



**AXEL STENROSS MARITIME MUSEUM
26 November 1996**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I rise to commend the State and Federal Governments on their initiative in providing programs to skill the unemployed, especially youth, and I deplore the debt incurred by the previous State Government which has meant that funds for such schemes are restricted. I draw the attention of the House to the Axel Stenross Maritime Museum in Port Lincoln, where the combination of voluntary service with job skill programs has lifted the prospects for many youth.

The museum was named after Axel Stenross, who ran a boat building and boat slip business on the site. It is unique, because the slipway is in working order and is used to slip smaller boats, with the income assisting the operation of the museum. In fact, this service generates about half the museum's income. Slipmaster Ivan Biddell is responsible for slipping small boats at all hours of the day and night, depending on tides. Maurice Henderson is the assistant slipmaster. The museum's officers are Jack McQuillan, Tom Hamilton, Tom Bascombe and John Jukes who, along with Bob Dobbins, Tony Marjason, Bernie Williams, Peter Weber and Sam Gaskell, act as guides for visitors.

Axel Stenross was born at Finby, Finland, in 1895 and began life at sea at the age of 12 as a cook in Baltic traders on the Baltic Sea. Later he did a five-year apprenticeship in boat building, the first two in his father's shipyard in Finland. In 1924 he signed aboard the four-masted barque Olivebank which was owned by Gustaf Erikson of Mariehamn, Finland. When the Olivebank returned to Port Lincoln for a third time in February 1927 Axel decided to pay off and stay. Sailmaker Frank Laakso signed off with Axel.

In 1928 the friends bought the Gulf Docking Slip where they built fishing boats and dinghies as well as doing general boat repairs. In 1940 the town council would not renew Axel's lease because the slipway was said to be upsetting the natural flow of sand between it and the town jetty. At the same time Jack McFarlane, who conducted a small boat building business about a mile away along the North Shore, wanted to sell. The deal that was worked out was approved by council, the State Harbors Board and other interested parties.

Axel and Frank spent most of 1940 moving their equipment, tools, work benches, cradle and camp to the new yard below the entrance to Happy Valley. With the exception of the cradle, all gear was floated to the new site on a raft built by Axel for the purpose and towed by his cabin cruiser Rio Rita. His shack came by raft and was positioned next to the workshop where it still stands. The exact number of boats built by Axel is unknown. Researchers have found reference to 44 boats between about 6.5 and 14 metres in length, and more than 250 dinghies up to 6.5 metres in length. Some of the shipwright tools which Axel brought to Port Lincoln from Finland and which had belonged to his grandfather are in the museum, which also boasts one of the largest and most comprehensive displays of knots and splices in Australia. The almost forgotten skill of splicing can be demonstrated on request.

In 1992 the History Trust of South Australia provided a grant of \$6 000 for a librarian to catalogue the museum's artefacts, a project which was completed with a further grant of \$2 000 in 1995. Both grants were on a two for one basis. Several unemployed youth—Roderick Lugg, Brian Everett, Tim Atkinson, Kirsty Teacle, Troy Eglington, Kirk Sleep, Matt Shipard, Astra Parker and Craig Dobbin—have worked on Government-funded projects at the museum over the past six months. These projects were coordinated by Evelyn Poole, the project officers being Yvonne Freeman and Ralph Glass.

The ketch Hecla, the last wooden ketch working in South Australia, is part of the museum. It has been restored and is supported by a steel cradle built with financial assistance from the Australian Maritime Museum and the Commonwealth Department of the Arts. The wreck of the steam-powered jet propelled lifeboat City of Adelaide is on the museum site. This is believed to be the only surviving relic of only three boats of this kind ever built. The City of Adelaide was declared an historic shipwreck in the late 1970s. The latest addition to the museum is the former tug Nabilla, which recently was brought back from Mount Gambier by Robert Hopping, Philip Roe and John Hopping, with Bob and Margaret Kretschmer assisting with the move. It is regrettable that moves to have a decommissioned Oberon class submarine placed in the museum were unsuccessful.

The Axel Stenross Maritime Museum is a world-class museum providing fascinating glimpses of maritime history beginning with the era of sail, but perhaps that is not surprising in an electorate that has a coastline as long as that of Tasmania.