

SOUNDINGS

October 2013
125 years new

2013 sees the UK Defence Club celebrating its 125th anniversary.



Introduction

A reception was held at the Benaki Museum on Piraeos St in Athens on 18th September, 2013 to celebrate the UK Defence Club's 125th anniversary. An original choice of venue, the Benaki's open-topped inner courtyard was transformed magnificently for the occasion with lounge furniture, soft lighting and a central bar. Guests were treated to an exclusive preview of the photographic exhibition "Hellenic Seas" which was displayed throughout the evening in the exhibition hall.

As night descended the spotlight fell upon Mr. Michael Pateras, the Club Chairman, to give the keynote speech. In excess of 400 guests, among them numerous Club Directors and senior Club Managers, were formally welcomed and told about the early beginnings of the Club as the Newcastle Iron Steamship Freight Demurrage and Defence Association Limited (as it was then known in 1888). Mr Pateras commented "... whatever the date and whatever the name, I am proud to be able to stand here today and say that this Association remains true to its core values.

To the hope of the (eight) founding shipowners, we have added the experience gained from 125 years of serving the needs of our Members."

Mr Pateras also referred to a circular issued by the Club in 1957 which made reference to criticisms that had been made by the English Commercial Court about the expense and delays that occur when submitting cases to arbitration and the impact of having two or three arbitrators considering a case. He commented that whilst these points may have been made 56 years ago they could also be said to be as relevant today. The key features of arbitration are generally thought to be that it aims to be a cost effective and quick system of dispute resolution; a largely consensual process involving judgement by one's peers and disputes being resolved by commercial individuals with shipping experience. The relevance of maritime arbitration and how it may need to adapt to meet the requirements of its users is a subject of key importance to the Board of the Club, and the wider industry, and Mr Pateras encouraged his guests to think carefully about this.

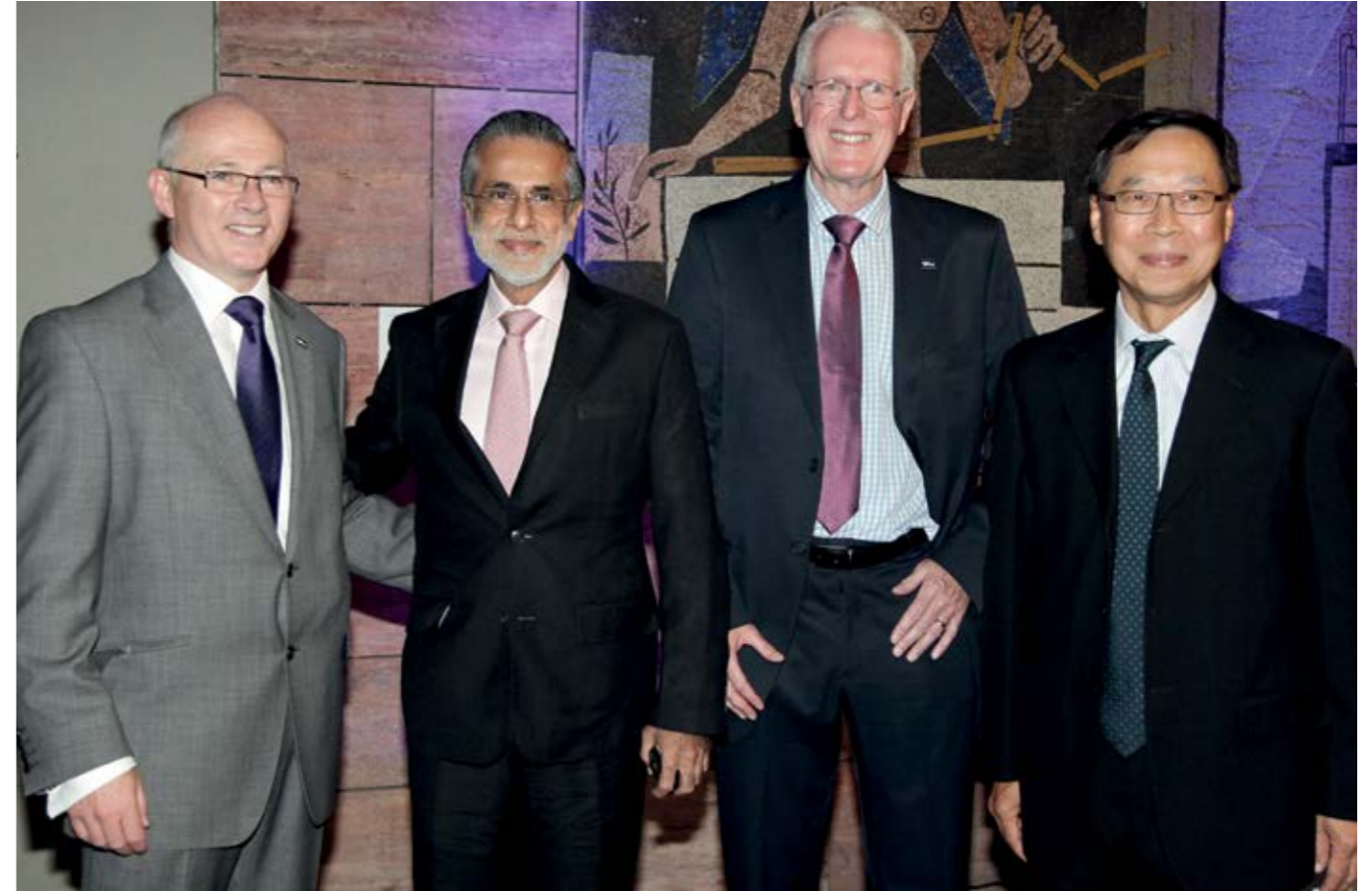
“The question I have for you this evening, and for you to take away, is whether arbitration still meets those aims. When more and more arbitrations are conducted before QCs or senior barristers, rather than commercial people, does that not of itself suggest that arbitration has become a quasi judicial process?”

Michael Pateras
Chairman

He said, “The question I have for you this evening, and for you to take away, is whether arbitration still meets those aims. When more and more arbitrations are conducted before QCs or senior barristers, rather than commercial people, does that not of itself suggest that arbitration has become a quasi judicial process?” Over the coming months the Board and the Managers will be canvassing the views of Members and others about the appropriateness of the arbitration process as a forum for dispute resolution and this will be done through panel debates in Greece, Singapore and London and also through more informal discussions.

Mr Pateras closed by thanking his guests for joining him in celebrating the Club's 125th anniversary. He paid particular thanks to the Members saying that the Club is about its Members and exists because of, and for, its Members and will continue to do so.

The event went on until the small hours of Thursday morning with those departing being presented with a copy of the UKDC's 125th anniversary book. This charts the Club's history through some of the key cases that it has been involved in over the years and through which it has contributed to the development of maritime law in a number of jurisdictions. Copies of the book are available from the Managers on request.



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