, I just didn't know where to begin'.[33] Yet as an archivist and historian, her habitual work experience engendered familiar expectations about what might be uncovered through methodical research. Along with the volunteers, she possessed a disposition towards discovery borne of past endeavours that fuelled anticipation about the promise of revelations that inhered in previously unknown and unimagined stories of the Mission, and the characters that moved through the building and shaped its activities. This expectancy pervaded work in the archive room and underscores how rather than simply being a space of mute affective attunement to agencies beyond the researcher, as Edensor insists, atmospheres and affects are profoundly shaped by social practices, past experiences and cultural dispositions.[34] Anticipation was further enhanced by Jay's awareness that in delving into long forgotten and unexplored stories, what was so 'moving and compelling was that I was finding things that no other living being has seen'.[35]

The silence in the archive room prevailed most of the time but it would be intermittently broken by a gasp or a shriek when a new, previously unknown fragment was found and could be connected with another piece rediscovered earlier. Anticipation eventuated in triumphant exclamations when it was fulfilled, soliciting a spreading joy as little nuggets linked up with other fragments within the archive, complementing each other and helping to build a fuller narrative. As Jay recalled,

> When we found things that we could then make sense of together it was great … these were our research victories … I spend so much of my time trying to make connections, to piece together the story. I was making new connections and eliciting new and different interpretations … I love jigsaws – and the MtSV collection like a super large challenging one has required many hours of frustration, patience, determination, concentration, testing of hunches, and great satisfaction on occasion![36]

The successful unearthing of each fragment - 'that moment of understanding (the shocking, sudden seeing of something)' - inspired the volunteers, inciting them to continue with the search.[37] Yet, they also recognised that it is not always possible, or indeed desirable, to build a unilinear narrative out of the remains and fragments found. Instead, they frequently needed to be creative. To make sense of the material required an imaginative, sensory engagement with the pieces. As Jay acknowledges, 'more often than not though it is an imperfect picture of the past. A bare bones outline, with some elements clearer than others'.[38] And so, as the room became silent once more, they quietly sense and imagine the past, those fragmentary, affective qualities conjured by the archive, and make vicarious, imaginative connections with the characters that leap from its pages, as I now explore.

[30] C. McGeachan, I. Forsyth and W. Hasty, Certain subjects? Working with biography and life-writing in historical geography, *Historical Geography* 40 (2012) 169–185, 170.

[31] J. Hodder, On absence and abundance: biography as method in archival research, *Area* 49 (2017) 452–459, 452.

[32] Volunteer archivist personal communication June 2017.

[33] Jay Miller personal communication 2018.

[34] T. Edensor, Illuminated atmospheres: Anticipating and reproducing the flow of affective experience in Blackpool, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30 (2012) 1103–1122.

[35] Jay Miller personal communication 2018.

[36] Jay Miller personal communication 2019.

[37] C. Steedman, After the archive, *Comparative Critical Studies*, 8 (2011) 321–340, 325.

[38] Jay Miller personal communication 2020.

Making affective connections with long dead people

As the process of creating, getting to know and inhabiting the archive progresses, it gradually summons up imaginative landscapes and events, but most profoundly the archivists develop a virtual, intimate relationship with particular historical characters. As Jay reflected, 'I dreamt about the different people I came across in the archives. I couldn't stop thinking about them on my days off.…The memory of these people in the past came back to me through the ether and made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. It is all very emotional'.[39] These affective entanglements solicit a range of encounters with long dead people.

Most pervasively, a sustained engagement with the hardships and pleasures of seafaring produces a vicarious, visceral sense of what early seafarers experienced, the woes, struggles and perils they faced and the adventures they undertook. Rather than dry accounts of dates, voyages and cargoes, archivists become acquainted with the seafarers who sailed from afar. Reminders of their harsh lives echoed through numerous pages in the collection.

All official reports begin with the 'prayer for sailors', newspaper articles highlight the poor treatment of seafarers and letters written by relatives appeal to the Mission to look after those who arrive in Melbourne. In one compelling letter from 1920, a seafarer's mother wrote,

> I think you can hardly realise the comfort it is to their mothers to feel that when the boys go away so far there is someone who is looking out for them and will do their best to save them from the terrible temptations that await young boys in those foreign ports – as there, of course, a mother can do nothing.[40]

Despite their age, such appeals continue to generate empathy and emotion. Sifting through newspapers cuttings and annual reports, the archivists also became acutely aware of the loneliness, boredom and isolation felt by seafarers. Photographs too conjure up the trials of seafarers, with an image from the early 1900s depicting the hard labour of loading and unloading of cargo onto a horse and dray at Australian Wharf (Fig. 3). And, as they encounter present day seafarers in the club room, they are deflated to see how these emotional trials and hard work continue to characterise contemporary seafaring experiences while feeling gratified by the continuing support they receive from the Mission.

The emotional impacts upon archivists of accounts of distress and drudgery, however, are ameliorated by a more positive sense about seafarers' excitement for adventure and a desire to visit new places. Indeed, it becomes evident from letters and diaries in the archives that for many seafarers in the past, going to sea represented a form of freedom. They were literally running away to sea, trying to disentangle themselves from relationships or family demands, to rupture previous connections and forge new ones, or to escape the boredom of a job back home. The excitements of escape and voyage are accompanied by the presence of much humour in the documents, generating a contagious laughter amongst the volunteer archivists. For instance, some seafarers joined ships to avoid arrest after having committed a crime, with some wishing to remain anonymous, as is evident in logbooks where they have signed in with false names, cheekily registering themselves as 'Mr Churchill of 10 Downing St London' or the 'Rt Hon Clement Atlee'.[41]

The heritage team were especially enamoured by what they uncovered about the Ladies Harbour Lights Guild (LHLG) who raised funds for the construction of the Mission building, organised social events and provided support for seafarers. Formed in 1906, this voluntary group served the Mission for over 50 years, arranged picnics and Sunday teas, knitted woollen hats to keep seafarers warm, and collected and distributed literature (Fig. 4). These records strongly chimed with the largely female heritage team's sensibilities, politics and emotions. For instance, Jay said, 'I became so absorbed by the LHLG. As a feminist, I felt it so important to know more about them, to let people know how important their work was to the Mission'.[42] Her own proclivities compelled her desire to make the foundational, though largely invisible, role of these women in the life of the Mission more widely known.

Amongst the archives were a set of 80 small newsletters dating from 1906 to 1939 written by the LHLG and titled *Jottings from our Log* through which the team gained an insight into the key supporters and the roles they played. Each of these four-page narrow leaflets, providing updates on Mission events, begins by 'cordially inviting all sea-going men … to use the Institute for Reading, Smoking and writing, &c.'. The caring role of the LHLG was keenly appreciated by the heritage team as they read about the deep concern that the women had for the wellbeing of seafarers: 'Our regular Guild helpers kept up bright evenings for the men every night of the week … so that all visiting sailors received a hearty

Fig. 3. Loading and unloading cargo onto a horse and dray, Australian Wharf, early 1900s. Source: MtSV collections.

Fig. 4. Ladies Harbour Lights Guild members, 1950–51. Source MtSV collections.

[39] Jay Miller personal communication 2020.
[40] Mission to Seafarers, Annual Report, Melbourne 1920, 11.
[41] Mission to Seafarers, Seafarers visitors log book, Melbourne 1946.
[42] Jay Miller personal communication 2019.

welcome at the Institute'.[43] Their kind preparation of care packages filled with socks, cake and reading material varied over time but according to *Jottings* were always 'much appreciated as presents by the men of the sea … We like to give a good bundle to every ship'.[44] The pamphlets also played an important role in drawing women from Melbourne and beyond into the work of the Mission and they are replete with adverts targeted at female readers. For example,

> You use Tea, Don't You?
> and like it to taste and smell like Tea,
> in fact, to be Tea - real Tea - not to be leaves
> doctored up with artificial scents and other
> adulterations. Then ROBUR is the Tea you
> ought to buy. It is the purest and the nicest.
> Tea procurable.[45]

In detailing their activities and attitudes, these newsletters evoke the practices, sensations and tastes experienced and championed by the women involved in the Guild and their desire not only to entertain and care for seafarers, but to instill in them moral sensibilities. Photographs show the ladies of the Mission at picnics and outings organised for sailors where they are 'suitably entertained' and where 'Football, Cricket and Sports are vigorously promoted' (Fig. 5).[46] From 1932, the LHLG began to organise regular dance evenings for seafarers 'under adequate and careful supervision' and members were repeatedly reminded that 'it is desired that the companionship extended by members to seafarers shall be as full and, as free as possible, without being intimate or embarrassing'.[47] Similar moral guidelines informed the LHLG's careful monitoring about which reading fare was appropriate for seafarers stressing that 'ladies fashion magazines and academic books were not suitable'. As they learned about the work of the LHLG, the team began to appreciate more keenly the oft repeated sentiment that 'It will be a sad day for sailors if the Ladies' Harbour Lights Guild should ever cease to shed its beneficent rays'.[48] Yet, in the largely masculine environment of the Mission, just as the Ladies Harbour Lights Guild in the past had protected and nurtured seafarers, so the female volunteer heritage team continue to perform a protective and caring role in the present.

Fig. 5. Seafarers v the Ladies Harbour Lights Guild cricket match, 1908–1910. Source: MtSV collections.

In reading through the Annual Reports and Jottings, the heritage team developed a particularly deep attachment to one intriguing and independent woman, the remarkable Miss Ethel A. Godfrey, Honorary General secretary of the Ladies Harbour Lights Network from 1906-1930.[49] All became fascinated and slightly in awe of this imposing, confident single woman who grew up in the 19th century but had not led the expected restricted and limited life of middle-class women at the time. Ethel had attended an elite girls' school where, they assumed, she forged many connections and friendships. She mixed in 'polite Melbourne circles', regularly attending fetes, tea parties and 'at homes', had a passion for music and studied in Europe. Though 'Miss Godfrey brought to her role a compassionate and acute awareness of the realities facing merchant seafarers' the team were disappointed to find no evidence that she had aligned herself with the suffrage movement.[50] Yet, in wondering what it must have been like for a genteel woman such as herself to spend time down in the 'wilds' of the central docks on the Yarra, they came to feel an intensified affection for Ethel and were delighted when in early 2019, they discovered a dusty parcel, containing a slightly damaged ceramic memorial plaque to her. They were now satisfied and relieved, the plaque confirming that Ethel had been well recognised in her day, duly respected and acknowledged.

Besides their vicarious relationship with Ethel, the heritage team became enthralled by Ebenezer James, Wesleyan lay preacher and Methodist Chaplain. While they now knew the names of most of the other Mission Chaplains, they were frustrated at not being able to find out who had occupied that position between 1885 and 1901. And then they discovered a photograph of a headstone of Ebenezer James indicating that he had been a Mission Chaplain. Jay captures her delight at this discovery (Fig. 6):

> I was rapt and wanted to hop around the building. It was a loose mounted photo of a headstone that provided our first major clue to what was for me a bit of a mystery period between 1885 and 1901. The picture of the headstone was not labelled, but it seemed to have a detailed inscription and looked fairly impressive with a railing, my magnification showed it was a commissioned headstone by friends *and* Naval officers, in memory of one Ebenezer James'.[51]

Given his extravagant commemoration, the team felt sure that Ebenezer had been highly regarded, yet no one at the Mission had ever heard of him, a critical lacuna since as Jay declares, the 'Early Origins' story of the Mission's history was 'about to be written and set in concrete, *sans* Ebenezer!'[52] They felt compelled to find out more about this enigmatic character.

Uncovering the backstory took several months but joint efforts were rewarded by the discovery of a scrapbook from 1886. Presumed to have been compiled by Ebenezer's family, it contained newspaper cuttings about Ebenezer and his work at the Mission. As they went through the scrapbook, the team assembled a portrait of a well-regarded, competent, and humane chaplain who was

[43] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 54 1919 1–3.
[44] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 4 1906, 1–4, 3.
[45] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 4 1906 4.
[46] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 15 (1909) 1–4, 3.
[47] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 105 (1932) 1–4; Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 107 (1934) 1–4.
[48] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, Jottings 63 (1921) 1–4, 3.
[49] G. Brault and J Miller, The Soprano and the Seafarers: a woman with a Mission 1906–1930, https://missiontoseafarers.com.au/2020/04/02/ethel-godfrey/last accessed 10 July 2020.
[50] G. Brault and J Miller, The Soprano and the Seafarers.
[51] Jay Miller personal communication 2019.
[52] Jay Miller personal communication 2019.

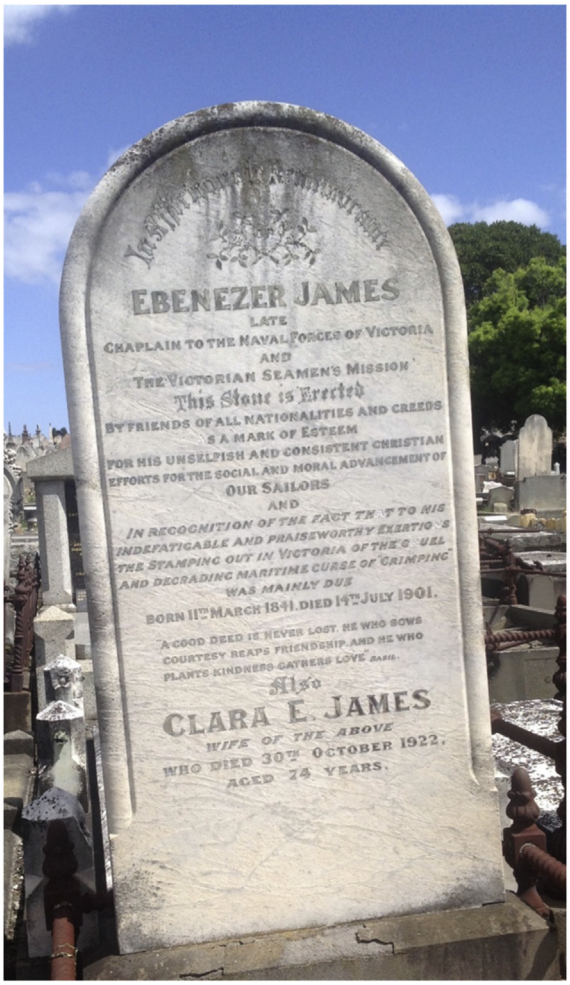

Fig. 6. Headstone of Ebenezer James, Melbourne Cemetery. Source: MtSV collections.

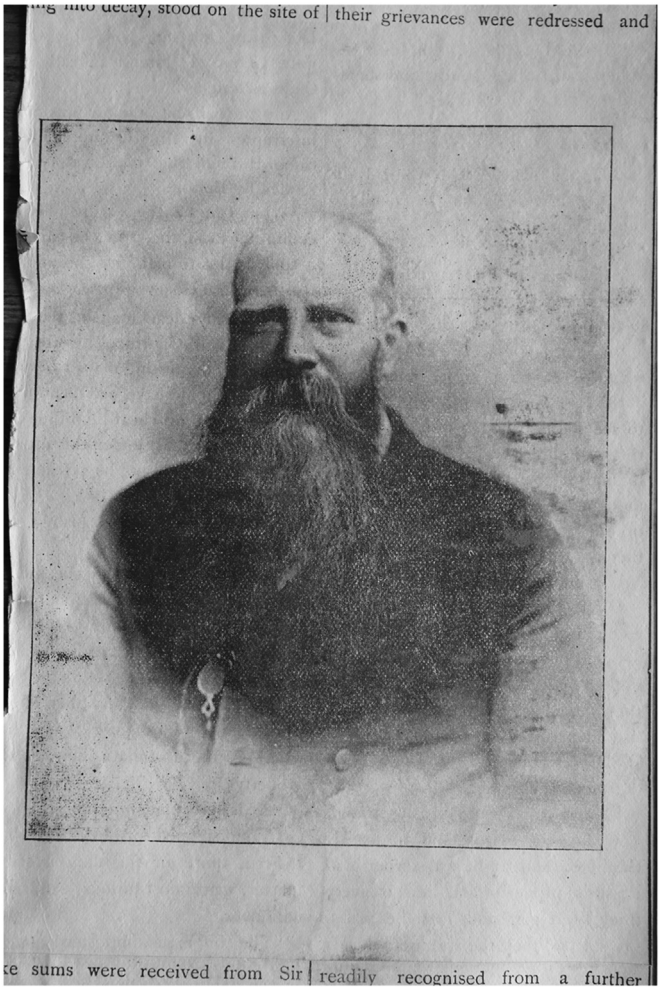

Fig. 7. Ebenezer James. Source: MtSV collections.

instrumental in establishing the tradition of quality entertainment for seafarers at the Mission. It became evident that he had felt deeply about the welfare of seafarers and was committed to ensuring their safety. This included campaigning to reduce their vulnerability to 'crimping' or 'Shanghaiing', the practice whereby local traders at port would dupe seafarers by supplying them with goods and services at highly inflated rates, often after getting them intoxicated.

Although the team learned much about the man through these cuttings, they had yet to see a picture of him and could only imagine his appearance. However, in November 2016 they found a neatly excised page, originally from the scrapbook, that included a profile of Ebenezer from a local newspaper. The title of the 1895 article was *Jack's friend* (Jack Tar, a common English term for a seaman). And there it was: 'the elusive image of Ebenezer James, the man himself revealed. Great was our joy!'[53] They could now visualise him, an imposing figure at six foot seven tall with a long beard (Fig. 7). Jay experienced a great sense of accomplishment: 'very nearly omitted, James was finally included in the history of the Mission, thanks to the scrapbook clippings and thorough genealogical research'.[54]

This breakthrough had been made just before I arrived at the Mission, and still reeling from excitement, Jay suggested I begin my research by going through the 19th Century scrapbook put together by the family of Ebenezer. Each day, I would arrive at the Mission, put on the protective white gloves and return to the scrapbook, now placed at the end of the long table on a stand and cushion waiting for me to pick up from where I had left off the night before. Poring over newspaper cuttings of his activities and aspirations for the Mission, I too became immersed in the life and work of the remarkable Ebenezer, oblivious to everything and everyone in the archive room; engrossed in the 'deep quiet' of the archive.[55] After three weeks, I turned the last page of the scrapbook to find a newspaper cutting from 1901: the obituary of Ebenezer James. I was distraught. So absorbed had I become that it was hard to imagine that he was not a living person. The connection I had forged compelled me to go in search of his grave, underlining the key issue that I now explore, that the archive is not contained and bounded but spatially and temporally extends throughout the Mission and beyond.

Sensorial resonances of an archive in place

The Mission's history is not confined to the documents rediscovered in the boxes under the stage. For the architecture of the building and the interior design, as well as the people and things

[53] J. Miller, *Chaplain Ebenezer James*, https://missiontoseafarers.com.au/2020/05/06/revjames/Last Accessed 10 July 2020.

[54] Jay Miller personal communication 2019.

[55] C. Steedman, After the archive, 324.

that continue to circulate within the Mission reanimate what is found in the archives. The Mission is itself a material archive, an archive in place, replete with many uncurated, unmediated and uncatalogued objects. These objects from the past have a sensual charge that is reanimated by unearthed histories of particular places and events. They affectively resonate with the stories that have come to light in the archive as well as with the contemporary experiences of seafaring and life in the Mission, affectively transcending time and place.

The building, listed on the Victorian Heritage Registry for its outstanding architectural, aesthetic, social and historic significance, includes nautically inspired features that conjure up life at sea, seafaring bodies, the ocean and the ship, travel and adventure. The pulpit in the chapel is fashioned in the form of a poop deck, the meeting room is lined with wooden ship panels and the lamp illuminating the bar takes the form of a lighthouse. Moreover, the repeated actions and rhythms produced by the body at sea were sustained in the Mission. For example, the Norla Dome was originally built as a gymnasium so that seafarers, who might be ashore for up to six weeks, could retain the daily embodied rhythms of ship life and maintain their fitness. The still visible metal rings protruding from the ceiling were used to attach ropes so seafarers could practice climbing a ship's rigging while on shore. Entering the dome thus still solicits a vision of the hardworking bodies of the seafarers. The bar is also suffused with sensational reverberations, the worn front of the counter top that accommodated the leaning bodies of seafarers as they enjoyed convivial respite from the ship and the ocean bears their absent presence.

The work of the heritage team extends beyond their upstairs room and the documents therein. During their breaks, they come down from the first-floor archive room and sit in a realm that is haunted by the people, events and artefacts that they have been reading about. As their quiet, slow and all-consuming work is disrupted by a room brimming with things, people and noise, the stories of the past that have absorbed them linger in the present. For example, after a morning spent reading *Jottings from our Log*, they eat lunch in the club room at tables placed upon what used to be the dance floor. Here, after having been immersed in the archive, they can readily conjure up images of the lively dances organised by the LHLG and the sounds of the three-piece jazz band playing on the stage, wondering what happened to the curtains that, they now know from an old photo, used to hang behind them (Fig. 8). Similarly, during Mission board meetings held in the Celia Little room, named after the aunt of one of the chaplains, they are distracted by the scattered paraphernalia, such as the reed organ tucked away in the corner, that they recently discovered was gifted in 1890 to the Mission by the Bethel Community.

Often, the team would hurry back upstairs, eager to find out more about an object they had noticed or a photograph hanging on the wall. On one occasion, they were particularly motivated to find out more about the two small children, posed in front of the ship's wheel of a sailing vessel, that are represented in a small monochrome photograph. The photo had for long been hanging in a small side room, yet no one knew who these rather melancholy seeming children were and why this photo was on display. Eventually, they discovered a LHLG newsletter of 1918 featuring this same image. The accompanying notes indicated that the two children, Margaret and Ronald, were born at sea in 1915. The shipmaster, Captain Aviss, of the *Barque Inverneill* ship, was their father, and they had travelled together with their mother, Catherine Florence Aviss, through dangerous waters from Europe to Australia. They later matched this information with an entry in the visitor's book of 1918, where they were delighted to see the names of the Aviss family registered and were also able to connect the story to a memorial plaque to Mrs Aviss hanging in the Mission chapel. The photo that had for long been an obscure image now came to life and created an emotional connection woven around an affecting narrative. Similarly, the stories about Miss Godfrey were given additional sensorial impact when the Heritage team found that Ethel's death in 1935 had also been commemorated by a substantial stained-glass window in the chapel, confirming the evidence uncovered in the archive about the high esteem in which she was held.

Fig. 8. The Mission dance jazz band, 1960s. Source: MtSV collections.

Most profoundly, the archivists felt intimately attuned and sensitive to the experiences of other human presences within the Mission: the seafarers. Having read about their lives, work and struggles and as they encounter them at the Mission today, they have become more emotionally attuned to the history of seafaring and the hardships faced by seafarers. They realise that seafarers were once assiduously cared for by the LHLG who better understood the extent of their vulnerabilities and anxieties. Today, the transportation of goods is rapidly changing with growing ship-size, mechanisation and containerisation. Consequently, ships require fewer crew, seafarers spend extended periods of time at sea and opportunities for shore leave are significantly reduced. Piracy, shipwreck and abandonment are amongst the problems merchant seafarers face. Separated from their friends and families for many months, with little access to communications at sea and with limited opportunities for shore leave, they also experience loneliness and isolation. While working lengthy shifts to ensure the safety of the ship and to deliver to a tight port schedule is part of life at sea, it often leads to fatigue and exhaustion. Mental health problems, including depression and stress are also key areas of concern. The archivists are saddened by the realisation that these problems persist and that the seafarers they meet in the club room are heirs to a long history of emotional deprivation.

As they sift through the cache upstairs and encounter present-day seafarers in the club room downstairs, the archivists are reminded of the cosmopolitanism of maritime trade, seafaring and the Mission. Yet, the demographic of seafarers has significantly changed over time. Seafarers who registered in the old visitors' books were almost exclusively white, primarily from England, Scotland and Ireland, and other places in Australia. Today, however, very few British or Australian seafarers travel to and from Melbourne; instead they originate from diverse countries including China, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, with a majority journeying from the Philippines. In contemporary seafaring, ships themselves host an accentuated mobile cosmopolitanism: one cargo ship in

port in Melbourne in 2019 had started its journey in Singapore, was built in Poland, registered in Bahamas, has a Greek owner and was leased to a Japanese company. Its crew were from Bulgaria, Ukraine and the Philippines. This increasing racial and ethnic diversity extends and deepens connections between the Mission and other places and has produced a vibrant atmosphere within the Mission as a place in which diverse groups of seafarers gather beyond the confines of their ship. Those working at the Mission have responded to this diversity, enhancing its capacities as an affective place of welcome. Workers and volunteers are increasingly aware of the 'racial discrimination' experienced by seafarers arriving in Melbourne and have worked to counter the racialised stereotypes that characterise some as potential terrorists, fears that have led to difficulties in their being granted shore leave by the port authorities.[56] Yet as is evident from the archives, Mission workers have long played a role in helping seafarers feel at home in the port. Providing a safe, secure and welcoming place has become even more salient as they strive to meet these changing needs. Creating a space of welcome has been enhanced by recruiting a Chinese speaking volunteer, a Fillipino chaplain and a Sri Lankan manager amongst Mission staff. Accordingly, while the archive conjures up the whiteness of the past, the changes in the affective and sensory qualities of the Mission can only be felt by those who both pore over the old documents and inhabit the lively, currently racially and ethnically diverse space.

The Mission also provides a place where connections between ships, the port city of Melbourne and seafarers are forged. Often, it is objects that connect the Mission to other historical moments and the wider world beyond. For example, on the stage in the club room stands a large brass ship's bell from the SS Diomed. The ship had been in service in Australia for 30 years and was gifted to the Mission by the ship's owner, Alfred Holt & Co. underscoring the strong relationship between the Mission and the various companies and agencies that worked on the oceans, as disclosed in the archive. These histories of circulation are also revealed by the more recent tradition whereby arriving seafarers pin a note of their country's currency on the wall above which they place a passport size photo of themselves; indicating 'I was here' (Fig. 9). Once, a young Indian seafarer spotted his uncle's photograph on the board and gained comfort in the knowledge that his relative had also spent time at the Mission and in Melbourne. Comparing the diverse range of currencies with the more limited historical origins of seafarers revealed in the visitors' books in the archive provides further sense of the changing geography and diversity of seafaring. Seen at once, the black and white photos of seafarers unearthed from the archives and the more recent photos of visitors pinned to the wall of the Club room, the mixed demographic of seafarers today becomes acutely evident. The visitor books, money and photos on the wall are more than material manifestations of the past but combine to reflect the intimate and distant connections between seafarers over time, engendering a deeply affective sense of the ongoing but changing processes through which they arrive in Melbourne from distant parts of the world and make their mark on place.

On the windowsill in the main room sits a basket of hand knitted beanie hats next to the sign, 'free to seafarers', providing another indication of how the Mission continues to be spatially and temporally folded into maritime journeys. These beanie gifts resonate sensorially and affectively, connecting present-day voluntary practices in the Mission to the work of the LHLG who established the custom of knitting woollies for seafarers. Primarily gifted to seafarers to keep them warm, the act of making generated

Fig. 9. Seafarers' currencies and photos. Source: author.

further emotional connections between knitters and seafarers. As Elizabeth Zimmermann writes, 'properly practised, knitting soothes the troubled spirit, and it doesn't hurt the untroubled spirit either'.[57] These affective acts of giving and receiving are regularly noted in the *Ship to Shore* Mission newsletter that depict photographs of seafarers 'delighted with their bright new beanies!, objects that 'come as loving gifts'. They indicate how acts of care and kindness have extended over time and display 'tangible evidence of support … that links the giver with the receiver in a very visible way'.[58]

I became fully imbricated, emotionally and sensorially, in the links between the Mission, its design features and the artefacts on display and the material unearthed in the archive, sharing in the collective affective responses of members of the heritage team. This entanglement with the Mission's archive, beyond its material culture, took an especially intense turn in what I now describe in the concluding section.

Conclusion: emotional entanglements with the mission

As shown above, the rediscovered documents, photographs and objects extend beyond their material resonances and reveal the Mission as a place of shifting affective intensities. The interior design, the artefacts and the circulation of people provide a sense of continuous movement between different historical moments. Additionally, sociability and conviviality were forged amongst the heritage team as they carried out their prolonged but deeply affective work within the Mission. The sensations and emotions that were released as the archive came into being and the stories within unfolded and augmented, came together at a particular moment.

Over time, I had become a part of the rhythms and atmospheres of the Mission and its relationship with ships and the sea, the city and seafarers. I shared the anticipation produced by research into the archives that was viscerally transmitted by those who worked there. Like the heritage team, I also become attached to certain characters who came to life in the archives, with seafarers, the women of the Ladies Harbour Lights Guild and Ebenezer James.

This immersion led to my curation of a photographic exhibition, initiated by coming across archival photographs of groups on a picnic on the Melbourne horse race, Cup Day in 1927 and dancing seafarers in the 1930s. I felt that the story of the Mission, its sense of place and history could be evocatively represented by bringing

[56] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, *Ship to Shore*, Summer 2010.

[57] E. Zimmermann, *Knitting without tears*, New York, 2008.

[58] Mission to Seafarers Victoria, *Ship to Shore*, 2006.

together contemporary images with photographs from the archive. The exhibition, displayed in the Norla Dome, did not seek to provide an authoritative history of seafaring or of the Mission. Instead, it sought to capture the multiple encounters that take place within and beyond the Mission in eliciting the affective resonances and the 'sensual immediacy' that the visual can offer.[59] However, I was soon to become even more deeply enmeshed in the material and emotional history invoked by the archive through the receipt and return of a symbolic, long-forgotten historical object. This artefact was the original trowel used in the foundation ceremony for the Mission building in 1916.

In November 2018, the Mission received a Facebook post from Kenny Ross in England, in which he wrote, 'I think I have something that belongs to you'. He wanted to return the object to the Mission but assuming that it might be valuable, he was unsure whether posting it would be adequately safe and instead asked whether he could hand it over in person. And so it was that I was asked if I would be willing to accept the object on behalf of the Mission on my upcoming trip to the UK. Consequently, in May 2019, I travelled to London and arrived at the headquarters of the global Mission to Seafarers, St Michael Paternoster Royal Church, where it had been arranged for me to meet the Mission to Seafarers Secretary General, Rev Andrew Wright, along with Kenny Ross and his partner Gillian. Upon being handed the trowel, it instantly transformed from an abstract idea to a sensuously apprehended, emotionally charged object. Its age was evident in the deeply ingrained dirt and numerous dents that peppered its surface and at 26 cms in length and 10 cms at its widest, it was smaller than I had expected (Fig. 10). While the trademark indicated that the ceremonial object had been made in 1904 by John Round and Sons Ltd in their Sheffield factory, I sought to comprehend how it had come to be in the possession of Kenny and Gillian Ross. After some research, fragments of a story emerged.

In November 1916 Lord Arthur Stanley, the Governor of Victoria, was invited to lay the foundation stone of the new building of the Mission to Seafarers in Melbourne. Falling ill on the day, his wife Margaret Stanley presided over the building's opening as revealed in a newspaper cutting discovered in the archive (Fig. 11) in which there is a photo of her holding the ceremonial trowel. A few tears later, in 1919, Arthur and Margaret Stanley returned to England in 1919, moving into their ancestral estate where Arthur Stanley had been elected a liberal MP for Cheshire in 1906.

Their youngest daughter, Victoria (Tordie) Stanley was born in Melbourne, in 1917. Tordie became an opera singer touring with Entertainments National Service Association during WWII and the Sadler's Wells Opera Company in England.[60] In 1946 she moved with her husband, a Canadian submariner JD 'Jade' Woods, to his hometown, Toronto. She was described as 'a consummate hostess' and a brilliant conversationalist. She was also a humanitarian, 'a passionate advocate of equality who had a lifelong commitment to radical principles'.[61] The more I read about Tordie the more I became drawn to this remarkable, glamorous and inspiring woman. Tordie lived in Toronto until her death in 2007.

Meanwhile, in another part of Toronto lived a Polish Jewish holocaust survivor, Israel Neiman who had moved to Canada after the war to start a new life. A tailor by trade, he also rented out rooms to lodgers. On his death in 2006, his granddaughter, Gillian Ross and her husband Kenny began clearing out his house. On the top shelf of a bookcase they found the commemorative trowel.[62] Gillian's mother, Israel's daughter, suspects that the trowel had been left in the house by a lodger who had to leave hurriedly to avoid paying his gambling debts. How the trowel found its way into the home of Israel Neiman remains a mystery, but the likely link is Tordie.

Kenny Ross made out the words, 'Mission to Seamen', engraved

Fig. 10. Commemorative Trowel, Mission to Seafarers Victoria. Source: author.

Fig. 11. Margaret Stanley laying the MtSV foundation stone, Source: MtSV collections.

[59] N. Mirzoeff, Ghostwriting: working out visual culture, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1 (2002) 239–254, 9.

[60] E. Avebury, 'Tordie' Woods, *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/feb/19/obituaries.mainsection, last accessed 12 August 2020.

[61] E. Avebury, 'Tordie' Woods.

[62] Kenny Ross personal communication 2018.

on the trowel, and sent a photograph to Sue Dight, Chief Manager of the MtSV who recognised it, from the photograph in the archive, as the commemorative trowel used by Margaret Stanley to lay the foundation stone in 1916.

The notion that I was the only living person in Melbourne who had seen, felt, and held it was exhilarating as was my anticipation of the moment when I would hand it over to the Mission. In June 2019, at the launch of the photographic exhibition I had curated, I handed the trowel back to the Mission amidst intense excitement, amazement and a few tears and recounted as much of its history as I had been able to uncover. The atmosphere in the room of over 100 people intensified and at the moment of revelation, when I held the object aloft, there was a loud collective sigh and a surge of emotion. We were standing in the same building whose foundation stone had been laid with this trowel.

The trowel is a highly symbolic object that radiates sensory charisma, having been exchanged between people across geographical and historical distances, a material manifestation of Tony Ballantyne's 'webs of empire'.[63] Now professionally cleaned, it can no longer be held and touched but is encased in a cabinet in the Mission club room alongside a caption explaining its rediscovery and return. The trowel reminds those working in and visiting the Mission of the origins of the building and those involved in marking its foundations. And many also recall their encounters with me, the time I spent there and the emotional event at which the enchanted artefact was handed back to them. A beautiful object of historical importance to the Mission now has another layer of emotion attached to it: mine.

This episode, resonates with Tony Ballantyne's writings on imperial systems, in which he reflects on the relationship between archives, place and mobility. The trowel, the journey it took and the networks it produced is a reminder of the complex 'traffic that operated over great distances within empire'.[64] The story of the trowel and its return further exemplifies the broader issues discussed above that emphatically disclose the affective and emotional potency of the archive. It underlines that the archive is a far from sterile, sober, dispassionate realm; rather, it is an affective place, filled with emotional resonances and sensorial atmospheres. Although a partial story of a much bigger tale, the legend of the trowel is suffused with abundance, resonating with the profuse treasury of the archive, the teeming events, people, processes and stories that lie within. Like the archive, the trowel is intimately connected with, and conjures up other places beyond, and through its journeys has come to summon up characters from the past. As an embodiment of these spatially and temporally extended transactions and connections, the trowel has reanimated the Mission and its history, contributing to an archive continuously in the process of becoming. Its discovery and retrieval was infused with emotion, and my journey to collect and then return it was saturated with anticipation and excitement. While affective and emotional engagements with heritage spaces and archival materials can be ambiguous, and sometimes even hold negative connotations, the moment of the trowel's homecoming generated a hugely joyous atmosphere in the Mission, consolidating my relationship with the Mission staff and volunteers and with seafarers. The trowel continues to contribute to this atmosphere as it sits in its glass cabinet in the club room, sparking daydreams about the founding of the mission, its travels and return.

The team at the Mission carry on exploring the recently discovered materials and continue to be excited by what they have stumbled upon. They are meticulous, ever mindful of their role in bringing the archive into being, of the narratives they are creating from the scraps of stories that lie within and the connections that they are forging between the fragments they unearth. They anticipate the other wonders that may be revealed and the experiences that may emerge. Yet, it is unlikely that they will find anything as profoundly significant as the trowel. While it is only one of many artefacts and stories, it is an intensely sensuous and symbolic object, one that heralds the very foundation of the building in which we all worked.

The intersection of a textual, visual and material archive and the embodied experiences of those who directly and indirectly encounter it are richly illustrated through this exploration of the affective resonances of the Mission to Seafarers' rediscovered cache. Here, representational and non-representational forms are thoroughly melded in the archive, in the place of the Mission and beyond. This paper has underpinned the contention that affective experience is 'a cumulative, and therefore historical, process of interaction between human beings and place' and revealed the multiple ways in which social and cultural contexts influence affective formations.[65] Additionally, affect is clearly not purely non-representational and instead, 'we overlay our perception of the environment with patterns of representation'.[66] The Mission archive facilitates this overlaying of represented and lived space that interact to spark affective responses. This underlines how the stories that emerge from the Mission and its archives 'blur the boundaries between affects generated by representational and nonrepresentational qualities … a melding that further exemplifies the flow of experience' and influences how affect and emotion are expressed.[67] Importantly, the paper also demonstrates the affective power of places. The Mission archives were rediscovered and are being surveyed *in situ*, their stories, impressions and events powerfully resonating with the affective experiences and social practices that currently take place at the same site that they document.

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[63] T. Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past*. Bridget Williams Books, 2012.

[64] Ballantyne 2006, 96.

[65] A. Kobayashi A, V. Preston and A. Murnaghan, Place, affect, and transnationalism through the voices of Hong Kong immigrants to Canada, *Social and Cultural Geography* 12 (2011) 871–888, 873; see also D. Tolia-Kelly, Commentary: affect—an ethnocentric encounter? Exploring the 'universalist' imperative of emotional/affectual geographies, *Area* 38 (2006) 213–217.

[66] G. Böhme, The space of bodily presence and space as a medium of representation in M. Hard, A. Lösch and D Verdicchio *(Eds) Transforming Spaces: The Topological Turn in Technology Studies* 2002, 6; see also S. Pile, Emotions and affect in recent human geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* NS 35 (2010) 5–20.

[67] T. Edensor, Illuminated atmospheres, 1114.