



ISSUE 126

headmark

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*What may the
Sydney wreck
reveal*

King-Hall Naval
Conference
Pictorial

The Soviet
Pacific Fleet:
August 1945

*"This ain't the sea,
it's an arms race!"*

The RAN and Recruit
Seaman Andrews
– Part 2

JOURNAL OF THE
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President's Message

I write this after a very successful Vernon Parker Oration and ANI Dinner. Mike Carlton gave a lively and thought provoking analysis of the relationship between the Navy and the media and some thoughts on what can be done to make that relationship more effective for Navy. We are very grateful to him for accepting the invitation to come and speak as part of his own demanding schedule. The ANI is also very grateful to ADFA for the continuing provision of facilities for the Oration and Dinner.

I hope that you are pleased to see the latest version of *Headmark* before Christmas. Our Editor has made the point that this is a much better time to get an issue 'on the streets' than in January. Please make it part of your holiday reading!

The main activity in early 2008 will be the Sea Power Conference and I urge members to book in soon. The fifth biennial Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Conference will be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre over the period 29-31 January 2008. The conference is being organised by the Sea Power Centre – Australia and will form part of the prestigious Pacific International Maritime and Naval Exposition. The RAN Sea Power Conference has become a significant event in the national and international maritime and security communities for its discussion on topical naval and maritime strategic issues, and

approximately 800 delegates are expected to register for the 2008 conference.

The broad theme of the 2008 Conference is *Australia and its Maritime Interests: At Home and in the Region*. Its aim is to examine maritime interests in the Indo-Pacific region and their impact on the roles and activities of maritime forces.

For more information visit <http://www.seapower2008.com> >

As part of the final session of the Conference, on 31 January 2008, Chris Skinner, the current (2006-2007) Maritime Advancement Australia Award winner will present his findings from his study of 'The Collins Class Submarine – National Benefits and Costs'. Afterwards, the winner of the 2007-2008 Award will be announced and the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Russ Shalders will be asked to present the award to that person.

If you haven't caught up with the Award, please go to the ANI website for details – it is a valuable one (some \$22,000 a year) and is open to ANY area of maritime endeavour which may be of value to Australia.

All best wishes for Christmas and 2008.

JAMES GOLDRICK
Christmas 2007

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photograph:
HMAS Ballarat

Errata: Issue
124 incorrectly
identified, on p26,
HMAS Kaninbla as
HMAS Katoomba.
Many thanks to
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WHAT MAY THE SYDNEY WRECK REVEAL

BY TOM LEWIS

If HMAS Sydney is ever found what will the wreck reveal about her last fight with the raider Kormoran? Will the discovery answer some of the mysteries of Australia's greatest naval loss?

The story, as related by the German survivors, is well known. The light cruiser closed the raider to within fatal range. The *Kormoran*, flying a false flag, struck it, hoisted her true colours, and opened fire, hitting the cruiser with her third salvo in the bridge area. *Sydney* hesitated, and then replied. The two ships fought each other for just under an hour, the *Sydney* taking a torpedo hit, and the *Kormoran* began sinking, her survivors taking to their lifeboats. The *Sydney*, on fire, and having taken a tremendous battering, moved off, probably not under effective control. The ship was never seen again, and there appear to have been no survivors from the cruiser, although a body in a Carley float, presumed from the ship, was later recovered and buried at Christmas Island. These remains have been recovered and are, at the time of writing, being analysed.

There are many controversies associated with the action. Why did the *Sydney* not stand off at the extreme range of *Kormoran* where she would have had the disguised raider under fire from her own more effective weapons? Why did she not deploy her embarked Walrus aircraft for overhead inspection? Some allegations made over the years range from the possible

to the extreme. Did *Kormoran* open fire under the German flag as she should have? Were Japanese forces¹ involved – several weeks before they joined WWII with the Pearl Harbor attacks? Were *Sydney* survivors machine-gunned in the water to prevent their speaking out about “war rules” being broken?

To answer such questions, and also to bring closure to the relatives of the *Sydney* ship's company, there has been much pressure over the decades to find the wreck of the cruiser. But can finding the ship give any answers? Spurred on by pictures of the *Titanic* and other vessels on the ocean floor, many people seem to think the finding of *Sydney*'s remains will answer questions. But is this going to be the case?

WILL AN INSPECTION OF SYDNEY TELL US MUCH ABOUT THE BATTLE?

In the main, we want to examine

¹ See for example, titles such as *Who Sank the Sydney?* and *Somewhere Below*.

the *Sydney* wreck to see if there are any answers to questions surrounding her final moments. Will

there be any clues, as to how the Australian cruiser fought the battle, from the condition of the external hull? *Sydney* engaged in a lengthy fight with a heavily-gunned raider. According² to the *Kormoran*'s gunnery officer, Lieutenant Fritz Skeries, the German initially scored:

5.9" armament hits on the bridge and [gunnery] director tower;
further hits on the bridge and amidships;

² Gill, G. Hermon. *Royal Australian Navy 1939-1942*. Melbourne: Collins, 1957. (454) Gill had access to Detmers' Action Report, which has been much reproduced – for example, see inbetween pages 45-46 of the Proceedings of the 2001 Wreck Location Seminar, where Detmers gives these numbers in his concluding paragraphs.



Top: Sydney after her return from battle in the Mediterranean (RAN)



Kormoran as she would have looked disguised (RAN)

a hit on the *Sydney's* embarked aeroplane;

effective fire from *Kormoran's* anti-aircraft machineguns and 3.7-cm guns against *Sydney's* bridge, torpedo tubes and anti-aircraft batteries

a torpedo strike under *Sydney's* A and B turrets, and then

many more hits fired by a large number of salvos from the *Kormoran's* main guns, causing the separation of a turret from the cruiser and setting the ship on fire.

According to Skeries, *Kormoran*, over the course of the conflict, fired 450 rounds from her main armament, and several hundred from her anti-aircraft batteries. (Sub-Lieutenant Bunjes, also on board the raider, in a rather melodramatic account, suggested "about 600" of the 5.9-inch shells;³ Captain Detmers said "approx. 500 base fuze, 50 nose fuze."⁴) Skeries commented on the final stages of the

³ Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (92)

⁴ Australian Archives. (Melbourne) "Kormoran" - Translation of Diaries. B6121/398682. (4)

55 minute battle⁵ that the Australian ship was being constantly hit by gun fire from the raider.⁶ *Sydney*, crippled, limped off to the south-east, on fire, with "glare" and "flickerings" showing her presence until around midnight, some eight hours after the action commenced.

Will there indeed be much left of the ship at all? Given the number of hits inflicted by *Kormoran*, and the fact that the Australian vessel was on fire for a long time, we can expect a battered, twisted, charred remnant of a once-proud warship. Indeed, out of 450 rounds fired by the main guns, how many can we expect to have hit? Given that *Sydney's* ability to manoeuvre was degrading steadily during the battle, we can expect her to receive an increasing

⁵ If we estimate 500 rounds over 60 minutes this is around eight rounds a minute from a broadside of four guns out of *Kormoran's* six 15 cm/5.9" main armament; that is, each gun firing at least once every 30 seconds. This is well within reality: these weapons were capable of five to seven rounds a minute. See for explanation Naval Weapons. http://www.navweapons.com/Weapons/WNGER_59-45_sk16.htm 13 August 2007.

⁶ Gill. (456)

number of strikes due to inability to avoid fire, for a period, as the battle continued, although this must be offset by the strikes *Kormoran* was receiving herself, thus reducing her firepower, and offset by the opening range.

When initial firing commenced the distance between the two ships was approximately 1,600 yards. This is an incredibly close

distance when one considers that the *Sydney*, when engaged the previous year in combat with two Italian cruisers, the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* and *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*, opened fire at 20, 000 yards, and obtained a hit on one of them within six minutes.⁷ Indeed, a German historian, commenting later on the *Kormoran* engagement, said "no guns could miss at such a range".⁸ So the *Sydney* began receiving terribly destructive "armour-piercing delayed action fuse"⁹ shells which exploded inside the ship.

Throughout the action the range opened, with the German vessel prudently trying to escape. At the final shot it was 6.25 pm, with the range now 11, 000 yards. So how many out of at least 450 shots fired would have hit home? One WWII technical set of naval wargame rules shows that

⁷ See Gill (pp. 188-190)

⁸ Von der Porten, EP. *The German Navy in WWII*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976. (p. 153)

⁹ Interview with the ADC to Captain Detmers carried out by ABC TV Rewind program, in 2004. <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/rewind/txt/s1199881.htm> transcript. 1 July 2007.

WHAT MAY THE SYDNEY WRECK REVEAL

at 2,000 yards once your ship has straddled the target, you were then “on”, and then two thirds of shots fired would hit at such close range. The probability of achieving hits decreases in proportion to the distance. At 12,000 yards the probability of a hit has dropped to 20% or less.¹⁰

All things considered, it seems reasonable to expect as an absolute minimum 100 rounds – or at least 25% – of 5.9” hits from the raider. A more realistic assessment is 150 strikes, and even that is being less than generous. (One survivor wrote as a prisoner of war “We suppose she must’ve got about 400 hits”)¹¹ It might be thought that some initial strikes at least would have been deterred by the armoured magazines and machinery spaces – the sides having 3.5-inch and three-inch plate¹² respectively. However, the design specifications for the Leander-class dictated that the magazines were to be immune to six-inch fire above 10,000 yards, and this requirement was met by the fitting of three-inch plate.¹³ With this sort of firepower, at such a short range, being directed against the light cruiser, the *Sydney* was doomed.

THE FACE OF BATTLE – WHAT WOULD THIS HAVE DONE TO SYDNEY?

What might the *Sydney*’s ordeal have caused the vessel to look like? In WWI, in the battle between the German cruiser *Emden* – coincidentally against the previous *Sydney* – the *Emden* was

hit by “about 100” 6-inch shells over an hour and twenty minutes, and she was “...totally wrecked, with the hull holed at numerous points, its superstructure a blazing shambles...and steering only possible using the screws.”¹⁴ Now, returning to the 1941 engagement, if we add the 3.7-cm fire and the torpedo damage it seems reasonable to presume massive damage, with the *Sydney* barely afloat – it is a tribute to the damage control expertise on board and the ship’s company’s determination that she was still on the surface. (In fact, naval officers in discussion today reflect surprise, that with that much punishment, the *Sydney* was afloat for as long as she was; a testimony to the characteristics of the Modified Leander class.)

CAN THE DAMAGE TELL US MUCH ABOUT THE FIGHT?

Will the *Sydney* be a battered wreck, or will it be relatively undamaged, having engaged, as some of the “Japanese lobby” claim, in a short sharp fight with the *Kormoran*, which it won, only to be sunk by a Japanese torpedo? The cruiser should be smashed extensively on both sides. According to all *Kormoran* survivor accounts of the battle, it was only around a few minutes after battle was commenced that *Sydney* veered hard to port, and fired a salvo of four torpedoes. The course change took her astern of the *Kormoran*, and exposed her starboard side to the raider. In summary, the combat began with both ships side by side, the *Sydney* on



Sydney in action as seen from the deck of the Bartolomeo Colleoni (Author collection)



Above & below: *Emden* smashed into a battered hulk in WWI (Franz Josef)



¹⁰ Gill, LL. *General Quarters*. Fridley: Minn., 1975.

¹¹ Australian Archives (Melbourne) “*Kormoran* (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners”. B6121/164M (7). Note: this item in Australian Archives contains 491 pages, photographed from the original as jpg files. The pages are not numbered; rather the page number referred to here relates to the number ascribed by AA to the photographed page.

¹² Raven, Alan, and John Roberts. *British Cruisers of World War II*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1980. (p. 416)

¹³ Raven and Roberts. *British Cruisers of World War II*. (p. 143)

¹⁴ Coulthard-Clark, Chris. *The Encyclopedia of Australia's Battles*. Melbourne: Allen and Unwin, 1998. (98)

Detmers
post-war
with the
Iron Cross
he won for
the action
(Author
collection)



Kormoran before her conversion to a raider
(Author collection)



A typical 15cm/6"
German naval gun
(Author collection)



Kormoran's starboard, but then during the battle *Sydney*'s starboard side was exposed.¹⁵

So if the wreck is found, if it is damaged massively on both sides, this is significant. If a wreck examination bears this out, then the survivors' accounts are supported. Even small supporting pieces of evidence like this can be important. The examination of the wreck of the *Hood*, for example,

¹⁵ See, for example, Frame (pp. 86-87)

led to two interesting findings. The first was that *Hood* was in a turn to port when she exploded; there had been some doubt for historians as to whether this turn had commenced. The second was that there was some sort of "catastrophic event" at the bow, whereas before the finding it was thought there was one explosion around the waist sections.

Of course, if the *Sydney* is only damaged on one side, or if her damage differs markedly to what may be expected from receiving over a hundred rounds of six-inch shell fire, then the *Kormoran* accounts are suspect. One¹⁶ book, although based on what looks like faked sources, alleges the cruiser ran into a mine. The damage received from such an encounter is radically different than that received from shell fire; in other words if the *Sydney* does not look like a Leander-class cruiser which has been hit by shellfire and a torpedo, then this will cause the history books to be reopened.

DID THE CRUISER ROLL ON HER SUBMERGENCE?

Sydney may have lost significant items of equipment. *Bismarck*, sunk by the Royal Navy in WWII, rolled in her sinking so that all four of her gun turrets fell out of their mounts, but then sank and righted herself so she now lies largely intact on the sea bed. The wreck has been visited many times by deep-sea submarine. Her remains, however, do not tell us much that was not already known from accounts of her last battle. If *Sydney* has lost her guns, this will give even less of a wreck to examine. But if found, the cruiser's guns should be significantly damaged. If they are, it bears out the German raider's account. If not, then there will be cause for further speculation.

¹⁶ Montagu, John A. *The Lost Souls and Ghosts of HMAS Sydney II 1941*. Perth: self-published, 2006.

Some analysis, written by Captain Peter Hore RN, of the bow compartment flooding, caused by the torpedo strike, suggests that counterflooding in the stern may have contributed to a propensity to roll during the action.¹⁷ "The consequence may have been flooding of sufficient spaces...to cause sudden capsizing." Will *Sydney*'s wreck be right side up, and does that tell us anything? Probably it is a "yes" to the first question, and a "no" to the second. Observation of other battles lead to a conclusion that warships generally finally end up on an even keel. Out of twelve wrecks catalogued from the Battle of Savo Island, for example, ten are keel down; one on its side, and one upside down.¹⁸ *Sydney* will probably be right side up, and inspection will be made easier.

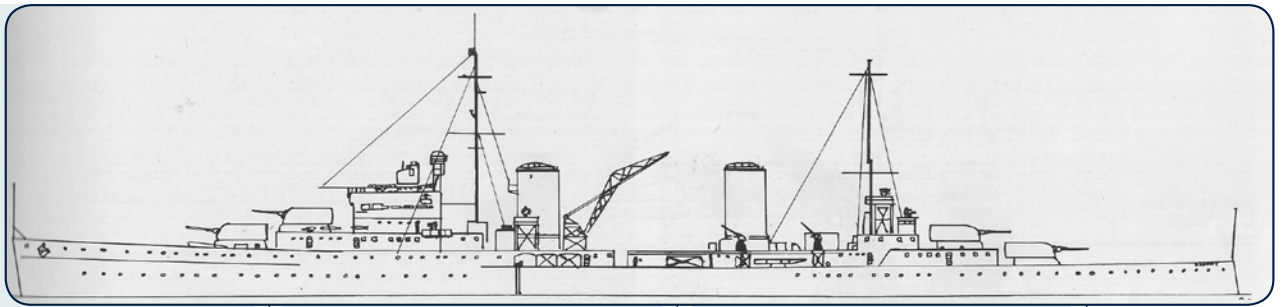
The basic dimensions of the wreck, if she is in one piece, will be a ship of 562 feet, three inches in length, with a beam of 56 ft, 8 inches, or 171.3 metres long x 17.3 wide. Confirming features will include the two funnels and two masts of the Leander-class, and eight guns in twin turrets. The ship's Supermarine Seagull V (Walrus) single-engined aircraft was mounted between the two funnels, but little of it will remain, although the 53-foot (16 metre) launching slide and recovery crane may be located. Leanders also carried four 4-inch single guns and eight torpedo tubes in two quadruple mounts. The condition of all of these will provide further clues as to the veracity of the accounts of the ship's end.

¹⁷ Hore, Captain Peter. (Ed.) *HMAS Sydney II. The cruiser and the controversy in the archives of the United Kingdom*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2001. (261)

¹⁸ See pages 200-201: "The Sunken Battlefield of Iron Bottom Sound", in Ballard, Robert D. *The Lost Ships of Guadalcanal*. Ontario: Madison Books, 1993.

WHAT MAY THE SYDNEY WRECK REVEAL

Sydney outline sans aircraft catapult (R. Gillett)



WILL SIGNS OF TORPEDO STRIKES BE VISIBLE IN THE WRECK OF THE SYDNEY?

Probably the most controversial suggestion is that the cruiser was hit by a torpedo fired by a Japanese submarine. This damage would be additional to that caused by the *Kormoran*'s single strike with such a weapon. Torpedo damage will have caused considerable damage to the hull. Indeed, one submission to the 1999 inquiry into the loss of the ship suggested the torpedo firing resulted in: "...catching *Sydney* completely by surprise and having her bows almost severed between A & B turrets."¹⁹

What would be significant is that if there were signs of, say, five torpedo strikes, as the German raider's Captain Detmers thought only one impacted, although he may have been wrong. Even that one torpedo strike will have had a significant result. Torpedoes cause a massive explosion when they hit their target. It might be possible to see if more than one of these weapons impacted, although waterline hits from the six-inch guns will make it more difficult to analyse.

Significantly for the Japanese lobby though, it will be impossible to tell what sort of torpedo – German or Japanese – impacted the hull. Such WWII weapons simply caused a massive hole affecting several compartments. There is, of course, not going to be traces of

any weapon, which exploded, to be found in the hull. However, it may not be possible to even see whether the hull around the waterline has taken torpedo or six-inch shell impact.

Shipwrecks on an even keel invariably sink into the seabed if it is composed of sand and silt. In observations of over a hundred wrecks by the author, this seems to be the case in general. There are indeed exceptions: the wooden clipper *Star of Russia*, in Vanuatu, sits up to a degree of the upper half of her hull protruding, probably due to its composition of wood. The *SS Yongala*, now a largely empty hull, tilts to starboard on a sandy seabed off Townsville, but she remains proud of the seabed, which probably consists of rock below the sand. The submarine *I-124*, sunk with 80 crew on board outside Darwin, was for decades airtight in her bow compartments, causing the wreck to sit up off the sand to an extent sandy tunnels existed under the hull from one side the other.²⁰ But most ships, especially if they contain heavy cargoes, sink down into the sea floor to at least their Plimsoll line.

Given that the wreck, if it is sitting on an even keel, will have sunk into the seabed, it will be difficult to see if there are torpedo holes below the waterline, especially as along the sides of the hull there will also be much 5.9-inch and 3.7-inch damage. During a speech in 1994 in the NSW Parliament it was suggested that *Kormoran* "survivors estimated that she [*Sydney*] received up

to 50 shell hits on the waterline."²¹

The *Proceedings* of the 2001 Wreck Finding Seminar quoted *Jane's Fighting Ships* of 1943 as concluding the German 15-centimetre gun as "capable of defeating 5 inches of

armour plate at 3,000 yards."²² Given *Sydney*'s lesser plate and much closer impact range, we can expect the hull of the cruiser to be much punctured and damaged, but wreck detectives should be prepared to be unable to see the complete hull.

WILL THERE BE HUMAN REMAINS IN THE SYDNEY?

There is often little left internally in a ship's remains which can enlighten historical analysis. Anything not made of very tough materials does



A Supermarine Seagull V such as the cruiser carried (Author collection)



Sydney - a view aft showing the aircraft position (RAN)

¹⁹ Parliament of Australia. Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. Report No 87. Report on the Loss of *HMAS Sydney*. <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/reports.htm> 1 July 2007. Chapter 4.

²⁰ Lewis, Tom. *Sensuikan I-124*. Darwin: Tall Stories, 1997.

²¹ NSW Parliament. Hansard recordings of 3 March 1994. Speech by Hon. RB Rowland Smith <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/hansArt.nsf/V3Key/LC19940317024> 2 July 2007. (The source of this account was not stated at the time.)

²² Royal Australian Navy Seapower Centre. *HMAS Sydney II Proceedings of the Wreck Location Seminar*. 16 November 2001. (43)

Mike Bass of the Australian firm Cutting Edge Models shows off a superb example of his craft in a fine model of the cruiser (Cutting Edge Models)



A famous photo of the elation shown by some of the ship's company when Sydney triumphed over Bartolomeo Colleoni (RAN)

not survive in a ship wreck. Paper disappears, breaking up, eaten by fish, generally dispersing. Wood

becomes porous and crumbles. Human remains disappear. Bones are corroded by salt water and remains are dispersed by tide and fish. This takes a comparatively short time. An example is the case of *USS Peary*, sunk in battle with 91 people on board on 19 February 1942.

Peary was one of many ships in Darwin Harbour when Japanese forces launched their first attack on Australia. She fought hard but was hit by a small bomb and sank quickly by the stern. Post war her location was sought by the USA's War Graves people. Despite sinking in full view of hundreds of people, quite close to shore, she could not be found. Fourteen years later *HMAS Quadrant* found her by accident, proceeding into Darwin Harbour with her echo

sounder operating. The wreck, located in a deeper than normal part of the harbour, was explored by divers, initially for the purpose of finding human remains. They located only "some human bones, specifically in the wardroom passage and the yeomen's office. Eventually these were recovered and returned to America for burial."²³ So after only 14 years, most of 91 sets of human remains had disappeared. So it likely be with the *Sydney*. There will be no compartment of the ship left unflooded, particularly considering the depth at which the ship lies – the tremendous pressures of the deep ocean around where she sank will ensure that. The ship will be open fully to the sea, and it is almost certain human remains will not be present.

DID KORMORAN EXPLODE?

Kormoran was carrying a cargo of mines, although it seems from examination of the prisoners' statements, which freely admitted the presence of several hundred, that none were ever used for their intended

purpose. Instead they were wired to scuttle the ship.

McDonald, quoting Detmers' account, related that the mines exploded and the *Kormoran* began to sink. The ship's commander stated a "gigantic sheet of flame shot into the air perhaps a 1,000 feet". (McDonald interviewed another survivor who repeated the account.²⁴) Detmers stated in his interrogation diary: "Explosive charge in port forward oil tank... touched off charge, last boat cast off. Mines explode. Ship sinks rapidly stern first."²⁵

It seems implied that the mines were set to explode, relating that the preparations for scuttling took "five and a half hours". Frame concludes²⁶ that at 0100, a "charge" exploded; and 25 minutes later, "the mines exploded". He further quotes Heinz Messerschmidt, a specialist in underwater weapons and Detmers' secretary, as preparing the explosive charges and using the mines

²⁴ McDonald, Glenys, *Seeking the Sydney*. (13)

²⁵ Australian Archives. (Melbourne) "*Kormoran*" - Translation of Diaries. B6121/398682. (8)

²⁶ Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (87)

²³ Lewis, Tom. *Wrecks in Darwin Waters*. Sydney: Turton and Armstrong, 1992. (32)

WHAT MAY THE SYDNEY WRECK REVEAL

on board to blow up the ship.²⁷ Quite a few of the *Kormoran* survivors knew of the mines being used to destroy the vessel. Albert Ruf, an engine room rating, stated mines were carried aft and “probably were the cause of the vessel blowing up.”²⁸ One survivor wrote later in a letter: “At half past 10, we blew up (sic) our ship,”²⁹ although Oskar Marwinski thought the blowing up of the *Kormoran* may have been “accidental.”³⁰ Petty Officer Paul Kobelt said, while being held as a POW, that the crew: “used the mines for blowing up the ship.”³¹

In general, it can be concluded that the raider was destroyed, by explosion, around midnight on the 19th. The raider's Sub-Lieutenant Bunjes, in his account of the action, saw the raider explode shortly after midnight.³² The summary of the account, presented to the Australian War Cabinet on 4 December, stated: “At about 1815H the raider's crew abandoned ship, and at midnight the vessel, which was scuttled, blew up.”³³ This concurs with the summary of the *Kormoran* prisoners, which stated the raider was “blown up around midnight.”³⁴

The final explosion was massive. *Kormoran* survivor Herman Ortmann

related to Glenys McDonald his escape from the burning raider, where he and his fellows in the lifeboat “rowed like mad to get as far away from the *Kormoran* before it blew up thirty minutes later”, and he also described steel raining down all around them.³⁵ It may have been seen from the West Australian coast. McDonald interviewed a reliable witness who, together with her husband, heard and saw “noises and saw smoke in the north-west over Dirk Hartog Island; there were heavy booms, flashes and flares, grey and black smoke and a huge explosion, followed by silence.”³⁶ However, this account, placed by the witnesses' surrounding description of the evening's radio programs, seems inaccurate in time – around 6.30pm.

So will *Kormoran* be in one piece, and therefore be able to become, if found, a beginning search point for the search for the *Sydney*? We might expect the mines to have caused such massive damage that the ship is in so many pieces that she is not a complete wreck any more. It is probably more the case though, that as the mines were not distributed around the ship, that she suffered massive damage in one place.

WILL SYDNEY'S WRECK BE IN ONE PLACE? WAS THERE AN EXPLOSION?

Shipwrecks more often than not do not remain intact. Sometimes they break apart from the stresses engaged in the disproportionate pressures necessitated in compartments being flooded. *Titanic*, for example, although involved in a fairly simple collision – ie: no-one was killed in the initial collision with an iceberg, and she settled slowly over around three hours – finally broke in half during her sinking. Ships involved in battle suffer considerable damage

which can lead to much more break up. *HMS Hood*, for example, was sunk in the Atlantic in WWII, in a brief fight with German naval units *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen*. She caught fire, and shortly afterwards exploded. The wreck, found in 2001 by Blue Water Recoveries, is scattered over three main sites, with “debris fields” nearby.

Even if the cruiser did not break apart in her dive to the bottom of the sea, she may have broken up through explosion. Did *Sydney* explode, and if she did, what are implications for the wreck? Any explosion is going to mean a further scattering of wreck fragments, although depending on the force of the blast, not necessarily to a huge extent. There are a few, but only a few, accounts of *Sydney* blowing up. Frame quotes one *Kormoran* survivor as speaking of “the cruiser exploding as they rowed towards her in the hope of being picked up.”³⁷

Captain Detmers is on record as thinking she blew up. He said:

I had been badly hit and was making preparations to abandon my ship. Before leaving, I looked around and in the darkness, I could see *Sydney* still blazing fiercely. Then just before abandoning ship, I looked for the *Sydney* but she had gone. All was blackness...My opinion is that *Sydney* had been hit by me at a vital spot, and the fire reached the magazine and that she blew up and sank. I do not think there could have been any survivors.³⁸

However, there are few other suggestions. The 1999 Senate Committee of Inquiry examined this theory (see Chapter Six) but concluded: “it is difficult to assess the veracity of such claims when there is no evidence, for example from interrogations, that German survivors actually witnessed

27 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (90)

28 Australian Archives. (Melbourne) “Interrogation of German Survivors ex Raider 41 “*Kormoran*” MP1049/5/2026/19/6. (20)

29 Australian Archives (Melbourne) “*Kormoran*” (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners”. B6121/164M (7)

30 Australian Archives. (Melbourne) “Interrogation of German Survivors ex Raider 41 “*Kormoran*” MP1049/5/2026/19/6. (28)

31 Australian Archives (Melbourne) “*Kormoran*” (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners”. B6121/164M (27)

32 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (92)

33 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (85)

34 Australian Archives (Melbourne) “*Kormoran*” (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners”. B6121/164M (178).

35 McDonald, Glenys, *Seeking the Sydney*. (83-84)

36 McDonald, Glenys, *Seeking the Sydney*. (43)

37 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (103)

38 Australian Archives. (Melbourne) “*Kormoran*” - Translation of Diaries. B6121/398682. (4)

Sydney exploding.” If there had been an explosion, there might be nothing of a wreck to find. A heavily damaged ship, which eventually explodes, might be in such small parts that nothing constitutes the wreck. Items falling to the seabed would eventually sink further into the mud or sand. However, in the light of any evidence, the explosion possibility must be largely discounted, although unverified reports³⁹ continue.

HOW QUICKLY DID THE CRUISER SINK?

Although we can reject an explosion, there seems ample evidence the Australian ship sank quickly. Gill thought: “It is not surprising that there were no survivors, for after the punishment she received from the shells and bullets, and the ravages of fires on board, it is unlikely that much that could float remained.”⁴⁰ Frame quotes *Kormoran* crewman Tymmers, who suggested “the cruiser sank at about 1930”⁴¹ and later Radio Operator Hans Linke, who when in the raider’s boats during the scuttling operations, noted that “the boats rowed towards the cruiser in the hope of being picked up; she was on fire amidships and astern, and disappeared so suddenly she was believed sunk.”⁴²

Captain Dechaineux’s report to the Naval Board concluded “Survivors stated...at about 1900, cruiser was seen still heavily on fire and shortly afterwards disappeared. No violent

explosion was seen or heard.”⁴³ Dechaineux went on to say: “Most evidence seems to show that the cruiser disappeared suddenly and most prisoners believe that she sank before midnight.”⁴⁴

The interrogation of the prisoners summarized: “From darkness until about 230019, the glow of the burning ‘*Sydney*’ could be seen about 14 or 15 miles away to the south eastward, but at a later time this glow disappeared and the raider’s crew believe that she sank.”⁴⁵

Midshipman Otto Joergensen noted of he and his fellow survivors that “when in their boat they saw the fire on *Sydney* suddenly vanish having then been in their lifeboat for 1 hour. They heard no explosion.”⁴⁶

Crewman Willy Tummers saw the cruiser on fire after the action and noted “burning suddenly extinguished...they think she sank about 7.30”⁴⁷ However, the summary of the prisoners’ interrogation concluded “The cruiser was still in sight, distant about 10 km when the first boats left the *Kormoran*, and for some time the glow of the fire could be seen. Before midnight it had disappeared. No explosion was heard.”⁴⁸

Several *Kormoran* survivor interrogation reports noted that the cruiser, after she was hit by the torpedo, was down in the bows, most estimating

by six feet.⁴⁹ This suggests quite heavy flooding in that area. Given evidence that the forward turrets were paralysed, there can be some conclusion that this area was heavily damaged, with damage control equipment in the area perhaps out of action. Captain Hore’s analysis above contributes to thinking that the *Sydney* may have capsized and sunk quickly.

Interestingly, a summary of the accounts above suggest that *Sydney* may not be far from the wreck of the *Kormoran*. She seems to have sunk quite quickly and still within view of the survivors in their lifeboats. Although we have suggested that the wreck of the *Kormoran* may have somewhat disintegrated, finding it be still prove useful in acting as a datum for a *Sydney* search.

WHAT CAN THE WRECK OF THE SYDNEY TELL US?

What may we conclude is the final scene? The German raider *Kormoran* is probably only going to exist as a fragment of a ship. The *Sydney* wreck is going to be in one piece, perhaps with sections missing. She is likely to be on an even keel, but is going to be so battered that her hull exterior will be insufficient to add to the story. This was, after all, a light cruiser which was hit by hundreds of highly explosive shells, and a torpedo; was on fire “from the bridge to the after funnel”⁵⁰ when last seen, and was according to the experienced sailors who were abandoning *Kormoran*, to be hardly functioning. The *Sydney* wreck, if found, is going to be so badly damaged that a survey of it will tell us only a little of her final moments. The ship’s remains are now 66 years old, and upright sections will have corroded and

39 See, for example, “*Tales of the Sea: HMAS Sydney vs. HSK Kormoran*.” 25 February, 2007. <http://lefarkins.blogspot.com/2006/12/tales-of-sea-hmas-sydney-vs-hsk.html> 1 July 2007, and Wikipedia’s entry for *Kormoran*: “*Sydney* was last seen by the crew of *Kormoran* in flames on the horizon followed by some kind of explosion.” 1 July 2007.

40 Gill, G. Hermon. *Royal Australian Navy 1939-1942*. Melbourne: Collins, 1957. (459)

41 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (94)

42 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (103)

43 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (94)

44 Frame, Tom. *HMAS Sydney: Loss and Controversy*. (95)

45 Australian Archives. (Melbourne) “Interrogation of German Survivors ex Raider 41 ‘*Kormoran*’” MP1049/5/2026/19/6. (9-10)

46 Australian Archives (Melbourne) “‘*Kormoran*’ (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners.” B6121/164M (63)

47 Australian Archives (Melbourne) “‘*Kormoran*’ (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners.” B6121/164M (112)

48 Australian Archives (Melbourne) “‘*Kormoran*’ (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners.” B6121/164M (178).

49 See summary page 178. Australian Archives (Melbourne) “‘*Kormoran*’ (Raider No. 41) - ‘G’ German AMC - Interrogation of Prisoners.” B6121/164M.

50 Gill (456)

WHAT MAY THE SYDNEY WRECK REVEAL

probably fallen in on the remainder. It will be heavily covered with marine growth which will have become concretions in many parts. Many sections will not be distinguishable as parts of a ship. Penetration of the wreck is certain to be strictly forbidden, as although human remains are unlikely to be present, the site will be considered a war grave out of respect for the feelings of the families of the 645 members of the Royal Australian Navy lost with the vessel.

However, inspection of the wreck is likely to be possible to the extent that it will somewhat corroborate the *Kormoran* survivors' account – that their ship pounded the Australian cruiser at close range on both sides extremely heavily with six-inch shell fire, a torpedo, and smaller calibre gunfire. Anything different from this will constitute further debate.

Given that this picture is the one most accepted by most historians, and that there has been no variation in it over the years from the *Kormoran* survivors, it is likely that it is the truth. It is unlikely that the wreck of *HMAS Sydney* will contribute any conclusive answers to the mystery of why this cruiser took her ship's company to the grave. But one aspect of examining

the wreck, and finding that it confirms the *Kormoran* survivors' account, is that this will finally end alternative speculation, which in some cases has amounted to derogatory and hurtful suggestions. 🚢

Dr Tom Lewis is the author of five history books and several hundred articles. He specialised in shipwreck research for some years, as a diver and historian, leading to the publication of Wrecks in Darwin Waters, and Sensuikan I-124, the story of the Japanese submarine sunk outside Darwin Harbour in 1942.

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Above: Left to Right: Dr Alexey Muraviev, Peter Overlack and Bob Nicholls



Victoria Kitamov and Richard Jackson share a joke at the dinner



Richard Arundel and Peter Grose - who made the after dinner speech - enjoy coffee at the dinner



Philip Mulcare and
John Bradford

ADFA Midshipmen (left to
right) Kane Mackey, Thomas
Ford, and Lachlan Browne
enjoyed the presentations



The Fifth Biennial King-Hall Naval History Conference

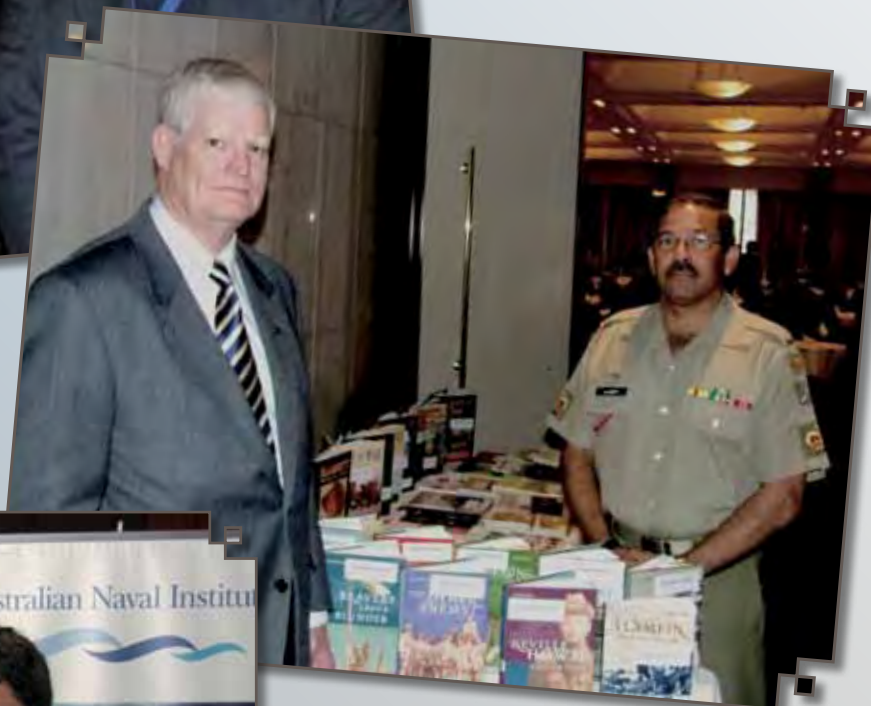
King Hall



Left to right: Norman Friedman, Professor David Horner, Captain Martin Brooker and Commander Steve Dryden



Neil James and Ric Pelvin



Brian Mann, Deputy head of the Army History Unit and WO2 Stan Albert, the Museum Liaison Officer of the Unit



LCDR Nguyen Thang from Vietnam and CMDR Kasem Niamchay from Thailand look through a copy of the Journal



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THE SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET: AUGUST 1945

BY JAMES BUSSERT

Many believe that Allied conflict with Japanese troops ended after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. Few are aware that after 40 years of Japanese occupation, the USSR captured Korea, Sakhalin, Manchuria, and the Kurile Islands during three weeks in August - after the bomb was dropped. The Soviet Pacific Fleet had been inactive in port for all five years of the Great Patriotic War, with a non-aggression pact with Japan since April 1941. This Manchurian campaign was the only combat action of the Soviet Pacific Fleet in World War II.

BACKGROUND

In the 1860 Treaty of Peking, Russia annexed land from the Ussuri River to the Sea of Japan from China. Russia then established Vladivostok, meaning 'Ruler of the East' in Russian, at the southern peninsula, and named the bay after Peter the Great. An 1876 treaty gave all of the Kuriles to Japan and the northern and southern halves of Sakhalin to Russia. This division would stand until the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

The Japanese began the assault on Port Arthur, a major Russian naval base in China's Liaoning Province in February 1904. The Tsar sent 39 warships from the Baltic to relieve the beleaguered port in October 1904 but Port Arthur fell in January 1905. The Russian Fleet did not complete its 18,000 mile trip around Africa until May 1905, and was destroyed in the Battle of Tsushima by a smaller Japanese Fleet, and only one cruiser and two Russian destroyers reached Vladivostok after the sea battle. The post-war 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth split Sakhalin into a Russian northern part and Japanese southern half. Japan also took Manchuria and Liaoning Province from Russia after the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. During the 1930s, the Japanese expanded their control over all of Manchuria.

In 1941 the Soviet Pacific Fleet consisted of two destroyer leaders, 12 destroyers, six escorts, 91 submarines, 38 mine warfare ships, and around 200 miscellaneous patrol boats.¹ Thirty per cent of Soviet Navy bombers and torpedo planes were in the Pacific Fleet, and saw no action.² When Russia signed a non-aggression pact with Japan in April 1941, this effectively removed the prior Pacific combat missions of the Fleet since both Japan and the United States were not at war with the USSR.

The February 1945 Yalta Conference resolved that the USSR should attack Japan. This was again confirmed in the July 1945 Potsdam Conference, in which the Western Allies agreed to allow Russia to regain lost territory if it opened a second front against Japan three months after the defeat of Germany. By August 9, the USSR had received 100 Lend Lease vessels to be used for the amphibious invasion of Hokkaido. The Soviet Pacific Fleet had received 30 LCI landing craft, 18 large and 19 small minesweepers, 10 frigates, 20 subchasers and three repair ships.³ After Germany surrendered on May 8 1945, Japan tried to retain the non-aggression pact with the USSR and was not expecting a Soviet attack on Manchuria.

KWANTUNG FORCES

The Kwantung Army dates from 1915 when Japan first created it in South Manchuria. After several conflicts with China and the USSR in the 1930s, General Yamashita doubled his force to 800,000 troops in March 1941. Japan had 710,000 largely inexperienced men spread out from Korea to Manchuria. The First Front (East Manchuria) had ten rifle divisions and one brigade under General Kita. The 4th Independent Army of three infantry divisions and four



The Russian cruiser *Aurora* was obsolete by the outbreak of WWII. She was therefore stationed in St Petersburg harbour and used as a floating artillery defence and anti-aircraft battery.

brigades covered Northern Manchuria and the Japanese 2nd Air Army was stationed in central Manchuria. Japanese Manchurian defensive forces were deployed in the routes where Soviet troops and tanks were expected. The plains south of the towering and apparently impassable Khingan Mountains were not defended.

On 9 August 1945 the Soviets boldly sent the Sixth Guards Tank Army across the highest peaks and the tank army was unopposed when it reached the Central Manchurian Plain on 13 August.⁴ Initial bitter Japanese troop resistance began to weaken and the Soviet advances pushed the Japanese across the Yalu River into northern Korea. The 17th Front was Korea, which was held by the 34th and 59th Army under General Kozuki with nine infantry divisions. The main source of resupply from Japan for the landlocked Kwantung Army was Seishin and Wonsan ports in Korea and Sakhalin southern ports of Maoka and Otomari.

MANCHUKO RIVER DEFENSE FLEET (RDF)

Aside from a few Japanese ships that were in port at a few harbours, the only dedicated Manchurian naval force was the Manchuko RDF, established by the Japanese puppet government in 1931, mentored and augmented with several vessels by the Japanese Navy in 1932.

THE SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET: AUGUST 1945

Its area of responsibility was the Amur River and Sungari River tributary. The main bases of the Manchuko Flotilla were at Yingkou in the far south, Heiho and Harbin.

Its 1945 Order Of Battle was five squadrons and five gun boat groups. A Japanese Navy 2000 ton destroyer was added in 1937 but was transferred back to Japan in 1943.⁵ Several gunships varying from 184 up to 362 tons with 7 to 12 cm main batteries were identified in Manchuko river duty.⁶

In 1945, the main Manchuko Flotilla assets were four gunboats built by Harima shipyards in Manchuko and Japan. Two vessels were 270 tons and built in 1934 and two were 300 tons and built in 1935. These shallow draft gunboats of 183 foot and 195 foot length were heavily armed. They had twin 120mm dual purpose guns forward and another one aft plus three machine guns in midship towers.⁷ Captured Chinese or Russian gunships were included in the numerous patrol boats, gunboats and patrol craft. After losing six gunboats defending Heiho on 9 August, most of the remaining units mutinied on 15 August. The Manchuko RDF was not a factor in the August 1945 conflict.

JAPANESE NAVY IN THE KWANTUNG AREA

It would be incorrect to refer to the August 1945 Soviet Navy action as a Russo-Japanese naval war as in 1905, because there was no organised Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) naval resistance. The only opposition to Soviet amphibious landings was from shore batteries. Several major Japanese naval bases were captured at Shum Shu Island, Port Arthur, Korea and Sakhalin. There were some Japanese naval craft and auxiliary ships in those ports. Details on specific ships are lacking, but several mine sweepers were present, such as 222 ton minesweepers⁸ due to the massive B-29 mining campaign.

Auxiliary sub-chasers of 135 tons, were listed as captured in Korea and Sakhalin ports.⁹

Known Soviet and Japanese warship losses to American air dropped mines are noted in each campaign. Pre-landing Soviet air attacks were conducted and Japanese ships were destroyed prior to amphibious landings at navy ports. The northern Japanese home island of Hokkaido had few IJN ships afloat in August 1945. The remaining IJN vessels were moved to southern Kyushu ports to oppose the pending American invasion force. These were mainly suicide boats loaded with explosive to hit American Fleet warships. Japanese submarines could have operated at sea covertly, but their mission for several months was largely carrying supplies to beleaguered islands south of Japan, not warship torpedo attacks.

SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET

Two *Kirov* class light cruisers were the largest Pacific Fleet ships. The *Kalinin* was completed in 1943 and *Kaganovich* was finished in June 1944. Apparently they never left pierside in Vladivostok during the August 1945 brief naval combat. Neither did any of the ten Type 7 and Type 4 destroyers or the one destroyer leader. Eight Type 7 destroyers were shipped on the Trans-Siberian railway to the Pacific Fleet Komsomolsk Shipyard and final fitting out was completed at Vladivostok. One Type 4 destroyer, *Voikov* (built in 1913) and Type 5 Stalin class (built in 1915) were also in the Pacific Fleet. The Soviet Navy had numerous escort vessels, gunboats, minelayers and sweepers, and about 50 submarines in the Pacific Fleet. Several submarines were built in Vladivostok, such as L-13 class.¹⁰ Over 100 auxiliaries filled many coastal naval roles.

Few of these ships would participate in this conflict except for American Lend Lease landing craft and miscellaneous minor vessels. The Commander in Chief



Cruiser *Kaganovich* depicted in 1945

of Soviet Troops Far East Vasilovsky, requested ADM Kuznetsov, Commissar for the Soviet Navy be sent urgently to the Far East to coordinate navy and land forces.¹¹ The Pacific main base at Vladivostok provided ships for Korean port attacks. Sovietskaya Gavan base supported Sakhalin landings and the Petropavlovsk base provided marines and vessels for the major Kurile Island amphibious operations.

MANCHURIAN FRONT ATTACK

America dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima 6 August 1945 and a second at Nagasaki on August 8, the same date that Russia informed the Japanese consulate in Moscow that a state of war now existed between them. The Japanese 5th Air Army in Korea (originally established in 1944 Nanking, China) had 600 aircraft. The 1st Air Army HQ in Tokyo since July 1942, had bases in Korea and Kuriles, but all aircraft were withdrawn to defend the home islands in August. Soviet submarines began anti-Japanese merchant ship operations.¹²

The Soviet Pacific Fleet had 78 submarines in August 1945. The only recorded success identified was four Japanese ships sunk by *L-12* and *L-19* on 22 August. The *L-19* was itself sunk by an air-dropped US mine while transiting the La Perouse Strait the following week. On August 9, forces of the Pacific Fleet and Amur Flotilla, Transbaykal, Soviet Far Eastern Front Armies attacked Manchuria. The Russians had to use two full divisions and masses of artillery to defeat the single Japanese 80th Independent Mixed Brigade in Manchuria.

AMUR FLOTILLA OPERATIONS

In August 1945, the Amur Flotilla had a large variety of vessels and shore units suited to river combat. The Amur Flotilla included six monitors, 11 gunboats, four floating batteries, 52 armoured gunboats, 12 minesweepers, one boom-tender, one staff vessel, 50 auxiliaries and over 100 small boats and craft.¹³ Organisationally, RADM Antonov had four brigades and a battalion of River Ships. The Flotilla had three battalions of Gunboats and three battalions and two Detachments of Armored Cruisers.¹⁴ Soviet 385 foot monitors had two 130mm guns which provided fire support for the nearly 200 amphibious landing craft and boats. Besides the boats, there were two Special Recon Naval Detachments and a Fighter Aviation Regiment. Three battalions provided anti-aircraft artillery protection.

The Amur Flotilla began carrying the 15th Army across the river with no Japanese opposition. Amur Flotilla ships entered the Sungari River and attacked heavily fortified Japanese strong points.¹⁵ Monitors supported the attack and capture of Fuyuan, and captured the Tuntsiang defence area on 10 August. The Soviets noted exceptional performance of the monitor *Sun Yatsen*. On 18 August Sun'u fortified city fell with 20,000 Japanese prisoners taken. On August 20 the Amur Flotilla landed a force of the 15th Army in Harbin.¹⁶ The Japanese Sungari Flotilla remnants surrendered to the 1st and 2nd Amur Flotilla Brigades in Harbin, the day after Sansing was taken.¹⁷

The first Soviet Pacific Fleet torpedo attacks on enemy ships in World War II were allegedly by Amur Flotilla monitors and torpedo launches.¹⁸ Russia admitted no Amur Flotilla losses due to the Manchurian 1945 conflict, but two of the eight 385 ton heavy monitors, *Dzerzhinski* and *Kirov*, and two Flotilla gunboats *Krasnos Znamaya* (244 ton)

and *Proletary Buryat* (193 ton), were 'decommissioned for repairs.'¹⁹ Since there was no record of Manchuko Flotilla resistance, the damage must have been from shore artillery.

FIRST FAR EASTERN FRONT ATTACK ON KOREA

The Soviet attack on Korea was coordinated between the 25th Army, Vladivostok Naval Base and various Red Air bases. Pacific Fleet amphibious forces landed at the seaport of Yuki on 11 August. Russia used American Lend Lease landing craft sent to Russian Pacific Fleet for use in the planned attack on Japan. Russians had used small boats and auxiliary craft for all prior amphibious landings during the war against Germany.

A second major landing followed at the port of Rashin (now Najin) on August 12 and patrol boat EK-5 was the communication staff unit.²⁰ Twenty eight 1945 Lend Lease 1430 ton American *Tacoma* class frigates were designated EK 1-28 by the Soviets. Resistance was overcome when the 358th Naval Infantry Battalion was landed on 13 August. The largest Japanese naval base in northern Korea was Seishin and the initial amphibious troops made the three hour trip from Rashin on 13 August. Amphibious landing forces landed at Seishin Naval Base (now Chongjin) on 12-14 August.

The main assault by the 355th Naval Infantry Battalion arrived on 14 August. A frigate and minesweeper provided gun support at the port until the arrival of the 13th Naval Infantry Brigade on 15 August. Seishin did not fall until 16 August. The largest warship in the Seishin landing was the 1916 vintage 3-stack, 1600 ton destroyer *Voikov*. The communication vessel for the Seishin landing was the 2900 ton *Argun*,²¹ which was a 318 foot British merchant ship built in 1923 that had been converted to an auxiliary minelayer by the

USSR, and again converted to a staff communication ship. The ex-American frigate, *EK-2*, was also a communication post for the Seishin landings.²² A third unit, *EK-9*, was also a communication post in landing operations.²³ Two Soviet minesweepers, Lend Lease *Admiral* class units *T-279* and *T-524*, were lost on Aug 14 by mines off Korea, which were the only admitted naval losses.

Emperor Hirohito formally announced that Japan surrendered to the Allies on 14 August and all American forces stopped fighting the next day. That same date, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued General Order Number 1, which included who the Japanese were to surrender to in each area. It stated for Korea, Manchuria, and Sakhalin, surrender to the Far East Soviet Commander in Chief. It did not address the Kurile Islands.²⁴ The Kwantang Army kept fighting furiously and Stalin had plans for much more land to be occupied, including Hokkaido itself.

Wonsan was attacked on 20 August by a frigate, two minesweepers and six torpedo boats supporting the 1800 man landing force.²⁵ After negotiations and brief resistance, the offshore gun batteries surrendered on 23 August. There were 15 transits of ships from Vladivostok to Korea, and 234 craft were claimed to be involved.²⁶ Russia claimed that their Motor Torpedo Boats (MTB) sank 12 Japanese warships or merchant ships off of Korea, but none of four losses confirmed by Japan were sunk by MTBs. One was a 1000 ton Type A escort IJN *Kanju* sunk by bombing off Korea on August 15.²⁷ Another was a Type C 810 ton escort hull # 213 sunk at Pusan on Aug 18.²⁸ Type D Japanese escort hull #46 was sunk by a mine off of south Korea²⁹ and hull #82 was bombed near Joshin northern Korea.³⁰ Despite the lack of Japanese naval opposition off of Korea, Russia lost two merchants off Rasin and three more off Seishin, from

THE SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET: AUGUST 1945

American mines. One Russian MTB was lost at Rasin.³¹

The Soviets claim that on 14 August, Japan had sent a battleship and three destroyers from Maizyru Navy base to find and attack Soviet naval forces off Korea, but Soviet Fleet command group false communications misled the Japanese battle force away from Soviet units.³² This seems unlikely since in August 1945 there were no IJN battleships or cruisers afloat in any port. At surrender there were 52 Japanese submarines, which had been on supply missions for months, rather than attacking US forces. The only surface units were a few destroyers and several kamikaze suicide groups formed in southern Kyushu to attack American invasion battle groups. Pyongyang surrendered on 24 August ending the Korean campaign.

SECOND FAR EASTERN FRONT/ PACIFIC FLEET ATTACK SAKHALIN

Since 1905, Sakhalin was divided at the 50th parallel and the Handenzawa post marked the line of demarcation. Southern Sakhalin was named Karafuto by the Japanese. Northern Sakhalin forces were the Soviet 16th Army and the LVI Corps and the North Pacific Naval Flotilla based in Sovetskaya Gavan. The Japanese had three infantry divisions and one infantry battalion defending southern Sakhalin.³³ On 16 August, the 740 ton torpedo boat *Zarnitsa*, four minesweepers, two transports, six gunboats and nineteen torpedo boats attacked Port Toro. Again this operation could have benefited from Soviet destroyers for communications, staff and gunfire support. Communication staff were on minesweeper *TChsh-524*, an ex-American *Admiral* class minesweeper for the Otomari landings,³⁴ and torpedo boat *Zarnitsa* for the Esutoru landings. The only defending Japanese troops were the 88th Infantry Division. On 19 August the Soviets



Type C Japanese
WWII Escort vessel

began the attack on Karafuto with a three day artillery barrage. Pacific Fleet amphibious units from Sovetskaya Gavan landed in Sakhalin ports of Toto, Esutoru and Maoka. On 17 August, marine and infantry battalions advanced and took the port of Esutoru.

Marines and army units attacked Maoka on 20 August, after the submarine *Shch-118* landed scouts.³⁵ The same day, 1600 marines landed at Otomari, and the 3400 defenders surrendered without any resistance. By 25 August, 18,000 Japanese troops surrendered in southern Sakhalin on 25 August. An air landing was made on the southern island of Iturup on 28 August. The USSR was very non-committal about losses in Sakhalin combat operations. Four Lend Lease 203 ton YMS minesweepers (T-152, T-278, T-279 and T-610) were lost during the August 1945 combat, but it is not stated which campaign they were operating in.³⁶

KURILE ISLAND ATTACK

America and Russia agreed at the Yalta conference that all Kurile Islands from Onkotan Island south were within America's sphere. Russia was allowed to seize only the top four islands. Stalin planned on occupying those islands and also Onkotan to test American

reaction. Stalin even proposed Russian occupation of northern Japanese homeland island of Hokkaido on 17 August but this was quickly rejected by Truman.

The Kamchatka Defense Region 101st Rifle Division, Petropavlovsk Naval Base troops and the 128th Air Division were staged to attack the Kurile Islands. The 24 hour trip from Petropavlovsk to Shumshu was 170 sea miles, by far the longest distance amphibious craft transit for the Soviet Navy in the entire Great Patriotic War.³⁷ ShumShu Island was the first step of the island chain that would lead to the Japanese home island of Hokkaido. Kataoka naval base that was HQ of the IJN 5th Fleet, a main Imaizaki Airfield with two landing strips with large hanger and fuel depot, as well as a new wartime Miyoshino Airfield in the centre of the island. This tiny 180 square mile area northern island was defended by the 11th Armored Regiment, 31st Infantry Regiment and 73rd Infantry Brigade. The two northern islands of ShumShu and Paramushiro, had 23,000 Japanese troops and 60 tanks for defence.³⁸ The attacking Soviets had only 9000 troops and American amphibious rule was invaders should outnumber defenders at least 10:1 to win. Soviet Navy landing craft attacked Takedo Beach on the northern tip of

ShumShu Island, landing at 0200 on 18 August. Soviet artillery located at the southern tip of Cape Lopatka Kamchatka, supported the ShumShu attack.

At this time the Emperor was trying to surrender to the Allies, and a Japanese victory at ShumShu would jeopardise this. The Imperial 5th Army Area Commander ordered ShumShu forces to stop resisting except for self defence at noon on the 18th.³⁹ This was reaffirmed the following day when the 5th Area Command forbade even self-defence resistance. ShumShu surrendered at the Kataoka Bay navy base on 21 August. The Soviets lost 1700 men on ShumShu compared to 1000 Japanese casualties.

This amphibious intensive island-hopping attack really needed cruiser or destroyer gunfire support and communication support room. Russian warships *Kirov* and *Dzherzhinski* did support the Kurile landing, but not the 8800 ton cruisers with their nine 180mm guns. They were two 810 ton escort vessels built by Italy in 1934 for Russia. *Dzherzhinski* was a notable ship in the Kuriles, as will be described. She transited to Vladivostok via the Suez Canal and she was 250 foot long with three 102mm guns and four 40mm guns. This versatile workhorse with an unusual 3 shaft diesel plant, served as an NKVD guardship until August, when she was converted for mine laying and served well as a command troop carrying ship.⁴⁰

The USSR did have two large 3200 ton auxiliary minelayers, named *Okean* and *Okhotsk*, based in Petropavlovsk, in the Kurile forces. Their three 130mm guns were probably used for landing support. Other attack vessels were four minesweepers, six landing craft and 17 transports carrying 9000 Navy Marines and Army troops. The submarine *L-8* reportedly participated in the ShumShu amphibious landing. The neighbouring larger Paramushiro Island was manned

by the 91st Infantry Division. There were five airbases on this island located on the north east tip, centre and south west corner of the island and Paramushiro Island was occupied on 24 August. The next seven tiny islands were lightly defended by the 41st Infantry Regiment. Since America did not forcefully object, Stalin directed the Pacific Fleet to take the remaining islands, in defiance of the Potsdam agreement.

One force from Kataoka base moved down the chain, and Onetotan, Shashikotan and Harumukotan Islands were occupied sequentially on 25-27 August. Another Soviet amphibious force on *Dzerzhinski* landed on Matsua Island on 24 August. That island surrendered on 27 August when the main landing force arrived, and *Dzerzhinski* moved on to occupy Shimushiro, the last Kurile Island. That same day, minesweepers 589 and 590 left Otomari and swept for mines to Kunashiri and Etorofu.⁴¹ On 28 August Soviet troops launched amphibious attacks on the two large southern islands. Uruppu and Etorofu islands were defended by the 129th Infantry Brigade and 89th Infantry Division respectively. Soviet naval craft with troops were landed on the southern Etorofu and Kunashiri islands as a second prong.⁴²

The Japanese fought fiercely for six days, sinking five Lend Lease LCIs and three LCMs.⁴³ These were the only naval losses admitted by Russia in the eleven day Kurile Islands campaign. Of all of the areas that Russia attacked in August, the Kuriles was the most stubborn Japanese resistance and highest Russian casualties, since the Japanese homeland was only a few miles south of the island chain and the Japanese thought that this was their homeland.

The TChsh-334 minesweeper was a communication post for the Kurile operations⁴⁴ although the frigate *Dzerzhinski* led several advance landing



operations. The northern and southern Soviet forces completed the occupation of all Kurile Islands on August 28. The IJN 135 ton auxiliary sub-chaser #77 was sunk during an air raid on Aug 28 at Horomushira.⁴⁵

Six thousand Japanese troops on Etorofu surrendered to landing troops on August 30 and 1250 surrendered on Kunashiri on 1 September.⁴⁶ Barely beating the scheduled Japanese surrender on 2 September on *USS Missouri*, the Soviets landed troops from two ships on Shikotan also on 1 September. The Soviets plan to also steal the Habomai Islands from America apparently failed because the two Soviet ships *Vsevolod Sibirtsev* and *Novosibirsk* landed 2400 troops on 3 September, a day too late.⁴⁷ On 20 September 1945 revision to the Executive Order Number 1, the USSR claimed possession of the Kurile Islands to include Shikotan and Habomai.⁴⁸

The Kuriles fighting did not end until 3 September which finally ended World War II, 18 days after the Emperor's surrender and one day after the official surrender aboard *Missouri* on 2 September.

TRANSBAYKAL FRONT PARATROOP ADVANCES

Paratroop attacks would be required for Stalin's forces to regain all of the territory lost since 1905, since Japan's announced surrender to the Allies occurred on 14 August. This would require speedy landings in key desired target cities with minimum delay of Japanese resistance.

Surrender of Japan, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945
View of the surrender ceremonies, looking forward from *USS Missouri's* superstructure, as Admiral Conrad E.L. Helfrich signs the Instrument of Surrender on behalf of The Netherlands. General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is standing beside him. (Photograph from the Army Signal Corps Collection in the US National Archives.)

This ambitious operation began at dawn on August 19, when Colonel Abramenko, five officers and only six troops flew from the Transbaikalian Front directly to the Kwantung Army headquarters airport in Changchun. He met with General Yamada himself and demanded surrender of all Kwantung forces around Changchun. After a tense conference, the Japanese surrendered, and at 2300 the 30th Guards Mechanised Brigade paratroops landed and disarmed the Japanese and Manchurian troops.⁴⁹ The next day advance units of the 6th Guards Army entered Changchun. Also on 19 August, 225 paratroops landed at the major city and rail centre of Mukden. They were augmented by additional Soviet troops the next day, but this still totalled only 1000 Russian troops. They successfully disarmed 50,000 Japanese in the city without any casualties.

On August 20 Russian paratroops landed at Harbin and Kirin. On August 22 about 250 paratroops landed at each of the major seaports of Dairen, Port Arthur and Lushun. On 25 August, 17 Lend Lease Catalina seaplanes departed Vladivostok and landed Navy Marines at the Port Arthur (renamed Lushun) navy port, occupied by Japanese forces since 1905. It was so unexpected, that many Japanese ships were still in port.⁵⁰ Naval marines had a major role in this combat, and took the key hill overlooking the harbour. The Russians advanced from central Manchuria to the Sea of Okhotsk sea ports in only three days. Two days later Russian paratroops landed at Hinnam and Pyongyang deep in Korea and advanced to the now famous 38th parallel. The Soviet occupation of North Korea led directly to the tragic Korean War five years later.

SUMMARY

After America dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, Russia overran Manchuria, Sakhalin, Kurile Islands, North Korea and Northern China

including Port Arthur in only three weeks. The Soviet Pacific Fleet conducted a total of 20 amphibious landings during the Manchurian campaign.⁵¹ A surprising fact is that of 'Soviet Pacific Fleet' units identified specifically by hull, many were 1945 American Lend Lease, and not Soviet built ships. After sitting out the war in port for five years, why were Soviet ships not given the chance to fight? This was the only opportunity for the Soviet Pacific Fleet to finally go on offensive operations, but destroyer and larger ships continued to remain in port. If Stalin had attacked Hokkaido as planned, possibly some major units could have participated, but with over 40 additional Lend Lease ships received later in August, this still may not have occurred. Russian deaths in August 1945 were 8000 men, compared to 80,000 Japanese killed and 600,000 prisoners making this the largest defeat for Japan during WW II.⁵² 🚩

BIOGRAPHY

James Bussert is a retired Master Chief Sonarman and currently employed with Surface ASW Fire Control safety at NSWC Dahlgren. He has been working in ASW for 53 years since enlisting in 1954. After winning two Naval Institute Essay contests in 1972 and 1973, Mr Bussert has published nearly 200 military articles in professional journals. His main writing focus shifted from the Soviet Navy to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in 1990, and he is currently working on a book on PLAN Combat Systems Technology with Professor Bruce Elleman of the US Naval War College.

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Australia's Secret War

Chapter IV

BY HAL G.P. COLEBATCH

"Curtin even blamed himself for the ship's loss since its departure from Sydney had been delayed by industrial trouble. Had he moved decisively against the unionists, the ship might have left on time and avoided its encounter with the Kormoran. Or so he told himself."

Part IV in the continuing story of the secret battle on Australia's wharves in WWII

EVERY CRUISER TARGETED

At the beginning of World War II the most powerful ships in the Royal Australian Navy were the ageing 8-inch-gunned County-class cruisers HMA Ships *Australia* and *Canberra*, three, more modern, improved Leander-class cruisers - *Sydney*, *Perth* and *Hobart* - each with eight 6-inch guns, making them slightly under-gunned by the standards of the day, and the older and smaller 6-inch cruiser *Adelaide*. The British County-class cruiser *Shropshire* was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy later after *Sydney*, *Perth* and *Canberra* were sunk.

Every one of these major ships, like other RAN vessels, was subjected to strikes and/or go-slows, sabotage, and harassment of crew during World War II, including during critical periods.

Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins, probably the Australian Navy's greatest seaman, was Captain in HMAS *Sydney* when she sank the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* in the Mediterranean on 17 July, 1940, a victory, when victories were few and far between, that was a tonic for the hard-pressed British and Empire forces.

He recounted in his memoirs returning with the ship to Sydney in February 1941 after long and hard service in the Mediterranean. The city wished to give HMAS *Sydney* and her crew a heroes' welcome. However the behaviour of the workers at the Cockatoo Island Dock (not members of the Watersider Workers' Federation) nearly resulted in the ship being stranded. As Sir John recounted it:

The entrance to the dock is rather

tricky in a southerly wind as there is no room for tugs forward. It is essential to get a wire out from the bows to the nose of the dock as soon as the ship is positioned, otherwise she will blow down on shoal water. Out went the heaving lines but the dockyard riggers refused to handle them. There was some dispute about the time allowed for washing hands after breakfast! We had lowered boats on approaching the dock and thus were able to get our own hands ashore to man the wires before it was too late. We were not amused by our welcome at Cockatoo Island. (1)

It is alleged by John Curtin's latter-day biographer David Day that when HMAS *Sydney* was subsequently lost with all hands (Collins had been transferred out) after a battle with the German raider *Kormoran*, probably because of a magazine explosion, that: "Curtin even blamed himself for the ship's loss since its departure from Sydney had been delayed by industrial trouble. Had he moved decisively against the unionists, the ship might have left on time and avoided its encounter with the *Kormoran*. Or so he told himself." (2)

Day is wrong and misses the point: HMAS *Sydney* departed not from Sydney but from Fremantle, on 11 November, 1941, encountering the *Kormoran* on November 19. It had been delayed about a week because the troop-ship for Singapore which it was escorting, the *Zealandia* (which would be subsequently delayed by Darwin watersiders when taking troops to Timor and later bombed at Darwin), had on this occasion been delayed by a seamen's strike in the eastern States. However, even if it is correct that *Sydney* fell in with *Kormoran* because of the delay in getting to sea, in the

uncertain fortunes of war delaying *Sydney* might have equally caused it to miss *Kormoran* as to run into it. War is full of illustrations of La Fontaine's motto *On rencontre sa destinee*/ *Souvent par des chemins qu'on prend pour l'eviter* and in any case it is a warship's job to seek and engage the enemy. *Sydney* was a much more powerful ship and should normally have defeated *Kormoran* with ease: it appears to have been taken by surprise because of some extraordinary and inexplicable failures of normal procedures. The lack of the able and experienced Collins may well have been critical.

The real point is that trade unionists were able to delay the sailing of an important troopship and one of Australia's few major warships at a crucial point of the war without any effective government action to stop this. It is just possible that had the troops the *Zealandia* was carrying got to Singapore a week earlier they might have used that time to improve Singapore's field-defences to resist the coming Japanese attack. This also illustrates the feeble and conciliatory attitude adopted by the Curtin Government towards strategically-destructive strikes - probably because of the influence of Eddie Ward and the other Left-wingers in the Cabinet, but also for historical and ideological reasons which will be examined below. The government was possibly eventually, or at least verbally, a little more resolute in the matter of coal and transport strikes, perhaps because their effects could be more immediately felt by the civilian population and could cost votes. The wharves were of course closed in wartime and what went on there was unseen except by those involved.

Brendon Whiting was the son of

a petty officer lost in *HMAS Sydney's* sister-ship, *HMAS Perth*, in the battle of Sunda Strait on 28 February, 1942, when *Perth* and the damaged US cruiser *Houston* fell in with a large Japanese naval force. Both ships sank after an heroic fight against overwhelming odds. Only 215 of *Perth's* crew of 680 survived the battle and subsequent years of Japanese captivity. Whiting's account, *Ship of Courage*, was taken in part from *Perth's* earlier war-diaries. After returning from service in the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans *Perth* was sabotaged by dockyard worker either for ideological motives or because they wanted to prolong the lucrative job of refitting. Whiting describes the sabotage as "unbelievable", showing, perhaps the extent to which Australia's secret war has been kept secret.

In September/October of 1941, *Perth* was required to return to sea duty ... The ship's departure from Sydney was also delayed by the unbelievable - sabotage, within Cockatoo Dock in Sydney Harbour. This was a well-kept secret and news of it was never released. Repair and fitting out work on *Perth* was supposedly being carried out by dockyard workers 24 hours round the clock to get the ship ready for sea again.

However, instead of working diligently for the war-effort the "dockyard mates" as they were then known, were seen playing cards in the mess-deck and generally loafing.

There was a fire in the canteen, the after magazine was flooded, and six-inch nails were found in all the wiring up to the bridge. In the end, armed crew members manned the ship all night to guard against sabotage ... [following a deliberately-lit fire] all the electric cables leading to the director tower on the bridge melted and had to be replaced, which took about a month, so we only got operational again a few

days after Pearl Harbour. (3)

With *Sydney* and *Perth* sunk, *HMAS Hobart* was Australia's last surviving modern cruiser. In 1943 *Hobart* was torpedoed and heavily damaged, the stern being virtually blown off, and was lucky not to have sunk. The amount of damage suggests a Japanese 24-inch "Long Lance" oxygen torpedo was used - these were probably the torpedoes which wreaked havoc among Allied forces at the battle of the Java Sea.

Mr W. ("Bill") Wreford was a wartime officer in *Hobart*, and was serving in her when she was torpedoed. He was below in a cabin aft and narrowly escaped being killed in the blast. He tells the following story:

Hobart was torpedoed at 1845 hours on the night of 20 July, 1943, port side aft, in a position about 100 miles due west of the New Hebrides. The torpedo hit obliquely, going aft so the main blast was directed, fortunately, away from the after 6-inch magazine. Had that been in the direct line of fire there would not have been anything left, material or human. Casualties were pretty light. Had it happened an hour later, there would have been 200 men in the vicinity and a vastly different story would have unfolded ... we limped into Espiritu Santo where the US Navy had a big base and were temporarily repaired by the *USS Vestal* ...

Being under Navy discipline her team did a very good job on us, under-water cutting and welding, so that we were able to make about 10 knots back to Sydney after about a six-week stay. We arrived at Sydney and went straight into dock at Cockatoo - and then the scum moved aboard.

We had failed to locate one cordite charge in the badly twisted and buckled ammunition hoist serving "Y" turret (the aftermost one, on the quarter-deck). Strict accounting is essential for ammunition: lot numbers of cordite records are essential, etc., so we knew

what was missing, not having fired any six-inch shells since well before we were torpedoed. So signs were well displayed: No Naked Lights", "No Oxy Torches", "Unlocated Ammunition" etc.

Well, down comes some snoozer not well versed in the King's English and he did find the cordite. He was badly burned and we heard later died. All hands walked off the job. Negotiations continued for some days (I had left the ship by then) and subsequently work was resumed at a "danger loading" - there was NO danger anymore! - of 7 shillings per hour. An Able Seaman's pay rate, at the time, was 8 shillings per day. And that loading remained for the entire refit, which lasted about 18 months: the work-rate was in stark contrast to the USN's example at Santo.

Hobart did not in fact re-enter service until early 1945. Mr Wreford continued:

Early the next year, 1944, I was drafted to Brisbane to re-commission [the sloop *HMAS Swan*] as gunnery officer.

She was alongside Evans Deakin works in the Brisbane River, and exactly the same procedure was followed by the "workers": they went on strike at the drop of a shell-case, they bludged, they stole, they found funk-holes and simply slept until knock-off time. I would have cheerfully volunteered to have shot them. Stop-work meetings were almost a daily occurrence. The Evans Deakin engineer told me: "Please don't show up at these meetings, Mr Wreford, we'll never get you to sea!"

Perhaps the most apt description of the breed's behaviour is in Nicholas Monsarrat's book, *The Cruel Sea*, page 161.(4) It gives the picture in all its stark reality. The very nature of the scum is common ... They were "protected", pampered, paid far higher rates than ANY servicemen and their reciprocity took the form of making the sump

However, instead of working diligently for the war-effort the "dockyard mates" as they were then known, were seen playing cards in the mess-deck and generally loafing.

Australia's Secret War – Chapter IV

of a Cairo brothel look like an unfair comparison!(5)

Mr W. H. ("John") Ross, was a career Naval officer who served in *HMAS Sydney* in the Mediterranean, was transferred to *HMAS Canberra* just before *Sydney* was sunk with all hands, and subsequently survived the sinking of *Canberra* off Savo Island. He had changed duties with another officer and the position he would normally have occupied was completely obliterated by an enemy shell-burst in the first salvo. After the war he became an administrative and financial officer with the University of Western Australia. Stormy Petrel, his first book about *Sydney*, has long been regarded as a classic of Australian Naval literature.

I knew Mr Ross in the latter part of his life and helped with the preparation of his second, autobiographical book, Lucky Ross (one of the nick-names by which he became known in the Navy). He was very much an officer and a gentleman (I choose the latter word carefully and mean it in its best and most literal sense), somewhat given to understatement. However his comments on the refitting of *Canberra* in Sydney indicate a deep outrage in men who had endured months of front-line combat and many of whose comrades had already perished in battle in *Sydney* and *Perth*. He wrote:

In the details of *Canberra's* movements listed earlier ... it will be noted that her refit [at Sydney] took three months, that is, from mid-February to mid-May, 1942., and having experienced the speed with which the Maltese dockyard workers were operating I was surprised by what seemed to be the leisurely, peace-time methods of our own people. Admittedly the Maltese were very much in the front line of the war, but at that time we in Australia had the Japanese on our own front door-step and all of us were in grave danger. On board it seemed to

us that the work could have been done more quickly, much as we enjoyed being reasonably snug in harbour.

Various examples of the kind of things that were offensive to us became the subject of much bitter discussion and disgust in the Mess during this period and I was able to contribute my own experiences as, for instance, when one morning I came upon an electrician sitting on top of his step-ladder in the passageway near my cabin. He was running new cables along the deckhead and had reached a bulkhead. I wished him good morning and asked him what was happening and he explained that he was waiting for a boiler-maker to come and drill a hole through the bulkhead. I said, "Surely you can do that!" But he replied, "Oh No! That is a boiler-maker's job. If I do it I'll be in serious trouble."

On another occasion I returned after spending a night ashore to find some "docky" who was supposed to be doing a night-shift - and probably receiving penalty rates for it - had been spending some time in my bunk. He had been so blatant about it he hadn't even bothered to tidy the bedding. The rumpled and grease-marked sheets and other bedclothes had been left just as he tossed them aside. Because we were unable to prove the identity of the culprit it was just shrugged off by his superiors. (6)

Mr Keith Nordahl was also a survivor of *HMAS Canberra* and later served in *HMAS Shropshire* in an 8-inch gun-turret. After the war he was president of the *Canberra-Shropshire* Association in Western Australia. He recalled a strike when *Shropshire* docked at Woolwich, North Sydney, in October, 1943, another in June, 1944, when it put in with a damaged starboard propeller and again at Captain Cook dock at Garden Island, Sydney, in May, 1945, after the Philippines campaign, when its

worn 8-inch guns were being re-rifled before it sailed for the Borneo campaign. On the last occasion 1,300 dockyard workers walked off various jobs. The work on the guns was eventually done by the Navy. In fact, only one of *Shropshire's* wartime dockings in Sydney does not seem to have been affected by significant union trouble. (7) Stan Nicholls served as an Able Seaman in *Shropshire* and later wrote a history of the ship:

Before leaving for our first battle on 29 October, 1943, some union labour troubles made it necessary for Royal Australian Navy Ratings to engage in dry-docking the ship at Woolwich for refitting, undocking on the 28th to carry out degaussing ranging. The dockyard workers declared *Shropshire* black and it was fairly obvious, apart from some genuine grievances, that dockyard workers didn't know there was a war on even though they were being paid danger money for working on a warship. (8)

He described the ship's return to Sydney at the beginning of 1945:

The return to Sydney quickly turned to anger when, after nearly a year away and secured alongside Garden island ready to leave, we were to witness the efforts of the dockyard police to hold us back to allow the dockyard workers to board the ferry for Circular Quay first. The ferry had not arrived and the weight of the angry sailors kept moving to push these "usurpers" into the drink ... During our stay in Sydney the dockyard workers went on strike and declared the ship black. They had been reported for lighting fires between decks to boil their billy tea and for being lazy and slow in carrying out their daily work (So much for being paid danger money for working on a warship).

On this particular day 1300 men walked off the ship, after a supposed day's work. A quick check on the decks revealed very few (about 100) were actually to be seen on the job. In fact constant smokes seemed to be the order of the day. The upshot of the black ban was that we returned north with much of our equipment still requiring urgent maintenance.(9)

The flagship, *HMAS Australia*, was also subject to industrial trouble when it returned to Australia for refitting after being badly damaged and suffering many casualties when repeatedly hit by Kamikazes at Lingayen Gulf in January, 1945. While Kamikazes often damaged superstructure rather than the vitals of large ships, on this occasion two of them hit the water near *Australia* and skidded into it, blowing a 14-foot hole in the port side. 🚩

"Australia's Secret War" continues next issue.

Notes:

- (1) Sir John Collins, *As Luck Would Have It* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1965), p. 97.
- (2) David Day, *John Curtin, a life* (HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 427-428.
- (3) Brendan Whiting, *Ship of Courage* (George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994), pp. 27-28.
- (4) There is an incident described in *The Cruel Sea* in which the crew of a warship which has been in dock find that dockyard workers have stolen the emergency food-supplies out of the life-rafts. *The Cruel Sea* is fiction but closely based on fact. Its author, Nicholas Monsarrat, was a wartime Naval officer and commanded a corvette.
- (5) Letter following interview, Perth, 6 July, 1994.
- (6) W. H. Ross, *Lucky Ross: An RAN Officer 1934-1951* (Hesperian Press, Perth, 1994), pp. 217-218.
- (7) Interview, Perth, 21 February, 1996.
- (8) Stan Nicholls, *HMAS Shropshire* (Naval Historical Society of Australia, Adelaide, 1989), p. 59.
- (9) *Ibid*, pp 186-187.



Hal G.P. Colebatch has an MA in History/ Politics and a PhD in Political Science and is the author of several books as well as many articles in The Australian, Quadrant, The American Spectator etc. His book Blair's Britain was chosen

as a Book of the Year in the London Spectator. His latest book is Steadfast Knight: a life of Sir Hal Colebatch (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, WA). This is an extract from his unpublished book Australia's Secret War.

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THE RAN AND RECRUIT SEAMAN ANDREWS...

...SOME THOUGHTS ON A CHANGE OF LIFE-STYLE.

PART 2

BY GRAEME ANDREWS, R51410.

Christmas Leave over, the Recruit School returned to life. As 'sailors' of some three months seniority we 'knew' our way around the system and the Depot routine was fairly comfortable.

I have no way of knowing if the sailors of today have any public 'perks' but there were a number of such that were very useful in the 1950s. Our postage was one penny – 1d.- and our letters were carried Air Mail if that was suitable. The general public's mail went by road, rail or sea unless a premium was paid. Long Distance phone calls went through an exchange operated by a human and for us, the rates were much cheaper. In cities where government trams, buses and ferries ran, servicemen in uniform travelled free.

The public perception of servicemen and their occasional frolics was friendly, almost avuncular, and it was usually easy to hitch hike if in uniform. I made the run between Sydney-Melbourne-Sydney many times by standing on the highway.

Our routine had changed. There was somewhat less Bull Ring and more study and our class sometimes broke up as certain sections did familiarisation courses. One such was the Gas Chamber. Into this air-tight little brick building we were 'invited' wearing our Anti-Gas Respirators (AGR). Tear gas canisters were opened and after a suitable period of time we were ordered to remove the AGRs. At this time the class bully cum thug panicked and broke for the door. It was noted by the rest of us that he was missing the following day!

Reading, writing and 'rithmetic became part of our day. The Navy

wanted us all to be about Intermediate Education Standard, if only to be able to understand the range of Books of Reference (BRs) that were ahead of us. In charge of our class was a choleric Commander, one 'Tiger' Lyons. He was a great teacher and, as a survivor of *HMAS Perth*, he was able to instruct us in the differences between male and female bamboo! It seems that male bamboo is less dense and when you are being encouraged to carry a great load of the stuff by a friendly Japanese Burma railway soldier, this was useful information, if not to us.

Rifle drill involved large and heavy .303 rifles (c. 1919) and the firing of same at the butts. We learned how to formation march and to do funeral and admirals guard drills – just in case.

Baby sitting was a new benefit. Second part recruits could put their name on a roster for babysitting. This service applied to officers and to non-commissioned officers and their families, living in depot housing at the 'patch.'

Wearing Night clothing, negative cap, the babysitter was called for at the Police Office and was signed out! At the designated home a list of typed instructions was provided. If a TV existed instruction was given, along with directions for toilet, supper and, if lucky, a bottle of beer with the cap removed was indicated. Payment in money was not



involved but sometimes a tip might be offered.

When the parents returned the sailor was driven back to the Police Office and signed in - wouldn't want to lose a sailor would we?

On Saturday and Sunday nights movies were shown in the Drill Hall.

**Recruit Seaman
Andrews, R51410,
1955.**

**The FND Ship's
Company cafeteria
from the Recruit
School J block.**





For one shilling recruits could sit at the back of the hall. Officers in front, followed by CPOs and POs, the Ship's Company and their families (if any), then Recruits. Dress night clothing, 4 or 4As, negative caps.

Saturday and Sunday afternoons were also interesting. There were families, with no obvious naval connections, who would visit for the afternoon. They often went away

having 'met a sailor.' These friendships, in my case at least, lasted many years.

As we gathered a few pounds, the Navy allowed certain hawkers to visit after hours. We could buy a range of things from Life Assurance to civilian clothing, mainly from Sinbad's Naval Tailors or from Red Anchor. They sold good stuff and 50 years later I still have and wear a woollen pullover that I paid off over six months by an allotment.

When we were not being doubled around or studying there were a number of out of hours activities on offer. Apart from the TV room, there was 'Millies' or the Millionaire's Club – soft drinks, billiards, 'burgers, ice-creams, soap, white cleaner et al. There were several volleyball courts on suitable flat spots, a scout troop existed somewhere in the base and the Depot Padres Tim Were and Gray Swain, ran

FND's twin 4.5in. turret 'protected' the approach to the Seamanship School.



Four of the members of Class 74 ready for a swim in 1956. Author is at right, who are the others?

Class 74 F.N.D. 1956

THE RAN AND RECRUIT SEAMAN ANDREWS... ***...SOME THOUGHTS ON A CHANGE OF LIFE-STYLE.***



This depot Photographer image looks over the Gymnasium towards the Cadet College, later became the Wrannery.

a fellowship known as ToCH. During the weekend one could walk up to the metropolis of Cribb Pt and visit the nearby ferry wharf or a small café – always in uniform, of course. The more physical among us could sail Bosn's dinghies, take part in organised sport (always a good way to attract attention for those seeking rapid promotion) or go on organised cross-country runs and so on.

All the above were merely time-fillers pending one's next weekend leave. Sailors didn't have much money to 'go ashore' with but there were ways of eking it out. The best way was to get up to the Exhibition Building as quickly as you could after Young and Jacksons shut at 1800. On the NE corner of the venerable 'Exhibish' was The White Ensign Club. This organisation was beautifully set up and run by a few paid staff and many female volunteers – almost all with that 'Mum' look, and patient, friendly and long-suffering, to boot.

The meals were cheap and good. The cubicles were lockable, reasonably roomy and comfortable and all having a 'ceiling' of chicken wire to keep

everybody honest. Behaviour there was always good, or almost always, even at 0300 because the word was around that if the Shore Patrol was called to you – you were banned – forever!

On Mondays at about 0550 the alarm rang. A quick wash, quicker breakfast and then down to Spencer St to catch the 'Spirit'.

It didn't matter what time the old loco made it as long as you were ON it. If you came in after 0730 by any other means you might just as well not make

any leave plans for a few weeks.

In April 1956 Class 74 and others of that period were taken by bus to a small wharf near Station Pier, Melbourne. Puffing away quietly alongside was a warship and it was real. *HMAS Gladstone*, soon re-named 'Happyrock', was our training ship. On her we were to learn about watchkeeping and sleeping and eating in the same space. Her crew of about 60 had to cope with 40 odd recruits.

Up on the 'pointy end' was a real

In the early 1950s *HMAS Gladstone* often visited the Base on Hanns Inlet.





With a load of apprehensive sailors, *Gladstone* heads out into Bass Strait.

Naval Bandsmen, dressed in their original Royal marine-style uniforms, prepare to lead the Coral Sea Day March in Melbourne in 1956.

4in. gun and at the other end was a heavy machine gun of some sort.

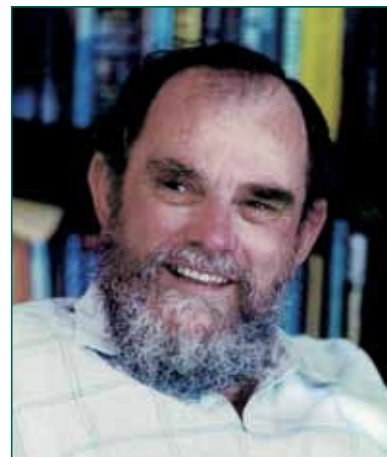
Gladstone was one of the last operational members of a series of about 60 similar fleet minesweeper (corvettes) that were built in Australia. She was a great little ship and she introduced green sailors to green seas and along the way many of us spent time in various shades of green.

In 2006 her sister ship *Castlemaine* is afloat as a museum ship at Williamstown and another sister *Whyalla* is ashore as a relic at Whyalla.

Safely back in FND, we soon found

out what next Pussers had for us. We were to go to Sydney by train and there we would join the carrier *HMAS Sydney* and we were all to be rated as Ordinary Seamen (or whatever).

Sydney was an aircraft carrier – or had been – and she was enormous and in her we would begin to learn the subtle methods by which ships side grey paint may be applied over large areas, but that's another tale. Ordinary Seaman G.K. Andrews, was off to sea. 🚢



Graeme Andrews joined the sea cadets in 1953; the Navy in 1955, and left full time Service in 1968, staying a member of the Reserve forces until 1979 when he retired with the rank of Petty Officer. From 1975 to 1988 he was the Australian and Pacific representative for Jane's Fighting Ships, and from 1970 to 1980 a full time professional writer. From 1980 to 1993 Graeme was master of various Manly ferries and coastal tugs. He was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2000 for voluntary work with the Sydney Heritage Fleet and for his many books and other publications on Australian matters maritime over more than 40 years. He has published, he thinks, about 28 books, and is now writing for Afloat magazine in Sydney.



“THIS AIN’T THE SEA, IT’S AN ARMS RACE!”

CLOSING REMARKS BY NAZERY KHALID RESEARCH FELLOW, MIMA SEMINAR ON MARITIME POWERS’ INTERESTS IN THE STRAIT OF MALACCA KUALA LUMPUR - 12 JULY 2007

Since time immemorial, the oceans have provided a theater for great powers to play out their strategic interests, often on a grand scale. Nations flex their muscles at sea through their navies as a natural extension of their strength and confidence, and as a visible projection of a formidable instrument of state power.

A scan through the pages of history gives credence to the Mahanian doctrine of whomsoever controls the seas, controls the land. Great powers of the past set sail across the oceans with their powerful fleets to colonize faraway land. History is rich with stories of great naval battles which acted as a prelude to the conquest of nations. The downfall of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15th century began with the assault of Malacca Port by the Portuguese armada – the undisputed naval superpower of the time.

Centuries later, mankind has made much progress in so many areas but the sea remains a place that is seemingly up for grabs, despite the proliferation of conventions and laws to govern it. The fluid, unbroken nature of the sea that lends it a borderless feature makes some maritime powers behave in almost an unrestrained manner. The world’s oceans today are characterized by messy maritime maps, overlapping imaginary boundaries and cluttered claims over areas of strategic interests and rich with resources. In the chokepoints and sea lines of communications of the world including the Strait of Malacca, maritime powers exert their presence, display their wares and engage in cat and- mouse maneuvering which at times even threaten to undermine the sovereign rights of the littoral states. Today, the Mahanian philosophy has grown into



an ideology that defines the existence of many of the world’s navies and dictates their engagements at sea. Out in the oceans, battleships have become critical tools in the game of brinkmanship.

The notion of *mare liberum* propagated by Grotius stating that the high seas are the domain of mankind has come under severe examination since the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). As a result of the ‘carving up’ of oceans into Exclusive

**Straits of Malacca
courtesy NASA**

Economic Zones (EEZ) under the UNCLOS regime, the much cherished principle of unimpeded travel in the seas suddenly appeared impractical and even archaic. Upon the introduction of the EEZ concept, coastal nations embarked on a near stampede at sea to define the exclusivity of their maritime economic zones, so much so that a third of the world’s maritime area now falls into EEZ areas. This is one rather unpleasant legacy of UNCLOS – the very convention put in

place to establish order at sea. It has inadvertently given rise to claims and counter-claims of maritime boundaries and areas. The waters that give earth the moniker 'Blue Planet' are now subjected to conflicting definitions and overlapping perspectives of maritime boundaries among nations. Some of these disputes seem only a short fuse away from igniting full-blown naval conflicts between maritime powers.

Since the September 11 incident, maritime security, once the domain of navies and maritime enforcement agencies, seems to have entered into public conscience. The nonconventional, asymmetrical security threats emerging ever since have heightened the perception of risk at sea and have dramatically changed the matrix of maritime security. Even navies, traditionally the defenders of blue waters, have been called upon to help counter the new form of threats faced in the maritime domain. The growing acceptance of the total maritime domain awareness philosophy - which is so crucial to neutralizing the new threats amid today's maritime security matrix - demands out-of-the-box thinking, greater interoperability and seamless command-and-control among various maritime enforcement agencies. The need to protect maritime assets and resources and to extend humanitarian aids during times of disaster and conflicts also demands that navies extend their scope of activities beyond their traditional responsibility of defending the sea borders of nations.

These could not possibly be achieved if navies are too busy worrying about the underlying intents of one another and focusing their resources only on encountering the threats of their naval adversaries. The costs and resources spent to outfox and outmuscle one another in the high seas would leave gaps to be exploited by elements bent on creating havoc closer



to the shores. It would be stretching it to ask for a complete review of naval warfare doctrines but there is a whole new spectrum of threats and challenges to deal with post-September 11. They require a dynamic reinterpretation of the sources, nature and magnitude of maritime threats to anticipate and mitigate the new forms of threats and multiplicity of challenges at sea. Inevitably, the assistance of navies which have the manpower, assets, operational capacity and tactical nous would be required to handle some of these threats.

Allow me to humbly submit what I call the 4C formula in facing the challenges of managing the multiplicity of interests and perspectives and in encountering the threats at sea. It involves four seemingly simplistic individual components - namely consensus, consideration, cooperation and commitment. Together, they could provide the pillars for the formation of a sort of code of conduct to guide the behaviors of maritime powers with grand assets and gargantuan ambitions. Nonetheless, they are not as easily meshed together into a coherent framework as one would imagine.

At the risk of being called naïve to

A sailor of Royal Australian Navy ship HMAS Kanimbla checks the safety on his weapon as part of visit, board, search and seizure training. Kanimbla was working in conjunction with U.S. military personnel as part of exercise Talisman Saber 200. The exercise improves interoperability, combat readiness and strengthen the Australian-U.S. alliance. (US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Adam R. Cole)

the realities and complexities of naval calculations, let me hazard to propose that good order at sea could be attained first and foremost by developing a *consensus* among nations and their navies that the excessive build-up of naval firepower and the threats and counter-threats they pose to one another is an unsustainable proposition. A reality check is long overdue for us to arrive at the admission that maritime muscle flexing and capacity upgrading by one naval power will only lead to more of the same by the others. While there is indeed precious deterrent value in offensive platforms such as submarines and missile systems that would discourage navies from going at loggerheads with one another, this understanding alone would not be enough to guarantee peace - or rather the absence of war - at sea.

The folly of the 'attack is the best form of defence' philosophy reminds me of a bumper sticker I saw that reads 'Fight crime - shoot back!'. The anxiety created by excessive naval build-ups - often described in pleasant-sounding terms such as 'asset upgrading' and 'fleet modernization' of navies that mask the adversarial tension among them - is fast reaching scary levels. Not

“THIS AIN’T THE SEA, IT’S AN ARMS RACE!”

to mention of the stratospheric costs of procuring the wares using public funds. One wonders what would be the price paid once the costly naval build-up and saber-rattling at sea exceeds its threshold and the line between necessary naval expenditure and wanton profligacy is crossed.

Secondly, there must be mutual *consideration* amongst nations that navies have interests at sea which may be in conflict with one another’s. If all of them take an uncompromising stand in protecting their own interests at whatever expense, the ensuing chaos would be unimaginable. Conventions and international laws notwithstanding, maritime powers – especially those which believe that their supremacy is unchallenged - have proven their willingness to brush aside calls for consideration of the position of others in favor of confrontation in defending their interests. The moment the deafening sound of missiles and battleship guns drowns the voice of reason, the seas would turn into a theater of turbulence instead of a platform of prosperity. Gandhi’s lamentation that ‘an eye for an eye will make the world go blind’ should provide a stark reminder of the consequence of the abandonment of consideration.

Thirdly, a high degree of *cooperation* must be forged amongst navies to pool their resources and to aim their collective focus at encountering the multiple threats at sea, instead of at one another. The involvement of non-state actors such as terrorist groups has lent an aura of increasing unpredictability to the kind of lethal threats they could pose at sea and on maritime assets. The nature of trans-national threats is growing in complexity, sophistication and risk levels. Such threats cannot be confronted and neutralized alone even by maritime powers, what more developing nations with scarce resources. The post-September 11

maritime security matrix demands that nations and navies cooperate and engage in multilateral efforts to encounter the emerging threats at sea.

The kind of close cooperation and interaction among nations which is so evident on *terra firma* in areas such as trade and economy should be extended at sea. Although there have been many trans-national and trans-agency maritime initiatives, especially in the field of security, much work still needs to be done to enhance maritime cooperation among nations. Judging from the cornucopia of maritime conflicts among countries and the simmering tension amongst their

navies, we are still a long way ahead towards reaching the ideals of creating a sphere of prosperity for mankind using the oceans as a platform. Cooperation generates trust, which propels nations to treat one another cordially and respectfully. This could act as a deterrent of conflict that could prove more effective – and a lot cheaper – than gunboat diplomacy. But of course much effort needs to be undertaken to get nations to engage in confidence

International co-operation - Ukrainian marines and US Navy corpsmen work together during a medical exercise at the Ukrainian military training facility during Exercise Sea Breeze 2007. Sea Breeze is a two-week joint invitational and combined maritime exercise held annually in the Black Sea and at various land-based Ukrainian training facilities with the goals of enhancing multinational interoperability, developing Black Sea-nation maritime security capabilities, and improving involvement in Navy Europe’s larger Black Sea Theater Security Cooperation strategy. (US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Michael Campbell)



building measures to reach a level of comfort among them to cooperate in multilateral maritime security measures.

With the three Cs in place, the fourth element, *commitment*, glues them together into a solid, cohesive framework that could blunt aggressive tendencies at sea. When nations are committed to work together, share resources, engage in capacity building and keep peace at sea instead of stirring the waves in aggression and hostility, it would galvanize them to come to a consensus, develop a sense of consideration for the interests and positions of others, and foster cooperation to maintain security for the common good at sea. It is evidenced from various multilateral maritime security initiatives introduced after September 11 – and others before that – that the commitment of the parties

involved is critical to their success.

The smooth implementation of transnational security measures such as the ISPS Code, joint coordinated patrols among navies, the Eyes in the Sky air-sea surveillance in the Strait of Malacca, among many others, stand testimony to what can be achieved through the resolve and commitment from navies and enforcement agencies.

Vegetius, the great Roman Empire writer, wrote in *Epitoma*, the ancient war manual of the Roman army: *Si vis pacem, para bellum* – those who want peace must be ready to go to war. But the profusion of lethal naval wares and weapons today would guarantee that war is not going to determine who is *right* but who is *left*. Therein lies much wisdom in the Malay proverb: *Yang menang jadi arang, yang kalah jadi abu*, which literally means the victors end up as charcoal, the losers reduced to ash. It

succinctly describes the consequence of a war of attrition and the mutual destruction that maritime powers can inflict on one another. The prospect alone should act as a deterrent for maritime powers not to take their brinkmanship too far.

Power, as the saying goes, is nothing without control. Maritime powers will continue to roam the world's oceans, some perhaps more prone to unrestrained display of their strength and aggression. But let us hope that the awesome collection of maritime firepower that could perhaps destroy all the world's navies many times over would be used in a responsible and controlled fashion, and would be put to good use for mankind instead of for its destruction.

Let us be guided by the virtues of consensus, consideration, cooperation and commitment to ensure peace, prosperity, stability and security in the waters of the Blue Planet. 🚢

The opinions stated are the author's personal views and do not reflect the official position of the Maritime Institute of Malaysia.



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SAAB

Inaugural *Platypus* Address

Delivered at HMAS Platypus 18th August 2007

BY VICE ADMIRAL IAN MACDOUGALL AC AFSM RAN (RTD)

The old site of HMAS Platypus in Sydney Harbour was handed over in 2005 to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, who will manage the conservation of its heritage for the general public as they are also doing for seven other former Defence sites around Sydney Harbour.

On 18 August 2007, the fortieth anniversary of the commissioning of HMAS Platypus and the arrival of HMAS Oxley to form the Australian Submarine Squadron, Vice Admiral Ian MacDougall AC AFSM RAN (rtd) spoke of the history of Australian submarines at the base and brought back memories for the assembled representatives of government and the Trust, members of Submarines Association Australia and other members of the submarine community and Australian Naval Cadets.

The speech provided a clear message on the extraordinary cost-effectiveness of the submarine force as a strategic deterrent to any would-be aggressor to Australia and its region. The contribution made by Australian submarines to allied capabilities has been significant.

Admiral MacDougall's speech has been entitled the 'Platypus Address' intended to be delivered each year, on the anniversary of the commissioning of HMAS Platypus to support the modern Australian submarine squadron, by eminent speakers invited from Australia and overseas to explicate the role of submarine capabilities in defence forces and the challenges for the intrepid people who are the submariners. This inaugural address is reproduced here by kind permission.

This is a day of remembrance, of history and recognition of the strategic importance of submarines as a part of the maritime security of our nation. I am honoured to deliver the inaugural Platypus address.

The memories will be most keenly felt by those who were here 40 years ago today. But also by those who served in Oberons and in the base, which maintained them during the 30 odd years which followed.

My strongest recollection of that day was the considerable elan with which the Captain of *Oxley*, David Lorrimer, drove into Neutral Bay after a passage of 68 days from Portsmouth.

With the adroit use of lots of power astern he both captured the attention of those on the wharf celebrating the commissioning of Platypus and avoided the boat becoming a



Vice Admiral Ian MacDougall AC AFSM RAN (retired), former Chief of Naval Staff, delivers the inaugural Platypus Address to the assembled members of the Submarines Association Australia and the Naval Cadets of Training Ships Sydney and Condamine, on the fortieth anniversary of the commissioning of HMAS Platypus.



Official guests at the ceremony (left to right) Brigadier (retired) Kevin O'Brien, member of the SHFT Board and chairman of their Defence History Committee; Ms Genia McCaffery, Mayor of North Sydney; Mrs Jillian Skinner MP, State Member for North Shore; Councillor Trent Zimmerman, representing The Hon Joe Hockey MP, Federal Member for North Sydney; Vice Admiral Ian MacDougall AC AFSM RAN (retired) and Mr David Sandquest, National President, Submarines Association Australia.

permanent fixture in Anderson Park.

One slip in the chain of orders from the bridge and reactions below would have spelt doom, but Lieutenant Commander Lorrimer had trained us well and had every confidence in us. There was no chance we would let him down. I glanced across at the face of Commander Bill Owen as this black express train sped towards its berth and saw a smile of pride – or was it relief? – as we arrived perfectly at our berth.

The history of our submarine arm and the Oberons' place in it is important. The era of serious submarining by global powers began in about 1905. At the Spithead naval review of 1909, the *Times* of London counted 42 submarines.

In 1910, just nine years after federation, our government began negotiating with Britain for two E-class submarines. Sadly both were lost in World War I. In a remarkable feat, AE-2 had found the way for other allied submarines to follow through the Dardenelles into the Sea of Marmara.

We acquired six J class in the 1920s, two O class in the 1930s and the Dutch gifted us a K class during WWII. After World War II the Royal Navy based its fourth submarine squadron in Sydney. For the princely sum of fifteen thousand pounds, paid by Australia and New Zealand, the squadron delivered invaluable ASW training for the navies and airforces of both countries.

In the 60s we bought four, and then two more Oberons from Britain. These wonderful long range boats, with their challenging ASRI diesel engines, proved to be one of the best-ever defence outlays for Australia. Henry Cook and Bill Owen were instrumental in this success.

It is deeply frustrating, to skate, in just a minute of so, across 75-odd years of dedicated service by those who took the boats to sea and those who supported them alongside in war and peace.

It was hard, unremitting work in fairly squalid living conditions but few who volunteered to join the submarine arm elected to leave. We were a small, vociferous minority – the Navy population in submarines was less than 3 percent.

Not content to be merely ASW clockwork mice, the submarine arm set out to become a highly potent strategic capability. It achieved this via an extraordinarily ambitious update programme, which successfully delivered a combat system, modern wire-guided torpedoes, and encapsulated Harpoon missiles. This also laid the ground work for the even more ambitious Collins class, the nation's first in-country build of submarines.

Those outside the navy cannot be expected to understand in detail how bold a step it was. Superpowers such as the US and Russia have built dozens of new classes of submarines over the last hundred years. Every new class has had teething troubles.

The remarkable outcome with the Collins, acknowledged by independent experts as the best conventional submarine at sea, is that those teething troubles were so few and fixed so quickly.

The fact that taxpayers' dollars remained in-country, that jobs were created for Australians, and that infrastructure enhancement and technology transfer benefits accrued, should not go unacknowledged.

We now have solid bedrock to build on as we go forward with the next class to replace the Collins, now into the second half of their useful lives.

In May of this year, Ross Babbage in a *Weekend Australian* Defence Special Report argued cogently the case for submarines. Not much has changed in the justification for submarines in a balanced maritime capability since one small U-boat sank three British cruisers

before breakfast, in World War I.

The cost of countering submarines in a hot war far outweighs the cost of maintaining a sub-surface capability. It boils down to the physics of sound transmission through water, which favours the submarine. Billions of dollars have been spent and continue to be spent in trying to lift ASW capability to parity but to little avail. It hasn't happened yet.

In a Cold War environment, the deterrent value of submarines has been amply demonstrated. For those who favour non-violent solutions to the prevention and settlement of international disputes, deterrence should be a favoured option until such time as humanity can universally agree to abandon violence.

I am no armchair warrior beating the drums of war. I believe in deterrence as a means of avoiding violence, not least for a large sea-locked country dependent on sea-borne trade for its prosperity, indeed for its economic survival.

As trade grows in a world with economies inextricably linked, the security of trade routes on the high seas and through littoral choke points grows in importance. It is no accident of group-think that most developed and developing nations in our region have acquired a submarine capability. They too know that their trade routes are vital to their present and their future.

It is, I hope, unlikely that we will have to fight a major war on land or sea on a stand-alone basis. Since World War II we have enjoyed the benefits and insurance of alliances, most notably the ANZUS treaty.

We pay our insurance premiums when called upon by the UN and/or our alliance partners to contribute to military actions designed to bring or maintain peace in troubled parts of the world. There is nothing cynical about preferring to do this far from home rather than on our own doorstep. In

Inaugural *Platypus* Address

most cases we are contributing highly valued expertise, quality if not quantity.

Sometimes the contribution as measured in numbers – ships, aircraft or soldiers – is small and complements the larger forces of coalition partners.

Occasionally our contribution is in a form not present in the order of battle of even our most powerful ally. The Collins class submarine falls into that category.

The US of course has a powerful undersea fleet, but all its platforms are nuclear powered and less than comfortable operating in shallow littoral waters. Australian submarines have no difficulty operating in shallow waters and this fills a gap, if our government agrees to make them available. If operating unilaterally in Australia's best interests even six submarines provide a highly potent force either to deter or, if push comes to shove, make continued aggression a price too dear for an enemy to pay.

The lead times for the highly sophisticated systems – platform and combat system – are long. As has been said many times before, our national defence strategy is based on maintaining a technological edge in every combat capability.

The reality is, the decision to replace the Collins class needs to be made not later than the end of this decade. If a timely and favourable decision is not made, the maritime security, hence well being, of our nation, will be placed in jeopardy.

There is a small band of Oberon brothers here today, and to you I say this:. Our characters were forever formed – some would say de-formed – by our experiences. 70 days without a shower. Learning to play a tin opener like a musical instrument in order to eat. Accepting the chronic lack of Vitamin D and its medical consequences. Being thrown a bar of soap and then hosed down on the

front lawn before being allowed into the house, on our return from a long patrol.

But operationally, we know what we did, how dangerous it was and why we did it anyway. We don't talk about the detail, not now, not ever. But we remember, with pride, and always will.

Platypus served the nation well for 30 years. It was a welcome beacon for boats returning home from far away. It justly deserves the recognition it has had this day. I am sure I speak for all those who served here in thanking the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and the Submarines Association Australia for making it happen. Not least I thank Captain Chris Skinner of the Trust and David Sandquest, National President of the Association.

Platypus had a good formal motto – nothing too difficult. I suspect Commodore Rick Shalders, currently Commander of the Australian Submarine Group, might agree that the spirit of that motto lives on in the submarines of today, and will do so in the submarines of tomorrow. 🦆



Vice Admiral Ian Macdougall
AC AFSM RAN (Rtd)

Ian MacDougall was the first Australian-born officer to command the Australian Submarine Squadron in 1985 and the first RAN Submarine Officer to attain flag rank. He is Patron of the Submarines Association Australia. During his 40 years service with the Royal Australian Navy (1954–1994) he commanded submarines, a guide missile destroyer, a fleet tanker, the submarine squadron and the Australian Fleet.

He was Director of Submarine Policy 1982–1984

and Director General of Joint Operations and Plans for the ADF 1986–87, contributing to the successful integration of the three arms for operations. From January 1989 to July 1990 he served as Maritime Commander Australia. He took up the position of Deputy Chief of Naval Staff in 1990, and Chief of the Naval Staff in 1991.

Admiral MacDougall was appointed a Companion in the Military Division of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours list of 1993, and is member of the Order of the Crown of Thailand, First Class, Knight Grand Cross for "his exceptionally meritorious conduct in performing outstanding service in the position of grave responsibility in the defence of the free world", and a military award from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for "his distinctive professional achievements and his personal endeavours for the improvement of relations between Australia and Pakistan and the Navies of the two countries."

Greg Davis's camera looks back on his time on board HMAS Oxley in 1987. One of six Oberon-class submarines, these boats served the RAN well for three decades, and obtained an enviable reputation for quietness. Their successors, the Collins-class boats, are now said to be quieter still.



Oxley with a younger version of Greg Davis in Sydney



Oxley:O-Boat, HMAS Oxley alongside HMAS Stirling-courtesy RAN



HMAS Otway in the town of Holbrook-photo by ABPH Kade Rogers

THE FUTURE OF “OPERATIONAL EMAIL”

BY CAPTAIN PETER LEAVY

This article seeks to raise a current issue that impacts both the operational and administrative aspects of the ADF. My aim is to generate discussion and comment - the ANI was originally set up with exactly that aim. The Council has embarked on a dedicated effort to move the *Journal* back to its routes, so I am seeking input from those with counter (or supportive) views to generate some discussion.

My issue is that of email, SameTime chat and other forms of electronic communication, and how we deal with it at sea and ashore. Has the introduction of these tools actually improved the way we do business or are we “dumbing down” the capabilities of new technology to suit the way we have traditionally operated?

I am old enough to remember the Ship's Office of *HMAS Hobart* getting its first Personal Computer installed, with most of us thinking it would last about two weeks in the East Australian Exercise Area with all the vibration, rolling etc. Luckily, commercial grade PCs seem to have cut the mustard, with even the ravages of Damage Control training smoke proving nothing more than minor (and temporary) irritants to their internal workings. Laptops and PCs are now ubiquitous, with most of a ship's administration and message traffic being conducted and distributed around various LANs.

While at first glance this may seem a step forward, the practical realities, at least from my experience, are not so rosy. The introducing this new technology onto our “old” way of doing business has led to more work for some. This is not because of the flawed technology; indeed the IT revolution holds the promise of huge benefits, many of which we have already seen. We now have a range of message handling systems, satellite communications bearers, email/chat systems and web sites (including



Hobart leads Stuart, Swan and others in the 1986 Review (Courtesy RAN)

classified ones) that all offer information services and have increased the speed with which information flows around the fleet. However, I think we can use these technologies better.

Take one simple example: sending a signal. In years gone by a drafting officer would draft up his/her signal, obtain the comments and concurrence from appropriate people, and then take that piece of paper to the Captain for his release. The CO only had to read what was drafted, and sign the bottom if he agreed. The drafter would then take that piece of paper to the COMCEN for transmission.

Now that we have gone to the electronic distribution of signals, all drafting is done ‘on line’. For routine matters, this is no great issue. The signal is forwarded to the Captain's release queue and he/she routinely logs on to release them. There is the downside that if the CO has a query, they must either find the drafter or send the signal back (electronically) with their comments or

concerns – a process that will further delay its release. Such queries may have been cleared up in 10 seconds of face-to-face time as the old paper copy was handed over, but that face-to-face time is now no longer ‘needed’. What happens, however, if it is an immediate signal that needs releasing? Well, in theory the drafter needs to send the signal to the CO's release queue, but then has to find the CO who goes to his computer, logs on, reads and approves the signal and then releases it. This is fine if he has the time, but that 10 seconds to read and sign his name may now be a five minute evolution if he is not already logged on (assuming, of course, that he can drop whatever he is doing and proceed to a computer).

So how do we accommodate this? Some COs grant release rights to selective subordinates (maybe the XO, OPSO or POCIS) so that they have the physical wherewithal to send the message electronically, and then rely on management rules to ensure only properly released signals actually leave the ship. This allows the drafter to print off the signal, have the CO sign it as before (so nothing has changed for the CO) and then get one of these privileged subordinates to release it from their release queue. Of course, this has simply transferred the same problem a couple of rungs down the command chain.

A similar situation arises with incoming signals. I am the first to admit that I am one of those dinosaurs who prefers to read large documents in paper rather than a computer screen. (I suspect that, rather than print electronic documents off

THE FUTURE OF “OPERATIONAL EMAIL”

to read like most of us seem to do, my daughter's generation – she's now six – will take those funny paper documents and scan them so they can read them on the computer. It's all a matter of what you are used too, but I digress). Personally I am happy to read signals on a computer screen, BUT the way we currently do so has actually increased the time required. It was much quicker to flick through the (paper) Wardroom Reading Log than to open up all the signals in your electronic queue. If you are happy looking at the subject line and deciding what to actually open, then the time devoted to signals is reduced. However the subject line is often ambiguous enough to require the signal to be opened and scanned. This all adds time.

Now I need to stress again that I am not suggesting a return to 75 baud HF comms and Gestetner machines, but we seem to have evolved our practices to suit what the (largely commercially based) technology gives us – even if it is to our own detriment. There must be a better way.

A related issue is that of email use. We now all have personalised, individual email accounts for auditing and security purposes. The benefits of email connectivity are clear for all, but again how we implement it may not be the best. We used to have formal correspondence and signals come into the ship and addressed to the “Commanding Officer”. If the CO was absent for some reason, then whoever was filling those shoes (such as the XO if the CO was on leave, the OOD out of hours etc) dealt with the issue as the Acting CO. Now such information entering the ship via email is sent personally to an individual, not a position. If that person is absent for some reason they must either:

Have prearranged for their messages to be automatically

forwarded to someone else

Have an ‘out-of-office’ message automatically sent back to the sender who can then re-send it to someone else on the ship, or

Only read the email upon their return – introducing a delay.

In short, much official correspondence now goes to an individual, rather than a position. We always have someone filling a “position” (the OOD for the Captain, the DSO for the Supply Officer if he/she is on leave etc), so information sent to a ‘position’ will always be accessed and actioned as required. This is not the case for information sent to an ‘individual’.

This is not just an issue at sea. Many shore bases have now done away with registries (and their staff) as information is passed around electronically. While this allows the same information to be sent to multiple people simultaneously (as opposed to a paper file doing the rounds one-by-one), it has also led to a loss of corporate accounting of correspondence. Rather than information being stored on a file held and controlled by professional registry staff, that same information is now buried in various people's email accounts, or on various drives on the “LAN”. There may well be appropriate systems for electronic filing, but they don't seem to be widely used, nor consistent across Defence. While some documents sent electronically are backed up by a signed hard copy, which usually finds its way onto a paper file (often managed individually or within a small workplace and not visible to the rest of the organisation), many ‘executive’ documents are not. This means that they risk being sent to the wrong desk officer (who may forward it onto the correct recipient, or delete it) or the right desk officer without the supervisor being aware of it, or the supervisor being swamped by being included as an info addressee on lots of emails. None of

these options are good. The action officer is then left to decide whether that document is to be kept, and if so where and how it is stored. This was not the case with the “old” paper registry. There is also the inevitable problem of version control as draft documents become uncontrolled and widely distributed.

None of this is to suggest that the electronic distribution of information is not the way of the future. Just the opposite, in fact. Correctly used, electronic distribution cuts the time taken to pass information around to seconds rather than days or weeks, but it requires a framework and system (“business rules”, if we want to adopt the latest terminology). I know most people have their own “system” of filing documents so that as individuals they can find what they need, but unfortunately that usually involves making a copy into their own directories which means they alone know where to look for it and many (uncontrolled) copies of documents end up being stored. With storage being a bit like bandwidth and laptop computers on a ship (ie it doesn't matter how many/much you have, you always ‘need’ more) this is inefficient. Of equal concern, when that individual posts out they must either pass those documents to their relief or they simply get deleted. In my experience this has led to a loss of corporate knowledge – or if the information does exist, people don't know where to get it (due to a lack of consistent rules and procedures) and hence it is of no value.

We already have a range of satellite based, digital systems for transferring information to ships at sea and so it seems to make sense that these disparate systems (some for transmitting “signals” and some for “emails”) are merged. In fact more and more “official” correspondence comes via email – we have all seen the minutes, documents, AF Memos etc that come via email with the “original signed by” stamp on the signature block. There is nothing at all wrong with this, as it makes the best use of a more expedient communications path, but the management of those documents has become the issue. There is no reason why the same communication bearers can't transfer both informal emails (an electronic telephone call if you will) and official ‘released’ correspondence – it may be something as simple as informal emails are blue and formal released emails (containing that information that currently comes as a ‘signal’) come with red text (an illustrative example only – I think the solution will require a bit more thought than that).

A few years back we amalgamated the Signalmen and Radio Operators into the Communications and Information Systems branch. While there were valid reasons for doing so at the time, I have always felt that it would have been better to amalgamate ROs and some functions of the Writers. I know that will take a few by surprise, but humour me!! While there are still some quite complicated skill sets that the CIS sailors must master in the COMCEN, the actual communications

aspects of their life (as opposed to the information management side) has – and I believe will continue to – become less. Modern digital communications systems, particularly if you have access to a satellite, are becoming more transparent to the user. How many of us actually understand exactly what goes on behind the scenes of our computer when we tap into an internet site in the Ukraine or send an email to someone in Canada? We have the user interface that we deal with and the behind-the-scene work is largely managing the appropriate bearers – something your ISP does for you and (in the absence of a fault) is largely automatic. Nobody in your ISP office bashes keys every time you head off to ‘www.whatever...’

I see that over time, the management of the bearers will more logically be a WEE, rather than communicator, function. The specific communicator’s skills of old – things like tuning radios, understanding HF propagation, sporadic E, sunspot activity and the myriad of things that used to make the actual communication path difficult to maintain and required specific skills to deal with (as found in ROs) – are increasingly becoming easier with digital and satellite technology. The communications sailors today are increasingly used to manage the information flow, not establish and maintain the actual communications path. In much the same way, the Writers have always managed information in paper form, but of course more and more of that information is now coming to them electronically. Interestingly, when the Writers and RO branches were first established, the writers actually typed correspondence and the ROs typed out the signals – in both cases now this is done by the actual drafter in the interests of time and efficiency. Hence I can see that both the CIS and Writer sailors’ jobs are merging (with the exception of the Bridge side of CIS, or course – something perhaps better suited to

being a seamanship function rather than a communications function. The Writers also have other personnel, pay and policy responsibilities, so it is really just the registry side of their job at issue here). Both will become the managers of information that enters a ship – they are separate because in the good old days information was transferred either by paper or radio with different skillsets for each. Now both these traditional sources of information can come digitally and over the same, increasingly automatic, bearers and so do they need to remain different? I know I daily check my emails, signals and the files that come up from the Registry. Why the different formats?

How can we do things better? I believe we need to be aware of, and accept, that the communications bearers that we currently use for signals and email traffic can merge and that there will soon be no requirement for separate signals, emails or minutes. All three are just formats of passing information, but increasingly the email format is used for all three. I know of at least one ship where signals were being transferred via secure email due to equipment defects in the “normal” satellite communications facilities, and as I have mentioned before, we have all seen official minutes distributed via email. What we need is a Navy (or more specifically, Defence) wide, endorsed and mandated system for managing electronic information - and then use the system. There should be no reason why “official” documents aren’t stored in one place electronically and all users access that parent document whenever they need it. This both saves space over everyone making their own copy and more importantly means an information manager simply updates that one electronic document when a new version is released and everyone accesses that single, and correct, copy. Version control is simplified. I know that many areas of defence already

do operate along such lines (web based electronic forms, for instance) but in my experience there is no real consistency in its application across Defence. A central information management organisation (an electronic “registry” if you like) is what we need and a standardised format for moving and accounting for information. (This is my amalgamated RO/WTR concept!). Importantly, this needs to be managed by properly trained people to manage the information flow – not be left to the users.

I do not profess to have all the answers, but I do believe this is one issue worthy of discussion with a view to a consolidated and accepted methodology being developed in the near term. We must make use of the benefits that the changes in IT are bringing to the world, and that will mean new skill sets are needed in our sailors, and, importantly, some existing ones will need to change. I believe there is a plan to move to web based information transfers across Defence, but even as technology stands today, I think we can do better. Any supporting, dissenting (or other) views? 🚩



Captain Leavy is currently the Director of the Sea Power Centre - Australia in Canberra. He is a Principle Warfare Officer with service in DE, DDG, FFG and ANZAC Class ships, including his most recent tour as CO HMAS Stuart where a large part of the inspiration for this article evolved.

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Visions from the Vault



An RAN Wessex maintains a vigil over the stern section of USS *Frank E. Evans*, 3 June 1969.

At 0315 on 3 June 1969, the RAN's sole aircraft carrier and flagship, HMAS *Melbourne*, was involved in a collision with the destroyer USS *Frank E. Evans*. Both ships were taking part in the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation exercise, SEA SPIRIT, in the South China Sea. It was the second major collision of *Melbourne's* career and, as with the loss of HMAS *Voyager* five years before, the destroyer was cut cleanly in two. The forward part of *Evans* sank within minutes leaving only the stern section afloat. Responsibility for the disaster lay with the destroyer, but while the circumstances of the collision remain reasonably well known, far less is heard of the aftermath.

At the moment of impact *Melbourne's* commanding officer, Captain J.P. Stevenson, RAN, ordered 'Emergency Stations', ensuring that medical parties were alerted and crews stationed at all boats and ladders. Immediately after the collision Stevenson gave the order to let go all

boats, liferafts and lifebuoys. Within five minutes *Melbourne's* motor cutter was in the water, returning with 29 USN survivors on its first trip. The Admiral's barge recovered another eight. Meanwhile a number of *Melbourne* men, some acting on their own initiative, jumped from the carrier to assist other survivors to climb *Melbourne's* scrambling nets or reach the safety of a liferaft. Well aware of the danger to men still in the water, Stevenson deftly used his engines to place the carrier's starboard quarter alongside *Evans* and then secured the ships together. This allowed those survivors who had gathered on the stern section to more easily board *Melbourne* and search parties from the carrier to ensure that no one had been left behind. Two Wessex helicopters were already in the air and two others were brought up from the hangar and were airborne within 14 minutes of impact. One of these rescued an exhausted swimmer at 0340, the last of more than 190 survivors to be brought

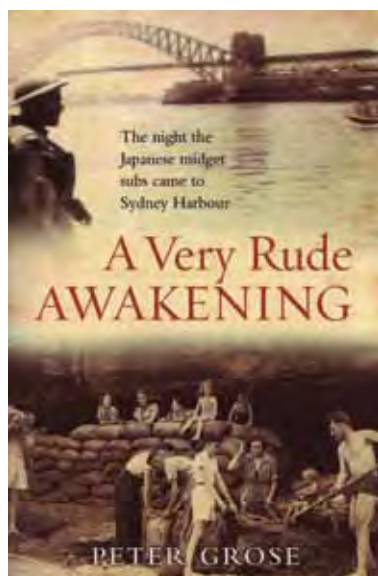
aboard *Melbourne*.

Evans lost 74 sailors and officers from her ship's company, but as the US Chief Naval Operations remarked, without *Melbourne's* exemplary rescue the tragedy might have been worse:

'At a time when both our navies feel great sorrow over the loss of our shipmates in *Frank E. Evans*, may I reaffirm the strength of the admiration which we feel for the superb Australian Navy and the contribution of your great sailors to our cause. I have taken the liberty of passing to *Melbourne* the appreciation of the US Navy for her gallant efforts on behalf of *Evans* crew, many of whom would surely not have survived without such prompt and effective rescue operations.'

Twenty two awards were made to *Melbourne's* ship's company in recognition of acts of bravery following the collision. The type and number of awards were limited by the scale of operational awards for service in Vietnam. 🇺🇸

BOOK REVIEWS



A Very Rude Awakening

by Peter Grose

Reviewed by Ron Bagley (Ron served in the RAN in WWII, and was in Sydney for the attack...)

Allen and Unwin, 320pp

Here is a book which expands G. Hermon Gill's (official history of the Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945) account of the midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour, Sunday 31 May 1942.) It was preceded by the reconnaissance flight of one of the mother submarine's aeroplanes over it two days previously. It should be noted here that Gill has the event on the Saturday, Grose as the Friday.

Although he was there at the time, up and about throughout the event, your reviewer is unable to say which is correct, despite a clear view of Sydney Harbour, from the Bridge to Manly. No matter. Warrant Flying Officer Ito's effort was very successful.

A Very Rude Awakening is a most important book for those who remember the events of 65 years ago, those who learned of them afterwards, and those younger people who no doubt have heard of them before.

It is important also because it is factual, as evidenced by the impressive bibliography, and because it deals with those facts in strict order of time and date. There are no confusing "flash-backs", and as Grose says in his preface to the bibliography "I have deliberately avoided peppering the text of this book with a profusion of footnotes and references". In addition there are no theoretical opinions by the author or any person quoted, such as one finds in publications on events like the *Sydney-Kormoran* battle for instance.

The first chapters deal with the build up to the end of May 1942. Despite the outbreak of war in 1939, Dunkirk, the Blitz, Greece and Crete, the Atlantic battle, the bombing of Darwin, Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, the presence of American warships in the harbour, uniforms in the streets – Sydney was still a peaceful place to be. On 29-31 May, as Peter Grose so aptly puts it, the city received a very rude awakening. He goes further, with evidence of a wry sense of humour which he uses a few times, by saying that the newspapers devoted more inches to horseracing than the war. Also, with rumours of clothes rationing causing a run on the shops, the Government were blaming that on Mother's Day.

The author's running account of the action is best left to the reader, but one salient point must be made. With due respect to the sailors who were killed in the depot ship *HMAS Kuttabul*, we were very lucky.

Let us just look at what was wrong after 30 months of war, with the last six months against a new enemy.

Communication ship-to-ship, ship to shore, all to Headquarters were virtually non-existent because R/T was not installed in many places. Flags are no use at night, and Morse Code, either by W/T or light, is time consuming.

Magnetic Indicator Loops had been laid, six outside and two inside the

Harbour. Only the inner loops were operating on 31 May.

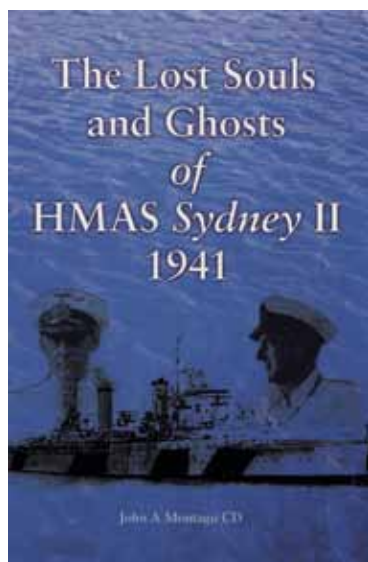
Specific Harbour Defence Vessels were 10 Channel Patrol Boats plus three auxiliary Patrol Boats, but these last three were not armed. (The sailors at the time referred to these vessels as Passion Punts.) The Channel Patrol Boats had .303 calibre Vickers machine guns and two depth charges. But the charges did not have shallow depth settings.

Two anti-submarine vessels were present: *HMAS Yandra*, and *HMAS Binger*, both slow – about seven knots.

Having dealt with all this the author then takes us through the aftermath, and the courage of the men clearing up after the attacks. He then deals at some length with where the blame should lie for errors made, and deals scathingly but correctly with this situation. No decorations were awarded but the Maritime Services employees were given sums of money. The Naval personnel had "appropriate notations made on their service records."

One aspect of the author's thoroughness is the space devoted to details such as house prices and rents following the said raids by the midgets, and the later shelling of the eastern suburbs, also by a submarine. Your reviewer can vouch for the accuracy of the figures: he was paying two pounds seven shillings and sixpence per week at the time, at Vaucluse. For about a week, no-one wanted to live in Manion Avenue, Rose Bay, but it was soon forgotten.

All in all, this is a most satisfying, smooth flowing volume, which makes entertaining reading about an event which could have had much more savage results.



The Lost Souls and Ghosts of HMAS Sydney

By John A Montagu

344pp

Reviewed by Tom Lewis

There must be a bucket of money involved in publishing anything to do with the loss of *HMAS Sydney*, the WWII cruiser, because this is yet another fanciful “explanation”, following *Somewhere Below*, *Who Sank the Sydney*, and various other so-called revelations. A lengthy paperback, *The Lost Souls and Ghosts of HMAS Sydney* doesn’t have a Japanese submarine, but it has plenty of weird suggestions, appalling inaccuracies, and dubious logic.

The book centres itself around two supposed new documents, which change the story of the *Sydney* battle with the German raider *Kormoran*, in which each ship sank the other. The loss of the Australian cruiser, with its entire complement of 645 men, has never been completely explained, for with its superior gunnery control it should have been able to stand off the disguised raider, and sink it if necessary.

However, according to the accounts of the Germans survivors, the warship closed to around 1,600 yards – an incredibly close distance, considering the same ship had scored hits in a fight against an Italian cruiser the previous year at 20,000 yards.

The author of *The Lost Souls and Ghosts of HMAS Sydney* purports to have found two explosive new documents. The first is a 1962 “British Intelligence” report which has a translation of a German 1941 report, advising that 30 survivors from the *Sydney* were recovered. The cruiser had apparently run into a minefield laid by the *Kormoran* and blown up, and these men were rescued. However, the raider suffered an accident a day later and detonated some of her further mines on board. Captain Detmers decided to let his prisoners go down with the ship rather than have his accident revealed. A supposed German document apparently details the story further, and also suggests *Sydney* was torpedoed by *Kormoran*’s motor launch.

Apparently some *Sydney* bodies were encountered by the ship *Cape Otway*, and the RAN command ordered this ship from her station, and as the bodies were washed up on the Australian coast, had some Army personnel bury them, for what reason seems unclear in the book.

However, both of these primary documents seem fake. According to a West Australian *Post* newspaper story, the Germans document contains over 50 errors, including spelling, typeface, and factual mistakes. The supposed English “intelligence” document also has such errors. For example, the word “Kriegsmarine” – the title of the German Navy – is used three times, but once has the first letter in lower case, and once is misspelt to “Kreigsmare”. On a one page document, the date appears twice. One of the sentences simply does not make sense,

looking truncated. Across the top of the page is announced: “This document is the property of His Majesty’s Britannic Government” but the document is dated 1962, which is well within the reign of the present sovereign. There are plenty of other mistakes. One can hardly imagine the boss-lady of the typing pool would let such errors go unchecked. The document bears no resemblance to the production of a real government organisation.

The book itself is an amazing collection of grammatical disasters. There is often a spelling mistake per paragraph; the sentence construction is usually poor, and illustrations are a hodge-podge of poorly reproduced choices which are often strangely captioned. For example, there is no such thing as a “submerged mine” (p.73); there was no such officer as “Lieutenant Commander EW Thruston” on board *Sydney*, but there was an officer by the name of “Thrushton”, and there is no real reason why we should want a picture of a “helmet diver” on page 66, as there is no discussion of diving in the text.

The text itself displays an appalling lack of research, and a similar absence of logic. What are we meant to think when told an “Australian staff admiral” (p.77) was approached by a “signal PO” with a report that *Sydney* was “overdue” on 23 November, but told the signaller to leave the item on his desk as he was “running late for the theatre”? We are also told that this item is “logged in the Archives”? Which Admiral? Which Petty Officer? And how do we know of the flag officer’s bad behaviour – presumably the Admiral pencilled a quick note in the margin to the effect he could not be bothered reading this report as the opening notes of *Madam Butterfly* were sounding as he wrote. Perhaps the “Archives” report can be examined? Unfortunately not: there is nothing to say in which of the many

BOOK REVIEWS

branches of Australian Archives this document can be found, let alone some helpful reference numbers to direct our confirming search. This is simply not good enough.

Why does the back cover tell us there were “654 Officers and ratings” lost off the cruiser when it was actually 645? What evidence is there that *Sydney* hit a mine at night, as the author alleges? There is no list of referenced documents with their location so that the author’s wild allegations may be checked. There are instead a strange collection of chapters, sections, and apparently haphazardly inserted pages. For example, there is a list of “next of kin and people who responded to request for information”; and a list of “acknowledgements” – with a catty exclusion of the RSL at the bottom, for “sitting on the fence” and “collusion”. Then there are “Certificates of Factual Occurrences” in relation to the two ships. I am at a loss to understand what these mean – what is meant by “certificate”, and who is the authority who is issuing them?

Various *Sydney* analysts and historians get a good telling off in places. Barbara Winter (not Winters, as described) who wrote a fine work several years ago, even gets accused of collaboration, apparently because she once lived in Germany. The *Kormoran* survivors must be made to tell the truth, says the author, even though, he suggests, the “statute of limitations” would prevent prosecution. One is not sure if the author reads newspapers, but it is hard to miss that even at this late hour various Nazis around the world are still being hunted and dragged off to face trial. Winter alone isn’t accused either: federal governments, the Navy, and even the RSL are all colluding in a cover-up.

The camera which one of the German *Kormoran* survivors said he hid in a cave on the WA coast is

dismissed, in knowledgeable tones, as a ploy to distract RAN searches from the real landing sites. How Montagu knows this he does not say. But a planned rescue by U-boats was on the cards. Exactly how many U-boats would be needed to rescue the hundreds of *Kormoran* survivors is not discussed, nor the interesting fatality rate which would have befallen quite a few of them in 1942, nor the Kriegsmarine’s historical inability to deploy many submarines in this part of the world.

The sketches made by German prisoners have been analysed. They turn out to be a complete description of the battle *et al.* The analysis is laughable: turn one sketch upside down and it becomes – the *Kormoran*! And so on – for too many pages.

In several places throughout the text the author blames the federal government for not doing enough to solve the “mystery” of the *Sydney*, and it needs to get its act together and pressure the German government for the answers. The only thing books like this do is convince anyone who is responsible for handling taxpayers’ dollars to run furiously the other way whenever conspiracy theorists like Mr Montagu appear. But lastly, the author should be ashamed of himself for dishonouring the German ship’s company of *Kormoran*, the Royal Australian Navy, Army members of WWII, and putting the families of *HMAS Sydney* through the wringer of misery yet again. A thoroughly disgusting book.



Historical artefacts from previous ships that carried the name HMAS Sydney

Thinking of Making a Contribution?

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PARAGRAPHS: don't indent, and leave left justified. Separate paragraphs by one line. Single spacing only. Use one space only after stops and colons.

CONVENTIONS: use numbers for 10 and above, words below. Ship names use italics in title case; prefixes such as *HMAS* in capitals and italics. Book and Journal titles use italics.

Use single quotation marks for quotations. Do not use hyphens for any rank except Sub-Lieutenant.

CITATIONS: endnotes rather than footnotes. Use footnotes to explain any points you want the reader to notice immediately. Book titles follow Author surname, first name, title if any. Title. Place of publication: publisher, year of that edition. So:

Adkin, Mark. *Goose Green*. London: Leo Cooper, 1992.

Adler, Bill (Ed.) *Letters from Vietnam*. New York: EP Dutton and Co., 1967.

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ANI ON-LINE: A GUIDE TO THE NEW WEBSITE.

Our new website is now on-line! In addition to the features available on the previous site, the new site also features a library of past journals, a discussion forum, a news section and member list. This short guide is designed to help you take full advantage of the new features.

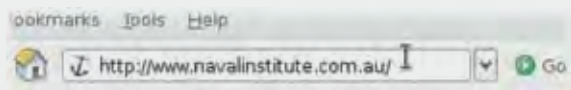


Figure 1

OBTAINING AN ACCOUNT

In order to access the new features of the site you must have a user account for the website. If you have a current subscription to the ANI, navigate to the website www.navalinstitute.com.au using your web browser (figure 1), click the “Members Login” menu item (figure 2), then click the link to download an application form. Fill in the form, then fax or post it to the ANI Business Manager. Once your account has been created, you will receive an email that outlines your member ID and password.

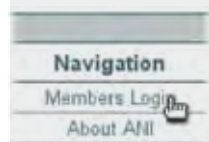


Figure 2



Figure 3

LOGGING IN TO YOUR ACCOUNT

Once you have your account details, you are ready to login and access the new features of the site. In order to login, navigate to the website (figure 1) and click the “Members Login” item (figure 2). Enter your member ID and password as they were provided to you, then click the “Login” button. The case of the member ID and password are important: i.e. “CaSe” and “case” are considered entirely different words by the authentication system. Each letter of the password will appear as a single “*” to prevent others from seeing your password as you type. If you have entered your details correctly, you will be presented with the news page. The grey status bar at the top notifies you of the account you are using (figure 4). You are now able to access all of the new features of the site.

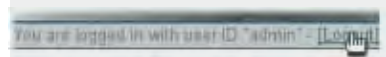


Figure 4

LOGGING OUT OF YOUR ACCOUNT

In order to protect your identity and to prevent malicious use of your account by others, you must log out of the site when you are finished browsing. This is especially important on public computers. In order to log out, click the “Logout” link in the grey status bar (figure 4).

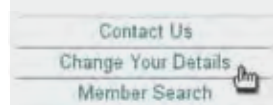


Figure 5

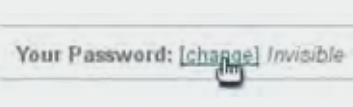


Figure 6

CHANGING YOUR DETAILS

When your account is created, only your member ID and password are stored in the system for privacy reasons. However, you may provide other details that are visible to other ANI members. In order to change your details, login and click the “Change Your Details” menu item (figure 5). Then select the “change” link (figure 6) next to either your personal details or password. Change the text appropriately and click the “save” button (figure 7).

The personal information that you provide will be visible to other members of the ANI but will be hidden from members of the general public. You may provide as much or as little detail as you wish but none of the fields are compulsory. However, you may not change your member ID as it is the link between the on-line database and our off-line records.

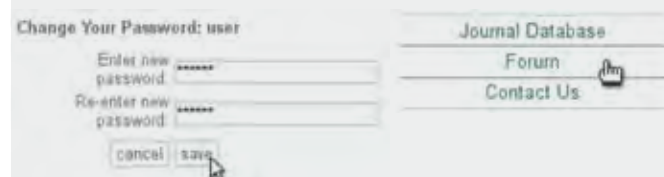


Figure 7

Figure 8

PARTICIPATING IN THE FORUM

In order to post topics and replies in the discussion forum, first login and click the “Forum” menu item (figure 8). Then select a forum that you would like to view by clicking its “View Topics” button (figure 9). Select a topic that you would like to read by clicking its “View this topic” link (figure 10). If you are not interested in any particular topic, you may add your own by clicking the “Add New Topic” button (figure 10). Similarly, once you are viewing a topic, you may post a reply by clicking “Add New Post”. Fill in the heading and body of your reply and click the “Submit” button to add your reply to the topic. If you change your mind while writing your reply, you may click the “Cancel” button and your reply will not be added to the topic.

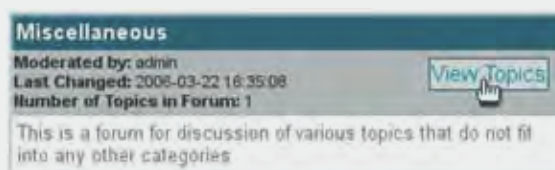


Figure 9

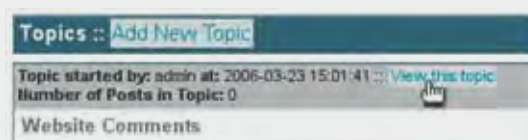


Figure 10

FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have specific questions regarding website features or even a feature request, post a topic in the “Website Questions” forum and a site administrator will reply. Otherwise, happy browsing!

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