

Visit to MSTI – Here be dragons!

➔ It may be an indication of the reputation of the seafarer in Hong Kong society that the Maritime Services Training Institute (MSTI) is sited deep in the New Territories surrounded by two prisons and a psychiatric detention centre, but an intrepid group from the local branch made the journey in early March and enjoyed an excellent visit.

MSTI was established in 1988 on a 16,000 sq. metre site, and is Hong Kong's only DNV/GL certified training provider.

We were met by the manager, Mr CK Mak and senior instructor William Wong, who kindly gave up their Saturday to host our visit. They started by explaining the role of the Vocational Training Council, which oversees a number of specialist training units, and the part which MSTI plays in the organisation. They then described their existing courses and proposed new initiatives and answered numerous questions before conducting a detailed tour of the facilities.

Their 17 teaching staff are responsible for up to 180 full time and 3,200 part time

students. At the moment they have 90 higher diploma students (60 deck and 30 engineering) plus 80 junior GP trainees.

Among the facilities are full-mission bridge simulators, ECDIS simulators, a firefighting training centre, lifeboats and davits, and the front end of a ship with working anchors and windlasses, winches, derricks and hatch covers.

Most courses are taught in English, and MSTI is one of the few education establishments in Hong Kong which can take students who do not speak Cantonese. When recruiting students, the MSTI emphasises career paths to senior ranks and subsequent shore employment, and is careful to highlight potential salaries in the industry. This tactic seems to work, because they have to turn away twice as many applicants as they can accept.

Junior ratings are offered the chance to study for local or river trade officer certificates after they graduate from basic training.

MSTI also serves the industry by offering various STCW short courses, and tailor-made courses for local companies.

At the moment, there are no certificate courses in Hong Kong, but MSTI hopes to offer modular Class 3 courses this year and build up to Class 1 courses by 2017. They also have plans to upgrade their simulators to handle future demand.

In addition, they are working with Warsash in the UK to offer a professional diploma in marine operations, which will be ideal for shore-based youngsters starting a career in shipping or agency work, or for junior officers who are looking for employment ashore in shipping-related companies. The staff hope this evening course will eventually lead to the introduction of a BSc in marine operations management by 2017.

Mr Mak was presented with an NI plaque to thank him and his team for an absorbing and instructive visit, and he was still being bombarded with questions as branch members were herded into the bus to return to the city.

Alan Loynd FNI

