The Australian Association for Maritime History Inc.
Quarterly Newsletter

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of vulnerability for the next two to three years. In early December 1999 the problems were reiterated at a Canberra press conference and Briggs said that despite a $266 million dollar injection, two of the already launched Collins subs would only be 75 percent capable by the end of 2000. More could not be achieved in the 12 months. The remainder are to have extensive modifications and full readiness could not be expected until 2005. The recruitment problem was mentioned again, but the figure had dropped. The navy could only provide 40 percent of the personnel requirements for six submarines, in other words a 60 percent shortfall existed. Losses to existing numbers were apparently also serious for ongoing training programs, and the navy was to offer experienced submariners a one-off bonus of $35,000 to complete an extra two years on the subs. Subsequently the media was blitzed with TV and press recruitment advertisements in December, with a noticeable recognition of the significantly important role women could now play in the services. Then late Feb came a press report (WA 29/2/2000) that retention enticements in some circumstances could be up to $100,000, but the article claimed navy officers were still leaving in record numbers. A quote from a navy spokesperson said the plan was to have only two of Collins fleet operational at any one time and there were shortages in all job categories except for medics. A strong reaction appeared the following day (WA 1/3/2000:8) from Rear Admiral Briggs saying he now had 42 percent of the overall 676 staff needed to operate the fleet. Of this crew made up 252 and there were currently 278 qualified submariners. Therefore crews existed for all the boats in the water. He said the navy intended to have five boats operational at any one time. This article said the cash incentive had a positive effect on retention and it indicated 27 personnel had reconsidered their option to leave the submarine service.

Defence Secretary puts deadwood on notice

After 100 days in the job, on 17 February 2000 the new Defence Secretary Dr Allan Hawke sent shock waves through the ADF with an address to the National Press Club which identified historically within the ADF "significant lack of clarity in direction; in roles, responsibilities and structures; together with blurred and poor performance accountability." Furthermore he said, "the organisation's reputation continues to be degraded by stories of poor project management and isolated but unacceptable behaviour by some of our people." Offsetting media speculation of a divergence of views at the top he spoke of, "the diarchy - the unconventional vesting of authority in two equals - Admiral Barrie as Chief of the Defence Force and myself. While we each have particular responsibilities our joint roles might be compared to a good marriage - where there's synergy at the top." The Minister for Defence Mr John Moore later that day had no hesitation in supporting Dr Hawke. After ruminating upon these matters, on 22 February Admiral Barrie went public saying he supported identification of non-performers and a change in the top structure of the defence forces - he indicated there was indeed a serious need for cultural change.

According to Mr Hawke, the ADF is probably the biggest and most complex organisation in Australia - second only to Coles-Myer as Australia's largest employer. The full text of his report is at http://www.defence.gov.au/media/2000/sec1.html

Meantime Interfet operations in East Timor transferred to UN supervision on 24/2/2000 with Maj. Gen. Cosgrove returning to a hero's welcome in Australia to take up a promotion as Land Commander Australia. Described as a soldier's soldier, pundits are already tipping him as the next Chief of the Defence Forces.

Kormoran veteran visits Australia

AAMH members may be interested to learn that I recently met a visitor from Rosstal, Germany in Melbourne. He was Oberfunkmeister Ludwig Ernst who operated Hilfskreuzer (HSK) *Kormoran's* range finder on the *fliegen Kommandobrucke*, (flying bridge) which was immediately above the bridge. Ludwig was the first to sight HMAS *Sydney* and continued to track it right up until the first artillery was fired. He was in the highest point on the ship at that time as the forward mast upper observation position had been abandoned immediately HMAS *Sydney* was sighted. I met him and his wife Lotte at the home of Herman Ortmann - one of two *Kormoran* survivors now living in Victoria. I conducted a video interview on behalf of a friend of mine in New York who works for CBS TV news and is preparing a TV documentary about WW1 and WW2 German raiders. He has been to Germany to interview several *Atlantis*, *Michel* and *Thor* survivors, together with at least one *Emden* veteran. Ludwig Ernst tells his own story to me in German, and as far as I can gather, he recounts the entire saga. I particularly requested him to provide it in his native tongue as important matters can sometimes be missed in the switch to English. Ludwig also brought to Australia an official copy of *Kormoran's* log, and with Herman Ortmann and Mavis McNamara, translated it into English. The log has a footnote written by Dr. Habben, who as readers may know, was the ship's medical officer and was repatriated to Germany prior to the end of the war due to ill health. Habben relates events after October 24 which was the date the supply ship *Kulmerland* departed *Kormoran* for Germany with the log. I consider that the interview with Ludwig Ernst has great significance because he was only briefly interrogated at Fremantle, and mostly by an person who did not appreciate his vital role on *Kormoran*. The translation of the video interview is currently being done by someone better versed in naval dialogue than I. **Frank MacDonough.**

The *Quarterly Newsletter - The Australian Association for Maritime History* is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Contributions are always welcome. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History. The editor is Dr. Paul R. Weaver, 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157. Email pweaver@starwon.com.au In 2000 the publication will go to the printers on the final Mondays of February, May, August and November. Material for inclusion should be sent direct to the editor well prior to this date and should carry the author's signature. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of material.

collectors. There are only two official mints in Australia: Canberra and Perth. Apparently the coins to come will be marked by a portable machine carted to the other cities. Even so, the blurb accompanying the first coin says its was minted "for" Canberra, which is interesting. It was certainly not done in Perth. The brief historical narrative on the card is worthy of mention because the grammar is pretty pathetic. For example: "Both ships were mortally wounded." Furthermore, a question has also been raised as to whether the ship image depicted on the coin is actually of *Sydney*, or of its sister ship.

Collins-sub investigator dies

The death of CSIRO chief Malcolm McIntosh (54) was announced on 8 February 2000. He was a co-author of the damning report on the Collins Class submarines released last year. He had been ill with cancer for some time, with two kidneys removed before he tacked the Collins study. Melbourne born Dr McIntosh was a nuclear physicist by training, and a graduate of the ANU. In his earlier years he had been recruited by Britain to be its Chief of Defence Procurement, and acquired a British knighthood in 1996. Curiously he also received the US Department of Defence Medal for Distinguished Public Service. Australia made him a Companion in the Order of Australia last year. Glowing tributes to him were accorded in Parliament by all parties.

Australian Archives ADF and Britain still stonewalling on HMAS *Sydney* signals

The Melbourne office of Australian Archives is still withholding secret signals believed to relate to the sinking of HMAS Sydney in 1941. Involved in the situation is the Defence Legal Office of the ADF which is unwilling to make a decision without the permission of Britain. The withheld files as cited by the Archives in their correspondence sent to Mr Frank MacDonough on 14 May 1999 were:

Series MP1074/7/0 *Flag Signals (Top Secret)*, 1938-1956, Item: 1/11/1941 to 21/11/1941
Series MP1074/8/0 *Miscellaneous Signals*. 1939-1948. Item 3, 1/8/1941 to 31/12/1941
Series MP1074/9/0 *Flag Signals (Inward) Top Secret)*, 1939-1948, Item: 1/10/1941 to 30/11/1941
Series MP1074/9/1 *Flag Signals (Inward) (Top Secret)*, 1939-1948, Item: 1/8/1941 to 31/12/1941

On 19 January 2000 the Australian Archive descriptions had changed to the following in response to a confirmation request by Mr MacDonough.:

Series MP1074/8/0. item 3: Secret Signals - 1/8/1941 to 31/12/1941 (folio 18 withheld)
Series MP1074/9/1, item 1/8/1941 to 31/12/1941: Confidential Flag Signals - 1/8/1941 (folio 72 withheld)

No doubt Australian Archives in Melbourne and the British High Commissioner in Canberra are hoping Australian maritime historians will be supine enough not to subject them to a deluge of inquiries about the release of these files.

MUP seeks plug

Haven't actually seen the books but MUP blurb says *The Governor's Noble Guest, Hyacinthe de Bougainville's account of Port Jackson, 1825* and *The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price* are pretty snazzy, and now available from bookshops.

Old grave from Flinders' voyage rediscovered

The West Australian's Saturday liftout "Big Weekend" (5/2/2000) carried an interesting article "The Loneliest Grave in WA?" which was about a rediscovered grave on Middle Island in the Recherche Archipelago, near Esperance. Some WA amateur filmakers John Robertson, David McFall and Ian Tarbottom (sounds nautical) accidentally found a weathered wooden cross amidst fallen scrub on New Year's Eve 1999 which was marked "Charles Douglas HMS Investigator May 18th 1803". Douglas had been Flinder's boatswain. The article said the men notified then visited the Fremantle Maritime Museum over the find and had a mixed reception from museum staffers.

Subs-saga brightens

1999 was *anus horibilus* for RAN subs with the startling revelations in the 1999 McIntosh - Prescott report, but the problems didn't end there. An *Adelaide Advertiser* clipping (4/9/1999: 1,5) sent from SA member Gerald Doherty at Flinders Uni revealed that HMAS *Collins* had to be taken in tow early September after it failed in trials following a lengthy series of modifications. Rear Admiral Peter Briggs was also reported as saying the navy was experiencing difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified people, which resulted in submarine personnel level being 47 percent of that desirable. This meant a degree

was the ship's sportsmaster and John being just one of many young Fremantle boys to swarm over the ship on "open day." He says he was greatly impressed with the ship, and like almost everyone else at that time, with the Germans. He says the crew had a couple of Bengal tiger cubs as mascots, and these were especially interesting. Many Western Australians offered hospitality to German sailors, and so a young man by the name of Heinz visited the Doohan home. As a gesture of appreciation he gave the Doohans a special handkerchief with the ship's name embroidered in one corner. John says these were provided to crew especially for the purpose, and while he kept his for many years, it has now disappeared.

Nowadays, he is retired from the workforce but the loss of HMAS *Sydney* II still occupies much of his time. Almost every day his phone at Willagee rings from some part of the world in relation to the incident.

His marathon effort over the years has been an expression of mourning for the 645 men lost with the ship and should serve as a fitting reminder to everyone about the phrase, Lest we forget. **Paul Weaver.**

Footnote: In early March 2000 the Australian Government is expected to publish its decisions based upon last year's recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into the loss of HMAS *Sydney*.

Outstanding new DIMA publications on "boat people" and immigration

Members interested in "boat people" and immigration matters should acquire two new excellent works hot-off- the-press from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural affairs: *Protecting the Border: Immigration compliance*, and *Population Flows: Immigration aspects*. They contain lots of up-to-date statistical data on just about everything you might want to know. In full colour, these latest free editions could well qualify for the best prepared reports ever by a government department. Versions of both can also be taken from the DIMA website at www.immi.gov.au

Macau returned to China

19 December 1999 marked the return of Macau to Chinese control. The event marked the end of a 442 year period of Portuguese rule over the last European colony in Asia. Occupants of Macau are to be allowed by China to maintain a separate political system for a further 50 years. Something like 97 percent of the present population are Chinese. The remaining three percent number about 10,000 people with various degrees of Portuguese ancestry. Covering 25.3 km^2, Macau comprises two causeway connected islands Taipa and Coloane, and an airport built on reclaimed ocean, which are all connected to Zuhai on the Macao Peninsular. High speed ferries operate to Hong Kong 90 KM to the east. Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer and would be East Timor head-honcho Xanana Gusmao attended the hand-over ceremonies.

HMAS *Perth* towed back to WA

The December '99 newsletter carried a report about HMAS Perth's final voyage from WA. Well after a short time in NSW the ship was decommissioned and stripped of some bits and pieces, then removed back to Albany WA over the Christmas break in a 15 day towing exercise reported to have cost $300,000. Predictably, the navy came under criticism for choofing *Perth* to NSW and then towing it back, but the Base Commander of HMAS Stirling retaliated in a newspaper letter (WA 23/12/1999:19) that the exercise was necessary in order to remove $100 million dollars worth of reusable equipment. Furthermore, most of the 320 crew lived in Sydney and the cost of repatriating them by other means would have exceeded the cost of the return tow.

On arrival back in WA, sadly the bows of the once-proud ship had been ignominiously daubed with graffiti by RAN personnel, apparently keen to have their names immortalised in red paint.

The ship is to be sunk as a tourist-dive destination in King George Sound in some two years time, after it has been given the same sort of preparatory treatment accorded HMAS *Swan* a few years back. That is the removal of saleable non-ferrous scrap, scouring of fuel tanks, cutting of access holes and the like. A handover ceremony to the beadles of Albany took place on 28 December. The gifting of the ship to Albany came as a disappointment for several other WA coastal towns, and they now have their eyes on HMAS' *Brisbane* and *Hobart*.

Canberra Mint makes mark on HMAS *Sydney* tragedy

At the beginning of January 2000 word filtered out that the Canberra Mint had produced a $1 commemorative coin depicting HMAS *Sydney II*. The uncirculated coin encased in a small cardboard folder could be purchased from the Mint and its authorised agents for $3. According to the Perth Mint where the editor purchased one, (plus a $25 parking fine.) the coin bearing the small mark "C" for Canberra had an issue of 80,000.

Subsequently it has been learned there is to be a release of a proof coin in April, which is anticipated by coin collectors will cost in the region of $50. This will be followed in July by a release of a coin bearing an "S" for Sydney. "B" for Brisbane, "M" for Melbourne, and "A" for Adelaide are expected to be released in October. Interestingly there has been no news of a "P" for Perth mint mark. The mint marks appear to be a tasteless exercise aimed at generating profits from coin

ships he served in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, in the Middle East and North Africa regions. When old enough he left the Merchant Navy and joined the Australian Army, and from 1945 was in New Guinea. After the war he took his discharge along with about 50 others at Rabaul and worked with the civil administration as a bulldozer operator. This included levelling a cemetery for Japanese war criminals. Malaria brought him back to Fremantle and he eventually married Betty, a nursing sister he met at Hollywood Repatriation Hospital. Later, he went back into the Merchant Marine.

A staunch unionist but never a Communist, he says he became interested in the Russian version of world events through contact with Russian seamen and as a result he learned to speak their language. As the Vietnam war progressed he says he became aware through these contacts that not all was as was presented in the mainstream Australian media, particularly in relation to the American use of defoliants such as Agent Orange. He became deeply involved with the anti-war movement and connected up with Bertram Russell in London. For his troubles he attracted the attention of the Federal Police and ASIO. He says that through his research and ongoing protestations about the use of chemicals in the Vietnam war he was threatened with 25 years imprisonment for "subversion," and was shaken when two dedicated people he met in relation to these activities separately met with unexpected deaths overseas.

John Doohan - 1999
Photo: P. Weaver

Fearing for the well-being of his family, John sold their home near Perth and went to Italy. By now a skilled specialist welder he sought employment in the international oil exploration industry, but he believes that his name had been flagged as an undesirable in countries such as Holland and Turkey because of his pacifist activities. He found that jobs that were almost a sure thing suddenly evaporated, presumably after security checks.

He returned to Australia and confronted with similar obstacles, applied to the Soviet Embassy in Canberra for Soviet citizenship, which was granted. On 19 August 1972, the family boarded a Russian freighter *Novotroitsk* at Fremantle and after three interesting months arrived in Leningrad. Disillusionment with Soviet life came quickly and they resolved to leave as soon as possible. In the face of hostility from the Australian Embassy, and suspicion from the Russians in Moscow, he applied for an exit visa and after five weeks, with all of their savings used up, the family managed to get to London on a diplomatic flight. John still thinks he was lucky not to have ended his days in the Gulag, and that some although not all the Australians then in Moscow would have been quite happy about it.

The ABC interviewed him in London in exchange for a taxi fare from Heathrow, but the British were not encouraging a long stay, so with a loan from a relative the family later made their way to Sweden, which was more sympathetic to Vietnam war protesters.

The wind-down of the Vietnam war brought him back to Australia but jobs were mysteriously short lived. He says that one employer told him he had been pressured to dismiss him. Refusing to comply, the employment continued, but an important contract to repair oil tankers was lost to the business. In desperation the owner took to secretly robbing eight Perth banks and used the proceeds to pay off his employees. That man has now served his time and on reflection suspects an intelligence agency had a hand in the loss of the contracts. An application was made to the Attorney General to investigate, but was unsuccessful.

As far as the loss of HMAS *Sydney* is concerned, few researchers have been more dogmatic in the quest for answers than John Doohan. This interest began to gather strength in the mid 1970s as the thirty year ruling expired on WW2 documents. He is the convener of ESOS, the End Secrecy on Sydney group founded in Perth, but with a small membership spread across Australia. Many politicians and government departments have been subjected to the group's fearless lobbying over time, and the recent Joint Parliamentary Inquiry took and published several submissions from them.

John in short pants
Photo: His mum

For all the efforts John and the group have their share of critics, some whom have been surprisingly hostile. These views too are represented in the published submissions of others to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry. Understandably he is still anathema to surviving *Kormoran* veterans.

Essentially, John feels that the official version of 1941 events, which is mostly dependent on German accounts, is little more than a pack of lies, and that acceptance has largely been due to duplicitous efforts of the Admiralty, high ranking RAN officers and the Australian government of the time. He feels that to a degree this effort continues to the present because the culture in these organisations discourages in-depth self criticism of the present or past. Certainly, there are current and former public servants who lose no opportunity, mostly in private, to derogatorily dismiss Doohan and the group as rabid conspiracy theorists, and equally, there is no shortage of apologists from within these ranks for the questionable actions of other individuals in the past. John takes the criticism of him in his stride and maintains that his only interest is to seek the truth. He bears no personal animosity towards individual *Kormoran* veterans and says he would be more than happy to sit over a cup of coffee with any to discuss matters.

There is another interesting, albeit tenuous connection between John Doohan and the Sydney/Kormoran issue. By one of those peculiar chances of fate, he probably crossed the path of Theodore Detmers in 1933, when he was no more than a young lad in shorts. The occasion was in 1933 when the German cruiser *Koln* called into Fremantle on a goodwill cruise. Detmers

have arisen from a shortsighted government decision in 1973 to discontinue an annual maintenance program. The jetty is now one of the most important tourist attractions in southwest Australia.

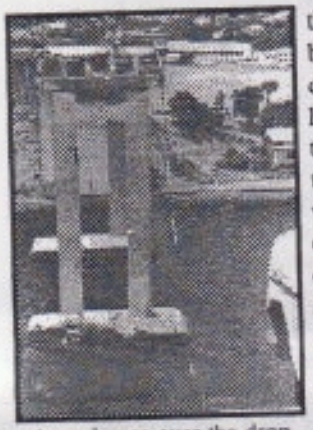
Meantime the federal government has announced a $15,000 project to protect marine life at Carnarvon's historic one mile jetty. The Environment Minister Robert Hill has $7.6 million dollars this year to allocate to projects which will sustain the use and repair of Australian coastal and marine environments. Applications close May 18. Further info from Environment Australia, 1800 803 772.

The old Broome pearlers' jetty, not on the same scale as the ones at Carnarvon and Busselton, is also undergoing restoration by enthusiastic locals who recently had a successful auctioning of "old historic planks" to raise funds.

Tasmanian Bridge disaster commemorated in new book

It seems astonishing that a quarter of a century has elapsed since the ANL's *Lake Illawarra* struck a support of the Tasman Bridge, which crosses the Derwent River in Hobart. The collision dislodged a span in the bridge's roadway and thousands of tons of concrete and steel collapsed onto the ship, sinking it within minutes. Sadly some five late-night commuters in their cars also perished, as did 14 crew on the ship. Author Tom Lewis has recently produced a book, *By Derwent Divided* describing the circumstances which led to the disaster and the aftermath.

Searching for bodies and ensuring that the sunken vessel had stabilised in the fast-flowing, heavily-polluted river became the unenviable task of RAN and Tasmanian Police divers. The event had a significant impact on the workforce of Hobart because so many people used the bridge to commute to work and the extant ferry services came under immense pressure, not only because of the huge numbers of people they had suddenly been expected to convey, but from "small town" politicians who tried to embellish reputations by interfering (unsuccessfully) with the existing fare structure. The subsequent expansion of the ferry service in response to passenger demand is a very interesting part of the book, and there are many photographs of the various vessels pressed into service from all over Australia. Traditional hulls, a hovercraft and a new innovation for Australia, a Tasmanian purpose-built catamaran appeared on the scene. Ultimately with the repair of the bridge finalised in late 1977 the bubble burst and many of the ferries dispersed, but the steel catamaran *Jeremiah Ryan*, designed and built by Bob Clifford and Phil Hercus had attracted substantial attention. Clifford later founded the shipbuilding company Incat which has become world famous for its huge aluminium passenger catamarans.



A car hangs over the drop

Jeremiah Ryan

Lewis, Tom. (1999). *In Derwent Divided.* Darwin: Tall Story Press. Hardcover with 72 pages, 68 B&W photos, maps and illustrations is available in Tasmanian bookshops and direct from the publisher, Tall Stories, PO Box 2935, Darwin. 0801. Ph/fax 08 8945 5130 for A$29.90 plus A$9.80 post and packing. **Paul Weaver.**

Footnote: Former chalkie Tom Lewis is an instructor and historian at HMAS Creswell, the Naval Officer College in NSW. He joined the navy in 1993. He has a string of other publications: *Darwin Sayonara, Sensuikan I-124, Wrecks in Darwin Waters* and *A War at Home*. He has a BA hons., an MA which delved into US cold-war politics and literature, and is currently working towards a PhD related to coastal surveillance and interdiction in Australia's northern waters. An audiophile, he has a diverse range of other interests which include motor bikes, scuba diving, chess, collecting naval swords, and of course most importantly, attending his wife and two children.

John Doohan - profile of an indefatigable HMAS *Sydney* II researcher

The name John Doohan is well known to anyone who has seriously looked into matters surrounding the loss of HMAS *Sydney* in 1941. Indeed this WA man has been ferreting out all sorts of information since – well since a very long time ago, and he has been a persistent thorn in the sides of public servants whom he says would rather the matter was covered up and forgotten. Similarly he has raised the heckles of other *Sydney* researchers, particularly in eastern Australia, and surviving crew members of HSK *Kormoran* because of his non-acceptance of their versions of events.

John has received a lot of accusations against him over time, including having been a "post-war pommy migrant." He is quick to retort that he is Australian born and a descendant of a 19th Century Irish Doohan shipped to NSW at HM pleasure.

While his *Sydney* researching has long attracted attention, he has done some other pretty unusual things in the past. He recounts that during WW2 he served from the age of 14 and a half with the Merchant Navy on an RAN fleet oiler *Kurumba* and saw active service with ANZAC Force, and air attacks in the Coral Sea, Milne Bay and Moresby. His first close contact with HMAS *Sydney* occurred during refuelling operations at Fremantle.

After the bombing of Darwin in 1942 his ship brought maybe the first load of oil into the battered NT port. On other

A nominal roll for Boer War veterans can be accessed on the web at the appallingly complex address, http://www.pcug.-org.au~croe/oz_boer1.htm A guide to Boer War graves in South Africa is at http://www.hag-soc.org.au/sagraves/

Both sites are funded by the federal government. The Australian War Memorial also has a free pocket guide to Boer War battlefields with descriptions and maps.

Memorial service to first Australians to die in WW1

On 11 September 1914 Able Seaman WGV Williams of Northcote Victoria was the first of five Australians to die in an attempt to take a German Radio station at Bita Paka on the northern tip of New Britain, which then was part of German New Guinea. Three of the others were from the RAN and the fifth was a doctor in the Army Medical Corps. A memorial service commemorating the 85th anniversary was conducted at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance.

"Dockers" footy club

Your humble editor lives almost in sight of the struggling Fremantle Dockers' training ground, so week after week during the season he has become conditioned to all-too-many disasters in clashes with others. However the latest one nearly caused a lot of people to choke. American jeans manufacturer Levi Strauss has forced the club to drop the word "docker" from its merchandise and clothing range because it has been registered for one of their lines. A survey suggested that 95 percent of members still wanted to keep the name "Dockers" for the club because they felt it reflected a maritime heritage. Never did like the word myself - too American. Funny thing is that waterside workers were not usually called dockers at Fremantle. They were "lumpers," and later as political correctness softened things up, "wharfies."

Diary account of Japanese massacre presented to AWM

Members may remember an article in our June newsletter last year about a memorial to 21 Australian nurses from the *Vyner Brooke* who were murdered by Japanese soldiers on Banka Island in 1942, being dedicated at Point Walter Reserve on the southern side of Perth's Swan River on 2 May 1999. Guest of honour was 83 year old Mrs Vivian Statham (nee Bullwinkel) who was the sole survivor. Subsequently Mrs Statham has presented her wartime diary, compiled during her captivity, to the Australian War Memorial. Along with a description of the massacre and other matters, the document/s have diagrams of POW compounds - and collected recipes.

Mailbox surprises

Strange things sometimes arrive unsolicited in the editor's mailbox. Professor Leslie Marchant of Notre Dame University, Fremantle is deservedly recognised for his outstanding work on historical French expeditions to Australia, but also works on other subjects. The Australian League of Rights weekly newsletter *On Target* V. 35 No. 43 revealed that organisation has embraced his recent book *The Westminster Tradition and Australia* and is selling it to its members through all its state branches. The organisation described the publication as "a very important book."

Historic jetty fired

The trouble with a fire are the end of the historic Busselton "mile long" jetty on the afternoon of 12 December last year was that the hoses and pumps of the town's fire volunteer brigade were stretched to the limit. Ultimately the firefighters had to take to the water and use buckets and chain saws to isolate the blaze. The incident came as a blow to the Jetty Management who have been raising about $300,000 dollars a year toward an ongoing program of restoration. The general feeling is that someone's cigarette ignited timbers which have been treated with petroleum based preservatives. There are "no smoking" signs but... The jetty was insured.

Undaunted, the committee have reopened the jetty and a small tourist train will continue to run on schedule. People can still walk out almost to the end until repairs are completed.

The jetty had its origins in 1865 to service the timber industry and was relatively short. In 1909 a railway extension was opened, replacing horse and carts. By 1911 the jetty was 600m long. Further extensions to cater for deeper draft ships saw the length increased and in 1960 it had become the longest wooden structure in the Southern Hemisphere. Jutting out into the Leeuwin Current the jetty supports a rich diversity of unusual tropical marine fauna and flora, and is a popular spot for divers. Fishing and crabbing from the deck has been a popular and rewarding pastime for generations.

Site of the December fire - about 40 piles were burnt to the waterline.

There have been previous fires and some major damage from Cyclone Alby in 1978. Much of the structural problems

New HMAS Sydney book in press

Maritime historian Wes Olsen (see Help requested) has just had word (late February) that his typescript which analyses the 1941 *Sydney/Kormoran* battle has been accepted for publication by University of Western Australia Press, hopefully to appear later this year. A family man, Wes is a freight-train driver on the run between Perth and Kalgoorlie in his spare time.

Tom Edwards' grave

Few Australia historians interested in Labour history would not know the name Tom Edwards, who died on 7 May 1919 from from head injuries inflicted three days earlier by police during a major waterfront dispute at Fremantle. The riotous day which became known as "Bloody Sunday" saw six other lumpers injured, some bayonetted by police. Twenty six police also sought treatment for injuries.

Fremantle wharves had been the scene of some trouble during the Great War (1914-18). When a national strike occurred in 1917, then volunteers took their place. Prime Minister Hughs encouraged ongoing preferential employment of these men which was a recipe for ongoing conflict with the unions. The trigger for the 1919 riot was the unloading of the *Dimboola* by scab workers hired by the ship owners. Weeks before it was discovered the vessel had avoided quarantine procedures for Spanish influenza and a standoff with the union developed. Eventually under pressure from the Commonwealth government the State Premier elect Hal Colebatch (1872-1953) decided to personally interfere and supervise the police who had taken control of the wharf. He came down the Swan River on a launch from Perth on the 4 May Sunday. As it passed the under Fremantle bridges it received an angry attack from Fremantle men and women hurling stones and dropping large chunks of scrap iron in the hope of sinking it. A single shot, apparently fired from the launch, found no mark but made the crowd more hostile. As the boat passed, the mob raced for the wharf and a furious battle ensued with the lumpers throwing police barricades into the harbour. Mr Edwards apparently fell to a rifle butt and on his subsequent death he immediately became a martyr for the lumpers. He was 42 and left a wife and three young children. The funeral attracted one of the largest crowds on record at Fremantle Cemetery. Edward's grave, shown right, shares a section of the cemetery with many other lumpers. There is another memorial to Tom Edwards placed in the early 1980s near the Fremantle Town Hall. Colebatch has had his defenders, even in recent times. One historian has attempted to rename the occasion as the "Battle of the barricades" and omit all mention of Edwards.

Tom Edward's grave 1999
Photo: P. Weaver

The tumultuous wharf confrontations between unions, ship owners, stevedore companies and government in 1998 revived many Fremantle memories of the 1919 events. **Paul Weaver.**

New war docos coming soon to a TV near you

The federal government has put up A$5 million dollars for a TV series *Australians at War*. Beyond Productions got the nod for the job from 20 tenderers to produce eight, one hour episodes to coincide with the celebrations for the centenary of Federation in 2001. As well as using archival footage, the producers are keen to hear from anyone who may be in possession of significant original documents, films, tape recordings and the like relating to any of Australia's wartime activities. In the first instance they can be contacted via The Department of Veterans' Affairs. PO Box 21. Woden. ACT. 2606. Do not send any materials initially.

Gulf War - Vietnam War - Boer War - nominal rolls

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has compiled a nominal roll of Australian service personnel who took part in the 1991-92 Gulf War against Iraq. So far the list has the names and service numbers of 1,448 navy; 162 air force and 48 army veterans. Its compilation has been done in association with a mortality study being undertaken on that group of people. Veterans and their families can contact the DVA for further information on 1800 502 302.

Australian governments have been seriously remiss for their lateness in compiling end of war lists as evidenced by the late efforts with the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. Things are changing however and the DVA has already announced it is working on one for East Timor. The compilation of the Vietnam roll has allowed a major health survey of veterans to be carried out and this has justified claims over many years that the group and their families were indeed experiencing significant health problems compared to the rest of the population. Gulf War veterans have also made claims that they are experiencing significant problems. The *AAMH Newsletter*, September 1999 carried an in-depth report on this.

account he gives is entirely factual? The following discussion may cast some light on his motivations.

His book was obviously geared for popular public demand and is a little free with the facts at times, and somewhat reticent at others. It is certainly evident that he was a very able and shrewd Captain. He had previous command experience in destroyers and was obviously highly regarded. His appointment to command *Kormoran* came when he held the comparatively junior rank of Lieutenant Commander.

It appears to me that he was excessively secretive and devious; for example he regretted being "talked into" taking a propaganda department reporter and a cameraman on cruise, because with them present "you weren't as free as you would like to be." (p.38). (Detmers apparently was not deterred by their presence at the final battle when they made a photographic record, which unfortunately did not survive.) From indications he did not readily take other officers into his confidence, not even his Second in Command (XO). On p.42 he noted, "Of course no one onboard apart from myself knew the exact date of our departure." Earlier, on p.23 he said that, "from the start I took him (the XO) into my confidence in all important matters." In fact the XO and Chief Engineer were only told on the night before departure and the others kept in total ignorance.

Detmers' deceptive manoeuvring to close in on merchant ships without raising any undue suspicion was quite extraordinary. He was a master of deception, and rarely was thwarted. He had also practised "unobtrusive" underwater torpedo firing (p.35).

Detmers states that he based his account on his War Diary which must have been sent home in one of the last supply ships prior to the action with *Sydney* and copied later (p.120). As one would expect, he names and often praises key members of the crew and all the regular officers, with one puzzling exception: Lieut. Baron R. von Malapert, who was the Wireless and Cipher Officer and must have played a very important if not critical role during the entire cruise. Could it have been because von Malapert was one of the allegedly "violent" Nazis aboard who would supposedly stop at nothing, but allegedly a Lieut. Greter was in this category, and is named.

The omission was more likely due to the sensitive work which the Wireless Officer supervised and about which there is an occasional vague clue. There is mention of the Wireless Officer and his staff closely monitoring for radio transmissions from vessels being intercepted and attacked (p.154). In practice, this scanning of enemy maritime frequencies was a regular task undertaken by tactical SIGINT teams on at least some of the German raiders. B-Dienst in Germany could direct them onto target transmissions, and they could also cover local radio traffic outside the range of the former. Such a close watch ashore and afloat was bound to detect some callsign compromises and other useful lapses in Allied security procedures.

After sinking *Eurylochus* off Freetown in early 1941, Detmers wrote, 'the ether was alive.' In this respect they heard a nearby merchant ship asking the Admiralty if it should continue to Takoradi (p.85). They also intercepted reports that other Germans had mined the waters off Brazil (p.125). Later, in the Indian Ocean, Detmers was immediately aware that the British had taken a DF bearing of a coded message he had made on departure from the supply ship *Alstertor*, and that Mauritius station also took a bearing of the latter on the next night (p.141).

Therefore, there is no doubt that *Kormoran* had a small but highly effective intelligence gathering capability to supplement the sophisticated support from B-Dienst and HQ in Germany. Supporting this, Admiral Doenitz in his memoirs of 1959, the same year Detmers' book was published, states they were able to read most signals giving the position of British ships, convoys and submarines, and this was a very great advantage, especially as it was not suspected that the codes were being broken .

Besides the on-voyage capabilities of the crew, they were evidently well briefed before departure from Germany, and had details of the Admiralty's general instructions for British merchant ships (p.169), which would have included QQQQ signals and the procedures for challenge and reply, matters to which Detmers pleaded ignorance when accounting for the meeting with *Sydney* (p.180).

As well, Detmers received shipping intelligence gleaned from Japanese and mercantile circles via Rear Admiral Wenneker, German Naval Attache in Tokyo. During *Kormoran's* final supply rendezvous with the *Kulmerland* in late Oct 1941 a "valuable document" listing enemy shipping operating in the Indian Ocean was handed over. The *Straat Malakka* was on the list (p.175). This pleased Detmers because he had recently adopted its identity. The question arises as to whether this was by coincidence, or perhaps it was one of a few ships whose secret callsign had previously been compromised and was now held by him?

What else we can only surmise because apart from the occasional slip, Detmers seemed quite reticent to reveal much of substance in his book. In comparison Admiral Doenitz was much more frank. There is no question in my view that German Naval intelligence held the trump cards at this stage of the war.

One obvious inaccuracy in the book is when he says he recalled seeing the *Sydney II* and sister ships in Sydney during the cruiser *Koln's* visit in 1933 (p.178), but they did not arrive in Australia until 1936 at least.

Finally, there is the consideration of Detmers' oft repeated comment that he was not sent to trial after the war. Perhaps this was to ease a guilty conscience and reinforce the impression on readers of his innocence? Use of a false identity and callsigns were not against International Law, although certainly nothing to be proud of. However not so, for example if torpedoes were fired at *HMAS Sydney II* on 19 November 1941 while still flying the Dutch flag! **Ian Nicholson**
Yaroomba, Queensland.

Footnote: Ian is the author of the well known reference editions, *Log of Logs*.

Needless to say the war took its toll for Fremantle. The pre-war regularity of P&O and Orient mail liners would never return. Nor would my Grandparents living in Malcolm St. Fremantle receive their Tuesday afternoon mail from England. Locally, Stateships had lost their newest ship *Koolama* in the nor-west attacks by Jap planes.

However, by 1949 things were moving again. A new look Orient liner *Orcades* arrived in Fremantle in January, and P&O's *Himalaya* in October passing old timer *Maloya* off Rottnest while bringing a fellow ordinand to Australia.

These companies continued to build into the 50's and 60's. *Canberra* (P&O), *Oriana* (Orient) being the last shipbuildings before these lines amalgamated and the Orient flag disappeared. I recall *Canberra* having difficulty in berthing at F Shed, stirring up the mud as the tugs pushed and shoved to get her alongside the wharf.

The 50's belonged to ships British, Greek and Italian, bringing assisted migrants to Australia. *Australis, Ellikis, Flavia* and many others. This scheme concluded in 1977 with *Australis*. bringing the final shipload.

In the 60s notable changes took place in the harbour. The new Passenger Terminal replaced the old F and G Sheds on Victoria Quay, and in 1969 the *Encounter Bay* (recently retired) introduced the new method of cargo handling; containerisation. North Wharf had been extended adding Berths 11 and 12, and a strange looking crane was sitting there. A new railway bridge had been built further east to accommodate them. No longer could you say "that's an oil tanker because its funnel and accommodation, bridge etc were near the stern" because the container ships were similar.

A widened Victoria Quay access road came to the Port Authority because marshalling of goods trains in Fremantle had ceased in preference to a new facility further north, on the coast at Leighton.

The early 70's made their own history as the airways took over. Soon passenger ships became a rare sight. Luckily I got in a few ocean trips just in time as a ship's chaplain. *Angelina Lauro* from Fremantle to Sydney; *Galileo* from Fremantle to Melbourne and *Iberia* from Sydney to Fremantle. Ultimately the first two ships were destroyed by fire, the third was scrapped in 1972.

Does anyone remember the ten cargo sheds on North Wharf? They have long gone and open berths are now the order of the day. On Victoria Quay, H Shed gone, E Shed has moved and is now a retail shopping market. What a nuisance having the now old Passenger Terminal on current site.

The concept of containerisation has grown and grown. Some of the beginners from France, Germany, Italy and Britain (ACT Line) have ceased to operate, but more have taken their place: Contships, Mediterranean Shipping Company, K Line and P&O/Nedlloyd to name a few. It is the era of chartering, takeovers and amalgamations. For example P&O/Nedlloyd, Williselusen/Wallensius and so on.

The 90's have had a very special significance. Stateships built 3 new ships at Jervoise Bay. Before we reached the Centenary of the Port's opening celebrations (1997) Stateships had gone, after 83 years of service to WA Ports and beyond. A reenactment of Blue Funnel Line's *Sultan*, the first ship into CY O"Connors concept of a Harbour at the mouth of the Swan River took one's mind back to Blue Funnel's, *Centaur* I, a hospital ship torpedoed by the Japs off Brisbane - to *Centaur* II and its long service between Fremantle and Singapore, along with other lines, and even that 75 foot funnel of *Nestor* in the 30's.

Sadly no longer the sounds of melodious tooting tugs in the harbour. Now a Fremantle Port Authority signal mast, bare like Mother Hubbard's cupboard. What a contrast to the 1st signal station on Cantonment Hill - with its black balls and colourful flags.

A new breed of tourist ships came on the scene in the nineties, confined to February and early March - P&O's *Oriana* and *Arcada*, the *QE II* and others.

But for me the container companies are still really fascinating. The P&O/Nedlloyd combine uses *Pegasus Bay* (Formerly *City of Durbin*) and a host of other memories from the past. *Ellerman's City*; Portline, Clanline, Bakke, British, India and so on - all gone. Wilhelsem from the 30's now amalgamated to Wallenius Car Carriers is still here. Even the original container companies are gone. As amalgamations, takeovers and charters go on and on. Very little stability - Contships yes, K Line at last - yes, P&O/Nedlloyd out with 5 new vessels, 5 smaller to come. Every so often a daisy appears in the harbour. You've seen it before, ships like Baltic's *Magnitogorsk*. When P&O/Nedlloyd's *Otago* sails in on 24 August look at it closely? Yes you've seen it as *NYK Providence* and then *Provider*. Not sure? Don't give up. Hang in there. Just enquire.

The big question now of course is the rival port - not an FPA idea, as yet, but honourable ex-Politician Charlton's. Cheers for some, possibly no more sheep carriers in the inner Harbour. Chris Gee reports in Fremantle Edition of the World Ship Society's Bulletin that Fremantle is about to receive 130 fewer calls per year. My own observations over twelve successive days in March 1999 showed 54 ships using a possible 216 Berths. Its only fair to ask - what of the future of Fremantle's inner Harbour?

Years ago I had intended to celebrate my Silver Jubilee of Ordination with a trip along the WA Coast. Sadly, Stateships ceased taking passengers a few months earlier with *Kangaroo II* being the last ship. Now for my Golden Jubilee, can I travel Fremantle to Fremantle? No way! So much for 60 years! What of the future? **Father Henry McFaull**, Fremantle

Captain Detmers' book revisited by a member

The Raider Kormoran by Captain Theodor Detmers is the only book by a participant in the *Sydney/Kormoran* action. Therefore this calls for some reanalysis in the light of developments since publication, particularly the Ultra revelations and the recent Parliamentary Inquiry into the loss of HMAS *Sydney* II. Apart from expected German bias, we must ask if the

been disciplined and further serious charges may be laid. The incident apparently took place in a forbidden part of the ship.

Another sad situation allegedly involving alcohol in the RAN was splashed on the front page of Perth's *Sunday Times* on 13 February. A male sailor from HMAS Stirling naval base who had undergone an alcohol rehabilitation program, found himself facing a psychiatric assessment following a suspected overdose of prescribed medicines and had gone absent without leave. He was then charged accordingly. Facing a disciplinary hearing, he went AWOL a second time by apparently swimming eight kilometers from Garden Island (WA) to the mainland. His mother alleged that her son's problems were related to conflicting medical treatment and the ready availability of cheap beer in navy messes. The newspaper report by Jim Kelly said the sailor, who has an estranged wife and three young children also had other health problems and should be discharged on medical grounds. In response to Kelly's probing the new commanding officer at HMAS Stirling urged the man to return so that his problems could be treated. He was quoted in the report that the navy was "not a draconian bad boy in all this."

Astonishingly, the day after, the navy revealed that the sailor had been dishonourably discharged on 30 September last year, the day after he went AWOL for the second time. The sailor's mother said she had many contacts with the navy since he went AWOL to try and sort matters out, but the news was never revealed. An HMAS Stirling spokesperson blamed Canberra and reportedly claimed, "We were not aware he had been discharged." (ST 20/2/200 p.27) Interestingly this is not the first incident reported over the years in the WA media of peculiar goings-on with personal records of sailors who rock the boat at this base.

Meantime alcohol still plays a role on Australian fighting ships at sea, even on the beleaguered billion-dollar plus Collins subs. The enduring PR justification is that "only" two cans are issued per rating off-watch, and that officers do not partake.

Another Flinders reenactment coming up

With stirring sea shanties being sung in the background at Royal Perth Yacht Club on 6 December WA Premier Richard Court waved his blessings over an entrepreneurial proposal for a reenactment voyage to celebrate the 1801 'round Australia voyage of Matthew Flinders on HMS *Investigator*. Mr Court, a keen fan of matters nautical said Flinders was the first to call the continent "Australia."

Behind the idea is a company called Historic Events International, with one Jonathon King as director. Mr King plans to charter an as yet unspecified tall-ship with a professional crew for a one year voyage from Portsmouth then around Australia in 2001. He anticipates passengers will pay about A$200 per day to participate. He hoped that among the passengers would be people willing to role-play the parts of significant voyagers in the past. Aborigines from different coastal regions would be invited to join in. Initial press reports on the proposal appeared in *The Australian* and *The West Australian* on 7/12/1999.

Australia - Flinders - which came first?

Probably a good subject for a heated bar room discussion, but evidently the Spanish word *Austrialia* was invented as a geographic name for a part of the New Hebrides by Pedro de Quiros in 1606. What, you knew that anyway? For more information you could start with George Collingridge's *Discovery of Australia*. (1895). Facsimile edition 1989. pp.246-251. Could be timely for some revisionist thinking on the entire subject, maaate. A lot of foreigners reckon Australia is where Adolph H. got a leg up. Confused with the home of the strudel, Austria of course.

Containers and P&O

The P & O house magazine *Wavelength* says the company had managing interests in 45 ports around the world in 1999, with more scheduled for 2000. At White Bay in Sydney they service 300 ships a year. Another facility at Glebe Island can unload nearly 2,500 vehicles a day and prepare them for the showroom. However, increasing residential pressure was putting pressure on existing port facilities and the company was moving to develop Port Botany. The company's newest ships carry an enormous quantity of cargo. They say if all the containers from one were laid end to end they would stretch for 25 miles. (46.3 km if they mean nautical miles.) Thanks to Gerald Doherty for that clipping too.

A jubilee of ship watching

Fremantle Catholic Priest Father Henry McFall has spent a lifetime in love with ships, and throughout that time has maintained a written record of his observations of the comings and goings in the port. In this essay, stimulated by his 1999 golden jubilee in the priesthood, he reflects on the many changes he has witnessed in the local maritime environment:

Having completed priesthood studies in Ireland, late in August 1949 I stepped ashore in Fremantle off RMS *Orion* which had survived the war, unlike *Orcades* her sister ship only 5 years old. It was back to peace time operation unlike my outward journey on *Asturias*, war time grey, and troop deck accommodation.

William Peckover (1747-?) is the subject of research by B. Sharman (08 9592 1380). Peckover was a gunner and senior WO with Cook on all three of Cook's main voyages. Later he served with Bligh on *Bounty* and was one of the officers who made the subsequent voyage to Timor in the longboat. On May 14, 1801 he signed aboard HMS *Gelykheid*. What subsequently happened to him has not been determined. Any help will be appreciated.

Mrs. E.A. Duncan is researching her great great granduncle Captain Thomas Watson of Sydney and has some unspecified queries. Her postal address is Box 404 Cooma North. NSW 2630.

RAN had Email in WW1

Everyone knows what Email is don't they? No its not that mostly forgettable stuff which pours into you computer from the internet, but one of Australia's oldest surviving businesses. Indeed there is probably no home in Australia which does not have a product of one form or another linked to the company. A corporate history which appeared in *The West Australian* 6/12/99 p.39 revealed that the company was founded in 1912 by Austrian immigrants Joe Schartl and Archie Schulz who initially manufactured carburettors and surgical instruments, then during WW1 equipment for the Australian warships *Sydney* and *Melbourne*. The business went from strength to strength, publicly listing and diversifying along the way. Email is an abbreviation of Electricity and Allied Industries Ltd.

SA archaeological conference - call for papers

There has been a call for papers for the Joint Annual Conference for ASHA (Australian Society for Historical Archaeology) and AIMA (Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology) which is to be held in Adelaide between 25 and 27 November this year. For further information please contact the AAMH treasurer Mr Nathan Richards Nathan.Richards@flinders.edu.au Home phone: (08) 8351 1134 Work: (08) 8201 3769 Mobile: 0402041509. Nathan is an archaeological doctoral candidate at Flinders University. He is currently directing a dig near the Glenelg Jetty, Holdfast Bay and has promised a report for the next newsletter.

Women pilots landing service jobs

Women can probably do any service-related job that a man can do but have always had to battle against chauvinistic attitudes. Amongst the most prestigious jobs are those of of aircraft pilot or navigator. Currently the RAAF has seventeen female pilots and navigators involved with every type of aircraft they possess, including F111s. The Army has seven female helicopter pilots, while the RAN has one female pilot and three flight crew.

HMAS *Moresby* springs into Chinese role

In 1999 former Australian survey vessel HMAS *Moresby* was sold to Chinese business interests and renamed *Patricia Anne Hotung* after the wife of chairman of Hotung Institute of International Affairs Mr Eric Hotung. Mr Hotung (74) is a wealthy Hong Kong resident who reportedly has spent over A$1 million on a refit enabling the 95 metre ship to carry 850 passengers. According to *The West Australian* (7/12/99:30) the new owner hosted a dinner in Darwin for Xanana Gusmao during September last year. The ship departed Fremantle on 4 December to take part in the repatriation of East Timorise to Dili. On deck it carried a 5 ton container of supplies collected by Perth priest Farther Brian Morrison, plus other materials from 'Timor Aid,' 'Friends of East Timor' and West Coast College of TAFE. The ship has a 17 strong Philippina crew, and according to the newspaper its use is available free to (unspecified) international organisations.

Alcohol in the RAN - continuing hiccups

Around the end of the century came the news from Darwin that a drunken Petty Officer had been caught streaking naked across a sporting ground, something he undoubtedly regrets to this day.

A far more serious incident happened at 12.35 am on Friday 4th February 2000 when a 27-year-old female sailor aboard the Guided Missile Frigate HMAS *Newcastle* was reported overboard whilst the ship was on passage from Darwin to Sydney. The incident occurred 28 km off the coast of Newcastle. The alarm sounded and miraculously the sailor was retrieved within 12 minutes using the ship's small boat. She was taken to the sickbay for medical assessment and counselling by a navy chaplain. An initial investigation by HMAS *Newcastle* Commanding Officer, Commander Peter Naughton indicated the incident was a result of alcohol consumption and skylarking.

The Maritime Commander, Rear Admiral John Lord ordered a further investigation by the Naval Investigation Service to determine the full nature of circumstances surrounding the event saying, "Any incident which endangers the lives of our people is viewed as extremely serious and I will ensure it is fully investigated and that appropriate action and if necessary disciplinary action is taken under the Defence Force Discipline Act." (Source: ADF 10/2/2000) Subsequently six navy personnel have

Queensland and Perth but there was the suspicion this was disingenuous due to a political directive that government agencies were to not give them any special assistance, thus placing the employees of those agencies in an ethical dilemma. Humanitarians in Perth came to the rescue and in a short time had organised rental accommodation, medical treatment, English lessons and for several men, jobs that Australians did not want to fill. Another group was sent by bus to Perth on Australia Day and arrived in an exhausted condition the following morning. The volunteers were waiting, but the Government had second thoughts on its previous decision and came to the party. Problem was some of the refugees did not want to take the three year temporary visas on offer, believing instead that they were entitled to permanent residency status because they had landed in Australia before the law changed last year. An all day standoff developed on the 27th (see photo) and eventually all but eight were persuaded to accept their status, and in turn the associated benefits. Those that held out maintained a silent protest in a park for several days but their status was not changed.

Afghan boat-people in Perth about to receive temporary refugee visas - Jan 2000

Photo: P. Weaver

The Afghan men carry with them appalling stories of persecution and danger, and because of the excesses of the transitory Taliban regime they all fear they would have been murdered. Many have lost male relatives in this way. They say that they worry greatly for their families who insisted they leave. There are no longer mail or telephone services in Afghanistan by which they can communicate. They say that the Taliban only sees males capable of resistance worthy of attention. Women and young children are apparently relatively safe. Some Afghans arriving by boat have been as young as 14, and these go into foster care after refugee status is recognised. Attaining this asylum is not automatic and people are interviewed more than once by experienced staff in an attempt to establish *bona fides*. When this is established and a refugee visa issued, they are also provided with a summary of their story in English. Their situation can be revoked if evidence later surfaces that they have not been truthful. It appears that the three year visa can be extended if the dangerous situation in their country of origin is unchanged, but under current policy, eventually they must return. The men who came to Perth in January had been in detention for near on six months. The Afghan refugee situation has been very serious for years. In 1996 there were 4.5 million who had fled to UN camps in Pakistan, the figure is now less but still substantial in comparison to the number who have come on their own initiative to Australia. Generally Afghans tend to move back to their homeland when conditions are peaceful, and this desire has been widely expressed by those who have come here. Australia has no diplomatic office in Afghanistan and those wishing to apply by more legitimate means must do so in Islamabad, no easy task considering the numbers.

Humanitarians and refugees alike have evoked little sympathy in Australia from a vocal minority who have expressed their angry views through various talkback radio stations and "letters to the editor" in newspapers. Some people in all seriousness have suggested that the boats and their passengers be sunk at sea. For a while the government made noises that it might intercept boats on the high seas, outside of Australian territorial waters. However, to try and extend jurisdiction in such a way only happens in major wars and not surprisingly was quickly squashed.

A series of public meetings were held around Australia by Mr Ruddock in early 2000 to allow input into the future policy forming process. Meantime increasing numbers of boat-people eligible for the temporary three year refugee visas are being moved into the community with the help of backpacker hostels.

According to DIMA figures for 1998-99 there were 926 people of various ethnicities who attempted illegal entry by boat, but 2,106 by air. However, in June last year there were 5,592 persons who had overstayed *bona fide* visitor visas, mostly from the UK, followed by the USA. **Paul Weaver.**

Help requested

The AAMH Newsletter is pleased to report research objectives when space permits however it should be noted that the Association does not maintain any research archives of its own. Nor is the Association in a position to undertake individual research assignments on behalf of others.

In July 1940 HMAS *Sydney II* was painted with a visually disruptive camouflage pattern, then in September 1941 a new pattern was applied. Several photos of the first pattern exist, but this is not exactly what the ship looked like when sunk by the Germans off WA in November 1941. WA researcher Wes Olsen is seeking a photograph of the second design to use in a forthcoming book. He can be contacted on 08 9337 4631.

John Waldron, 25 Cressy St. Montmorency, Vic. 3094 seeks any information on *Sea Queen* which arrived in Melbourne 15 April 1844.

October 1941 he took command of HMAS *Perth* and again distinguished himself in the Battle of the Java Sea. On 28 February - 1 March 1942 HMAS *Perth* was sunk by the Japanese in the Battle of Sunda Strait. Waller and 355 others perished.

Lt Cdr Barron

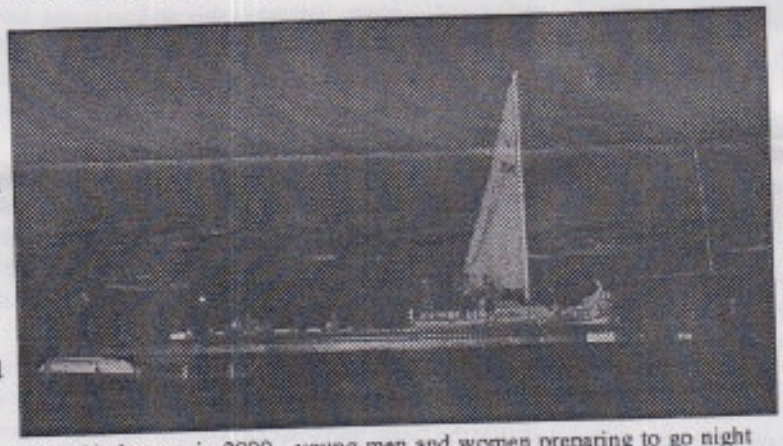
The naming of Camp Waller at East Fremantle was the idea of the late Lieutenant Commander Eric J. Barron, VRD, RANR(S) who was something of an unsung navy hero, like so many others who have served with Australian defence forces. For him, Waller had been an inspirational figure during WW2.

Born in Tavistock, Britain in 1900 "Skip" Barron as he eventually became known to all and sundry, had long been connected with the scouting movement, since 1909. According to Skip's son John (70) Skip's father had been one of Baden Powell's original scout leaders. Skip Barron served in the Great War on sailing ships, and eventually came to Australia as master of a four masted barque *Vimerra*.

As a member of the Naval Reserve, the outbreak of WW2 saw him back into active service on 2 September 1939.

He acquired a proud record during his Australian wartime navy service, commanding HMA ships *Warrnambool* from 1941-43; then *Kybra* in 1943, then *Launceston* 1944-46. *Launceston* and *Warrnambool* were corvettes. When in command of *Warrnambool*, he recorded in his Letter of Proceedings that he had in the first year of the ship's commissioning steamed 36, 000 miles, carried out five evacuations or troop rescues, been present in 18 air raids, ferried 4,000 troops to New Guinea, and landed part of Plover Force in Timor. According to Tom Lewis who provided some of the service details for this article, the ship was narrowly missed on two occasions, and Barron judged they had been very lucky not to have been hit. *Warrnambool* assisted in the evacuation of personnel from the destroyer *Voyager*, when it was ultimately destroyed by its own company whilst under enemy fire. *Warrnambool* also evacuated civilians from Java. On *Launceston* in 1945 Barron participated in various British Pacific Fleet operations. (Incidentally, after the war *Warnumbool* carried out minesweeping and anti-piracy operations from Hong Kong, then was sunk in 1946 while sweeping a minefield off Queensland.)

Immediately after WW2 Skip revived the 69th Sea Scouts in downtown Fremantle. The group later moved to the first of two sites on the riverside at East Fremantle and became known as the 1st Fremantle Sea Scouts.



A suitable legacy in 2000 - young men and women preparing to go night sailing - a regular occurrence on the Swan from Camp Waller, East Fremantle
Photo: P. Weaver

It is difficult to imagine a more appropriate person for the task. He was a man of enterprise with connections in the right places, and on more than one occasion the sea scouts benefited from his acquisition of various bits of useful equipment "surplus to official requirements." All manner of nautical skills were taught and young scouts learned how to splice rope and wire, and to sew their own canvas kitbags under his patient tuition, and periodically the group would all sail to offshore Garden Island for weekend camps. They were of course halcyon days before HMAS Stirling naval base was established.

When Skip reached the mandatory retirement age for scout leaders in 1980 he was awarded Australian Scouting's highest honour, The Silver Kangaroo. Nevertheless, his scouting links continued through his dedication to maintaining the variety of boats belonging to the group, but eventually failing eyesight obliged him to give that up too. He died in Fremantle on 13 September 1987. The 1st Fremantle Sea Scouts have photographs of him, Captain Waller, and HMAS *Perth* mounted on the wall alongside their most important ceremonial pennants. **Paul Weaver.**

Boat people

The arrival of unprecedented numbers of economic and political refugees on unscheduled voyages to the northwest coast and offshore territorial islands has revealed an unpalatable side of Australian officialdom. inasmuch as the burgeoning resistance to allow public scrutiny of the way in which these people are being treated and processed in the various concentration or detainment centres. Mainstream media, and humanitarian organisations report great difficulty and frustration in gaining access to these places. Immigration Minister Philip Rudock said on 31 November, "There is no way that their faces, their images, their names, should be flashed around the world. We do this to protect them and their families." However, the government has never been reticent in showing the faces of boat people in official footage when it suits the public relations agenda, such as when boats are intercepted at sea. Then in January this year the Government started releasing groups of middle eastern refugees from the detention camps. The first two groups were bussed from Curtin Base near Derby to

Navy's last Oberon retired

US and Australian submariners conducted a 10 day exercise "Lungfish 99" off the southwest coast in early December 1999. HMAS' *Otama*, *Farncomb*, *Waller* and nuclear USS *Los Angeles*, departed Cockburn Sound on 31 November in formation for the benefit of PR and media helicopters. Two RAAF and one USN Orion aircraft also participated. It was the final exercise for the 21 year old *Otama*, the last boat of the Oberon class in the Australian fleet. Decommissioning was scheduled for 17 December this year. The navy is ever optimistic about the replacement Collins class submarines, nevertheless the *Otama* has been mothballed for a while, just in case.

Four subs heading out from Fremantle
Picture courtesy Channel Nine News, Perth.

Reportedly, during Lungfish 99 war games there were several battle scenarios as the subs and aircraft stalked eachother. In one, the old *Otama*, famous for its stealthiness was pitted against the other three. Some shyness about the results apparently. However, the various crews were treated to the terrifying spectre of high speed torpedoes, albeit blank, chasing them down. Media reckoning was that the event was the biggest gathering of subs in the region since WW2.

Puru again in 2001 - why not

The *V Simpósio de História Marítimo e Naval Iber-americano* was held at Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 25 to 29 October1999. The Brazilian Navy, in the person of Contra Almirante Max Justo Guedes, Diretor de Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural da Marinha, and his comissão executiva, were excellent hosts. Forty-three papers were presented by participants from Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and Australia. Presentations were made in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English. Simposios have been held in Lima in 1991, Viña del Mar (Chile) in 1993, Buenos Aires in 1995, and Madrid in 1997. The proceedings have been published and form a valuable compendium in an area of historical research which is all too neglected in Australia. The next Simposio will be held in 2001 in Lima, and participation from Australia would be welcomed. Inquiries should be directed to Contra-Almirante Melitón Carvajal Pereja, Secretario del Instituto de Estudios Historico-Marítimos del Perú, Avenida Salaverry 2487, San Isidro, Lima 27, Peru (fax 51 1 422 7838).

At the October '99 Rio conference, Australia was represented by Robert King. The title of his paper was, "Arthur Phillip: Defender of Colônia, First Governor of New South Wales."

Hec Waller and "Skip" Barron - navy heros remembered

When the September AAMH Newsletter revealed that the navy had missed an outstanding opportunity to involve with the commissioning of submarine HMAS *Waller*, the many sea scouts who operate from Camp Waller on Perth's Swan River, a hostile letter was sent to the editor by a senior WA navy PR officer demanding to know why the editor had not informed the navy of the existence of the group.

Captain Waller
Print of a portrait by Julian Smith, in the Sea Scout collection

It is astonishing that the navy did not remember that one of its greatest heros had been honoured in this way by Western Australian youth for so long. Of course the navy used to keep a tab on these things and certainly knew about the sea scouts in the past. Indeed they had official representation at the opening ceremony for Camp Waller and presented the group with an Australian flag. And it is only a few years ago that the Camp Waller group gifted back to the navy a rare wooden cutter for the navy's historical collection, a matter mentioned at the time in the AAMH newsletter.

Captain Hector M.L. Waller entered the RAN College in 1914, graduating with the King's Medal in 1917. He then served on HMS *Agincourt*, *Resource* and *Brazen*. He commanded on the latter and guarded British interests in the Mediterranean during the Spanish Civil War. In 1939 he took command of HMAS *Stuart*, again serving in the Med. Distinguished service there gained him the DSO and promotion. Engaging enemy destroyers at point blank range and surviving, Waller gained a reputation for courageous enterprise in "The Battle of Matapan" and received more awards. In

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⚓ The Australian Association for Maritime History

Publisher of *The Great Circle*

Special: We survived Y2K issue

Message from the President

Mark Staniforth is on sabbatical leave from Flinders University and doing exciting maritime archaeological things overseas which he has promised to report when he returns. Meantime he can still be contacted about any matters relating to the AAMH and especially *The Great Circle* via his postal or email address, the latter being the most expedient.

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