March 1998
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Quarterly Newsletter

⚓ The Australian Association for Maritime History

Publisher of *The Great Circle*

Special : "Let's go to war" issue

1998: International Year of the Ocean

In recognition of the importance of the oceans and the maritime environment, the United Nations has declared this year as the International Year of the Ocean (YOTO). This provides an opportunity for all persons to pointedly celebrate the role of oceans in their lives, and to initiate or support measures to reverse the trends towards oceanic degradation.

Major maritime conference scheduled for Fremantle next year - advance notice

A significant maritime conference is being planned for Fremantle during the week commencing 27 Sept. 1999. Titled *Indian Ocean Fisheries– Past Present Future* , the conference is expected to attract international interest. Hopefully the title is self-explanatory. Sessions will be set aside for fishing history, which will cover the prehistoric, colonial, and (for Australia), post-federation activities. It is anticipated that papers will be presented relating to fisheries throughout the Indian Ocean. Important too will be the sessions relating to present fisheries management and the future directions. Commercial fishers will be encouraged to participate, and advice and assistance will be available to "first-timers" wishing to prepare and present a paper. Current AAMH executive members Malcolm Tull and Paul Weaver are on the management committee and have been attending planning meetings with other delegates since mid-1997. A call for papers will occur later this year and will appear in this newsletter, as well as on various web sites etc. but there is no reason why the date cannot be pencilled in now. Of course all work and no play can make the maritime historian a very dull person indeed, and those who have been to Freo before are well aware of its attractions. If you like seafood, this is the place. Great restaurants, excellent museums, commercial scuba diving tours on numerous wrecks, a diversity of accommodation to cater for all budgets, plus the opportunity to visit the increasingly famous Mendolia sardine cannery. (This premium Oz product from our beautiful Southern and Indian Oceans is now available in major supermarket chains). Conference convener Ms Sally May of the Fremantle Maritime Museum will be the principal contact. Her email address is, Sally.may@museum.wa.gov.au

AAMH involvment in important 1998 trans-Tasman conference

Australian Economic and Maritime History Conference, under the auspices of The Economic History Society of NZ and the AAMH, will be held at Wellington NZ, 24-27 Nov. 1998. Broad range of themes, including economic/business history - resources, social sciences, labour and migration history. Theoretical and methodological issues relating to maritime matters, and other historical themes are also acceptable. Offers requested by 30 June 1998. It is hoped that many AAMH members will make a special effort to participate in this conference. New Zealand is wonderful in the spring. Further information obtainable from: Dr Gordon Boyce, Economics, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington NZ. Fax. 54 4 471 2200. Email: Gordon.Boyce@VuW.ac.nz

HMAS *Swan* blows-up and goes to bottom

On 14 Dec. 1997 an estimated, 10.000 people turned out to watch the scuttling of decommissioned HMAS *Swan* at Dunsborough, in the lee of Cape Naturaliste. Some 200 volunteers have spent the past twelve months preparing the vessel for service as a dive-wreck. This entailed removal of all potentially polluting materials, and the cutting of many holes for ease of diver access through the hull and superstructure. In the absence of Australian expertise, the organisers brought in a Canadian demolition expert to supervise the placement of the charges. It was hoped the vessel would settle in an upright position, but as it turned out the vessel took a noticeable list to port soon after the charges, and associated pyrotechnic drums of diesel fuel were detonated. HMAS *Swan* arrived on the bottom with a 10 degree list. RAN divers on hand were able

to confirm that the vessel had settled safely.

The ship was launched on Dec 16 by then Defence Minister Don Chip. The champagne bottle reportedly required 13 swings to break it. During the following 26 years of RAN service, the ship had 22 commanding officers and voyaged 775,870 miles. It saw service off Vietnam, but had no battle engagements. In 1981 it made a goodwill visit to China. *Swan* gained an unfortunate reputation in 1992 when a female medical officer alleged sexual harassment by several crew members, and rape by a male officer.

The sinking of the ship has been a boon to local tourist dive operators, and large numbers of Oz and foreign divers are visiting the site every week. Marine life is responding well to the new artificial reef, and is also a great attraction. The Fremantle Maritime Museum, a world leader for its work on electrolysis and shipwreck material, is conducting carefully-planned long-term scientific observations of *Swan*

Australian sub-crew has nightmare experience.

In mid-February, the ABC Parliamentary News Network reported an Australian Oberon-class submarine accidentally plunged stern-first into the depths, off the coast of NSW. Fortunately it hit the bottom before it reached crush-depth. The boat was then able to make it back to the surface, but some substantial rear-end damage was sustained, necessitating an expenSive trip to the repair shop. Three Oberons remain commissioned, but reportedly only one is seaworthy. Inside sources say the Navy has become very concerned about a string of mishaps over the past year.

Steam Boat Willie goes back to sea

Walt Disney arguably turned out to be one of the most pervasive influences on the juvenile mind in the twentieth century, commencing with one of the first animated films *Steam Boat Willie*, which starred a scrawny rodent with a sadistic penchant for pulling cats' tails. Well as we know things have come a long way since. Old Walt croaked his last long ago, but the organisation he created just keeps going from strength to strength. Indeed it could be said Disney has put the capital "C' in capitalism, or is it consumerism? The products and ideas it churns out are designed to make parting with the dollars a compulsive pleasure. Just when we parents though it couldn't get any better, the mouse, and the duck have decided to get into ocean cruising in a big way. Next month and 85,000 ton cruise ship *Disney Magic* will be launched in Italy to transport customers between Florida and its private island in the Bahamas. A second vessel, *Disney Wonder* will be launched in December 1998. This way guys. How 'bout a freebie?

Unlucky 13th — another embarrassment for RAN

One of the RAN's newest ships HMAS *Anzac* became the focus of unwanted attention at the start of the Fremantle-Sydney leg of the Whitbread yacht race on 13 December. With 100 or so BIPs (beaming influential persons) on board to watch Premier Richard Court fire the starting gun. Plans to return them ashore went awry when the clutch on the anchor-winch burned out. It was thought initially that they might have to be moved ashore in small boats from the Fremantle Sailing Club, but as the civilian flotilla was preparing to put to sea, the ever resourceful sailors managed to raise and secure the dangling hook, and to everyone's relief, the ship finally got under way.

Reunions

HMAS *Albatross*. 50th anniversary of the NSW base is being celebrated between Oct. 28 and Nov. 2. Lots to interest old sailors and maritime historians. Contact Mike Lehan (Secretary) PO Box A15. Naval Post Office. Nowera, NSW. 2540.

Help requested

In 1845 *Cataraqui* was wrecked on King Island in Bass Strait and more than 300 immigrants perished. Amongst the nine survivors was ordinary seaman Peter Johnson, who was last heard of in Melbourne. Ray Smith is trying to trace the subsequent movements of this crewman and would appreciate any suggestions. His address is 4 Salmond Ct. Carnarvon. West Australia. 6701.

Mr D.G. Oaks, 40 High Grange, Lichfield., Staffs. WS137DZ. England. seeks information on a plaque he saw in a house in Cherbourg, France. It had three dolphins and the inscription, "Presented by the Dolphin Club Sydney 1924." Can anyone shed any light please.

Frank Phillips, 11 Ingram Rd. Na-Na-Goon, Viv. 3812 is working on 19th century Captain Alfred Stoddart, who was apparently in eastern seaboard Oz waters at the turn of the century. He has a sea chest with two flags. One is white with a dark blue cross, the other a red, white and blue tricolour. Beneath is a scroll with the letter single "A". Any information or

leads would be much appreciated.

Malcolm MacDonald is seeking images and information on Australian lighthouses for inclusion in an internet site. So he has established WWW pages for four Victorian lighthouses, and hopes eventually to have all Australian lighthouses. The web site is www.lighthouse.net.au/lights - People who can provide Malcolm with images, both old and new, anecdotes, technical and navigational information etc. etc. may contact him at, 9 Richard Avenue, Ocean Grove. Australia. 3226, or an email at keeper@lighthouse.net.au/lights – He is willing to reimburse costs.

Overlooked Anniversary in 1997

Anniversaries are a good excuse for writers to dredge up matters of past significance. On 17 December last year, the thirtieth anniversary of the mystery disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt while he was spearfishing alone off Portsea, Victoria passed with little notice. Some bizarre theories were spun about the 1967 disappearance, but perhaps none more so than the one that Holt had been captured by Chinese frogmen, taken to a Chinese submarine offshore and spirited away to China. Another was that Holt got tangled in the kelp and his body was totally consumed by piranha-like kelp lice within 24 hours.

Holt was a experienced skindiver, and he was relatively fit. He frequently caught crayfish in the relatively high energy waters, something non-divers may be surprised to learn that it is not as difficult or dangerous as it might first appear, provided one goes with the flow, and avoids the places where big waves dump onto the rocks. When Holt vanished in a turbulent patch of water, a pretty substantial search eventually got underway, and RAN divers reportedly examined all the underwater crevasses and holes in the area. Nothing turned up. If the hungry sea lice got him, they apparently also had a taste for his bones and bathers. On the other hand it could have been a hungry white-pointer, but no one seems to have considered that.

In accordance with the 30 year secrecy rule, on 1 January 1998 the Australian Archives released Cabinet papers relating to the Holt disappearance. Some papers relating to the subject, created in 1968 have been released a year early in order to maintain continuity with the 1967 documents. Go for it maritime historians.

Last hurrah for *Britannia*

In mid December 1997, After 44 years service, the royal yacht Britannia was decommissioned at Portsmouth dockyard. Parsimonious economics by the British Labour government have ended a 337 year tradition of royal yachts. Dockside, fifteen sombre, and sometimes tearful members of the royal family turned out to watch the ceremony, along with thousands of other Britons. For this Australian writer, who watched the events on television, the whole affair seemed far more symbolic than the mere decommissioning of a ship. The royal family, it seemed, were mourning the passing of an era, which in spite of all their power and influence, they had been unable to stop. It was more than losing a perk for nice summer hols. The naval uniforms worn by the gentle men and women of this elite family said it all. They were immaculately tailored and carried appropriately high symbols of rank, but the double breasted jackets looked as though they had come from the 1930s or earlier. It was as if they had been wrenched from the past by some sort of science-fiction time-warp, and the occupants now stood awkwardly in the public gaze, heartened by their numbers, but not quite knowing what to do with their hands. Britannia was redundant, and it seemed its former passengers were destined for the same fate. At least *Britannia*, which so many critical Britons have referred to as a floating palace, would not be going to a Hong Kong scrapyard, which would have been the ultimate insult by a nation which less and less appears to appreciate its royal heritage. The First Sea Lord and British Defence Secretary, Mr George Robertson, has announced the ship will end up on public display in either Manchester or Edinburgh.

As events proceeded the band of the Royal Marines, which in the past accompanied *Britannia* to many parts of the world, struck up renditions of *Rule Britannia, God Save the Queen*, and *A life on the Ocean Wave;* then with proceedings over, everyone moved to the proximity of the No 1 Oil Lubricating Shed for tea.

Britannia made several visits to Australia to coincide with visits by Queen Elizabeth II. Aside from being a place of refuge during what must have been exhausting schedules for Her Majesty, the ship was an important diplomatic tool for Britain. Countless official functions served to consolidate international relationships and smooth the waters for that country's trading interests in a generally turbid world.

Those of us who saw *Britannia* dockside in Australia will remember the perfect paintwork on the glossy dark-blue hull, the highly polished brass work and its overall impeccably clean appearance, all made possible only by the absolute dedication of its crew. Visually, the vessel was was a shiplover's delight. Paul R. Weaver

Recent acquisitions by the Australian Archives

The Australian Archives (NSW) have recently acquired custody of the following RAN records:

HMAS *Anzac*. Ship's books and logs. 1951-1974. (C4987).
HMAS *Tobruk*. Ship's books. 1950-1960. (C4981).
HMAS *Sydney*. (III) (Aircraft carrier). Ship's books. 1948-1973. (C4979).

HMAS *Diamantina*. Ship's books and logs. 1943-1980. (C4978).

HMAS *Diamantina* was based at Fremantle for many years and was involved with oceanographic survey work off the WA coast. Coincidentally, the editor when a teenager spent an exciting day at sea on this ship in the company of Maurice Cairnie and his son. The ship engaged in gunnery practice well out to sea in the dark blue waters beyond Rottnest Island, which was very exciting. Mr Cairnie, a civilian, was a merchant-marine engineer on the *Centaur* when it picked up German survivors from HSK *Kormoran* on on 26/11/1941. The Diamantina Trench, named for the ship, is a very deep bit of water southwest of Cape Leeuwin.

National Geographic Magazine - CD ROM version

Having been a long time acquirer and occasional subscriber to the US *National Geographic Magazine*, this editor had a flurry of excitement when the first 108 years of it became available on the Australian market just before Christmas. At a recommended retail of $299 it may not end up being a best seller in this country, but the price works out at $10 per disk, being 30 disks in all. (They have since come down to about $260.) So a set ended up being a family present and hopefully it will assist in all those assignments on the Titanic my kids get year after year. (One of my kids was also given a *Titanic* construction kit by a well meaning relative). Fortunately there is quite a bit of other stuff on Oz in the NGS set.

It looks great and its wooden storage box is nicely polished with a metal NGS emblem embedded. The CDs are additionally housed by decade in separate plastic cases. The magazines have been scanned page by page and only include the advertisements which appeared in the American edition. The Australian edition is quite different in this respect, although page numbers for the articles and other editorial material were the same in both in the comparisons I made.

The disks work on either PC or Macintosh, and having the latter, I experienced no difficulties. Because the magazine pages are scanned images, they take up a great amount of memory, making it impractical to load up the entire set onto a computer. It is possible to do a search of the contents of the entire set, and if an article is clicked, a screen prompt tells the user which disk to insert.

My main computer is a Mac Performer with 8 MB of RAM. One needs at least this much, and System 7.5 or above. Each article has a set of keywords which enable a more comprehensive subject search. James Cook brought up hundreds of references, whereas Matthew Flinders brought up none.

The image quality on the screen is not as sharp as an actual magazine. There are two settings, one for browsing the entire page, and the magnified stage which is essential for reading the text. Cut and paste function does not exist, which is a pity because NGS pictures have long been the source of embellishment for school projects. If the reason is to provide protection against commercial exploitation it is misguided, because the quality is not good enough. Someone with that sort of intent can easily take a far better image by scanning an original magazine, and there are millions of them about. The text of an original NG magazine can also be easily scanned and converted to a text document using something like Textbridge, so again there is little point in not including the cut and paste function on the CDs. The entire page on the CD ROM version can be printed, but having "only" 8 meg of RAM I found I had to quit the application after the image had been spooled, in order to print. A cut and paste function would have alleviated this, and would have been more environmentally friendly by using less paper. Even so the quality of reproduced photos is not as good as is obtainable from a photocopier or scanner.

So where are we at with the state of the technology? Well the product works well enough, and provides ready access to historical material that might otherwise not be easy. The image quality, particularly of the text is a limiting factor, and I feel that this will be a significant deterrent to younger people. It will be of use to me, but I will not be throwing out my collection of NG magazines just yet. Paul Weaver.

Weird hairy "monster" turns up on Tassie beach

Many readers would have seen the media reports just after Christmas of a fleshy, hairy lump of stuff with several appendages looking like big tonsils, which was found washed up on a Tasmanian beach. Australian boffins were baffled, which is surprising seeing as so many are involved in marine science. It is apparently part of the inside of a whale. Tissue samples were sent to the USA where there is a whale DNA data bank, so there is sure to be a more accurate determination eventually. A similar thing was found in the same region some 30 or so years ago and the CSIRO compiled a detailed report. Curiously the then Minister for Science Mr Gorton, ordered that the report be classified SECRET, and it has not been seen since. Shades of Roswell?

Canberra meets ignominious end

We mentioned last year it was coming, and now it has happened. The former pride of the P&O passenger fleet is being cut up for scrap on the beach at Gadani, 70km NW of Karachi, on the edge of the Baluchistan Desert in Pakistan. Gadani ranks as the largest shipbreaking site in the world, due in no small part to the low cost of labour. Vessels are simply run up as close to the beach as possible, then a swarm of workers begin cutting the ships into manageable pieces for transport to Pakistan steelworks. Other materials are sorted appropriately for recycling.

Bligh and Christian at it – again

William Bligh seems never to have had a good press, that is until now. Talented WA born inventor of the wobble-board and creator of Oliver Polyp the octopus, Rolf Harris and his brother Bruce have put their heads, and £500,000 to produce a 5 hour TV documentary on WB and his 1789 crew of miscreants. The project is a serious attempt to redress the wrongs which have been dished out to Bligh, especially the negative image of him portrayed in innumerable cinematic epics. In the past, Bligh was always depicted as the bad guy, with an unhealthy penchant for flogging spirited good-looking young sailors. Coupled with this was the tacit implication in the 1935 film with Clark Gable and the 1962 version with Marlon Brando that homosexuality was somehow involved. The Harris brothers' revisionist view is that this was not the case at all, and that WB has been seriously maligned. Homosexuality was a hanging offence in the RN during those days, and that compared with Captain Cook and his record of floggings, Bligh was actually quite humane. During the five month visit of *Bounty* to Tahiti to collect bread-fruit plants for the slavers, he was perhaps the only man who did not take an island mistress, but it is said this was because of his high moral values.

Oliver Polyp on a wobble-board

Fletcher Christian on the other hand, allegedly had more serious problems. He undoubtedly contributed to the Tahitian gene pool, and it is claimed by Maurice Bligh, an advisor to the Harris lads and a descendant of WB, that Mr Christian was the equivalent of a junkie having acquired an addiction for laudanum (opium) which he procured from the *Bounty's* allegedly habitually-drunk doctor. The laudanum ran out in Tahiti and FC was allegedly obliged to go "cold turkey," which brought on bouts of "violent perspiration" irrational behaviour and the unusual appearance of being "wildeyed."

Understandably, this version has not gone down too well with the large mob of Christian's descendants now living on Norfolk Island, where a mutineers' version of events runs twice weekly in a play for paying tourists. Neither are they apparently impressed with continual interest in detail of the sexual goings-on between their ancestors in Polynesia during those distant times. It seems even before Hollywood, love prevailed over lust and anyone who says otherwise had better watch out. (Margaret Mead where are you?) The Norfolk Island script will not be revised, and one of their leaders has threatened (on TV) to go to England and slap Maurice's face if he does not withdraw the allegations. Ooooh! It just goes to show, all publicity is good publicity in show business. The TV documentary is now a "must view and record," as is a trip to Norfolk Island to see the mutineer's version.

Freebies

The injection of funds from the Dutch and Australian governments has meant the *Duyfken* replica project is proceeding at full strength, and the numerous highly skilled shipwrights, woodcarvers, sailmakers etc are expected to have the project completed by the end of this year. In the lead up to Fremantle's annual *Sardine Festival*, held this year on 10 January, there was a lot of press publicity about the replica project and the editor has a few four-page newspaper supplements to spare. If any members would like one please send him a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The editor has also acquired some remaindered copies of the 95 page history, *A small war, Corvettes: The 39 through Fremantle*, compiled by Bruce Farrington and published by West Australian Newspapers in about 1990. The Booklet has many photographs covering the war record of these little ships. To obtain a copy send him seven 45¢ stamps to cover the initial outlay and postage. First in first served.

Solo blind sailor crosses Indian Ocean

For those of us who have trouble negotiating the confines of our houses when the lights are switched off, the thought of making a solo trip across the Indian Ocean probably seems an impossible task. However, for visually impaired or blind people, it seems that no challenge is large enough. So it was with yachtsman Geoff Hilton-Barber who arrived in Fremantle to an enthusiastic greeting in late January. Geoff departed Durban on 1 December 1997. His wife Carol helped him to negotiate the immediate confines of the harbour then left him to make his own way. En-route he was assisted by talking computers and Geosat navigational equipment, and after experiencing a frightening knock-down, soon discovered that equipment dependent on electricity at sea has its own problems. Nevertheless he was able to maintain contact with the world by radio and internet connections. Geoff arrived in Fremantle on 20 January with a little assistance from friends in getting over the line, which of course he could not see. The AAMH extends its congratulations for a remarkable and daring achievement..

Old whale and seal-oil measurements need clarification

AAMH member Joseph King from SA writes: I should very much like to initiate a discussion through the pages of the newsletter on the subject of quantifying whale and seal oil cargoes taken during the colonial era. As you probably know, it is very likely that American and British equipment and terms were used either separately or interchangeably, or the same term had

different meanings. In order to quantify oil yields from the various sealing (as far as I am interested) and whaling areas, it is necessary to decide upon the meaning of the terms "tun" and "gallons," as derived from barrels, casks etc., as well as in their own right. I therefore should be pleased to see what other maritime historians have to say on this matter – which may be resolved absolutely so that authors writing about these early maritime industries may achieve some uniformity and, hence, exactitude in in translating oil yields into numbers of animals and making comparisons. It may be possible and useful to compile a kind of glossary on the basis of the response to my plea. (The newsletter welcomes responses).

Calls for papers

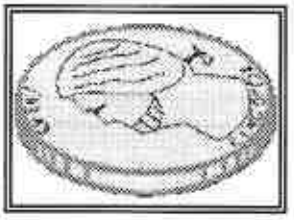
The International Commission for Maritime History is holding its quinquennial conference at Bergen and Oslo, Norway in Aug, 2000. Themes include oil-gas exploration, fishing history. maritime technology etc. Proposals requested by 31 July 1998. Further info from Adrian Jarvis, Sec. Gen. of ICMH. Merseyside Maritime Museum. Liverpool. L# 4AQ. UK. Fax. 44 151 478 4098.

The Association for the History of the Northern Seas is having a conference at Corner Brook, Newfoundland 8-14 Aug 1999. Diverse themes - mediaeval trade, whaling. fish trade, maritime labour etc. Contact Dr Olaf Janzen, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Corner Brook. Canada. NF A2H 6P9. Fax. 1 709 637 6159. Email: olaf@beothuk.swgc.mun.ca

The Economic Maritime History Association is having a conference at Esbjerd, Denmark 30 Jul. - 1 Aug 2000. Proposals requested by 1 Oct 1998. Further info from Prof. Lewis Fischer, Memorial University of Newfoundland. St Johns. NF A1C 5S7. Fax 1 709 737 8427. Email: lfischer@morgan.ucs.mun.ca

Mon dieu - we should be French?

In March 1792 on return from the Antarctic, French explorer/navigator Francis St Alouarn anchored his ship *Le Gross Ventre* in what was later named Flinders Bay, adjacent to Cape Leeuwin, Western Australia. Of interest to local fishing historians is that many sharks were observed and one very large specimen was caught, but the crew mostly ate smaller fish, including the Australian herring (*Arripis georgianus*). Eventually the ship proceeded northwards to Shark Bay, where more fish were caught. A landing was made on Dirk Hartog Island where, it is said, the region was claimed for France. A declaration to this effect was supposedly buried in a bottle with two French coins.



An artist's impression of the coin

Unlike the Hartog and Vlamingh pewter plates left later on the island, evidence of the St Alouarn visit has eluded numerous searchers. However, no longer. In mid-January this year an announcement was made that an old 1766 French coin, broken glass and some lead sheet had been recovered from the island by Australian diving explorer Max Cramer, French historian Philippe Goddard and others. (Max, a local adventurer, was the first person to dive on the *Batavia* wreck many half-moons ago). A grave of a French sailor who died of scurvy is known to be on the island but the exact location is yet to be identified. The searchers were also hunting in the nearby waters for two anchors lost by *Le Gross Ventre* . Understandably the find has caused a flurry of excitement, and tourist conscious shire-councils would rather see the coin on display in their local museums than in the main repository for historical maritime artifacts at the Fremantle Maritime Museum. The coin has been on initial display in Geraldton, but where it will eventually end up may require the wisdom of Solomon. Some scratches, allegedly caused by an enthusiastic but unknown cleaning pixie have been identified on both sides of the coin and subsequently caused embarrassment and denials. A feature article in the West Australian (28/2/98) revealed that undisciplined digging had moved a ton or so of dirt following the find and this has caused considerable consternation behind the scenes in museum circles. Reportedly, moves are currently underway to develop better legislative safeguards for historic material and sites such as this. The maxim of "finders keepers" has prevailed for too long.

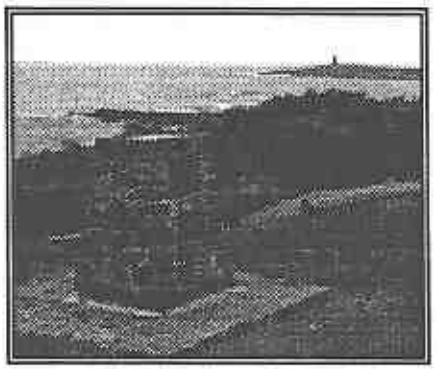
Material culture is undoubtedly interesting, but has its limitations when viewed alone. Perhaps of greater significance in respect to the voyage, at least to those interested in climatology, is that the French Scientist Buffon, also travelling on the vessel, had determined during the voyage that the southern hemisphere then was colder than the northern hemisphere. PW.

1998 recognition of Bass and Flinders

Through January this year the letters page of *The Australian* produced an interesting discourse relating to the voyages of Bass and Flinders. A prevailing theme was that the two English seafarers were not as appreciated in modern Australia as they should be. Flinders has long been credited with coining the name Australia, but one writer said this was not the case, and gave several examples of precedents. There has been a call for some form of national tribute to the pair, but particularly to Flinders. His main legacy is of course his journals and charts. The original journals are located in the Flinders Room of the Whyalla Maritime Museum. First published in 1814, there have been two facsimile editions in Australia. The most recent, and most magnificent edition of 500 leather half-bound sets, by the State Library of SA and the Royal Geographical Society

of Australasia, was in 1989 and included a bound folio of charts. No longer available from the publishers, there may be a few sets to be found with South Australian Antiquarian booksellers.

Numerous plaques dot the Australian coastline commemorating visits by Flinders, There is one near Cape Leeuwin (WA), another at Cape le Grand (WA), and one at Port Wakefield (SA). There must be many others. The editor would like to hear about them from members and compile a list for a future newsletter. Stop press: In direct response to the letters in *The Australian*, the Australian Mint has announced it will produce a special 50¢ coin later this year for general circulation.



Flinders memorial near Cape Leeuwin - 1998

New Phillip Parker King book should sell fast

The Miegunyah Press imprints from Melbourne University Press are renowned for excellence and Marsden Horden's biography of P. P. King is no exception. Aside from its scholarly worth, which no doubt will be reviewed in *GreatCircle*, there are important technical aspects about this book which other Australian publishers would do well to examine. Far too many authors and publishers of historical works in this land pay little attention to the design of their product. Poor page layout, poor font choice, low quality paper, poor image reproduction and just plain poor design all too often serve to ruin many years of dedicated research. Worse, writers and publishers find themselves with a ton of books they can't sell. Not so with *King of the Australian Coast: The work of Phillip Parker King in the Mermaid and Bathurst 1817-1822*. The slightly cream paper has a lustre that invites the fingers to caress. The pages exude a sensual quality, and the many images liberally sprinkled throughout cannot be faulted, the paper used for them has a lustre of its own. Undoubtedly this is a book to take to bed. A dark blue satin place-ribbon silently commands the reader to leave gently it between the pages without a crease. A discreet pocket inside the back cover contains an amazing nine charts, a secret compartment, known only to the initiated. There are some trivial typos, but make no mistake, this book is a collector's item, and as with other books in the series, its dollar value will jump substantially once the 1,500 copies are sold. Retail price is just under $50, but it has already been sighted in an antiquarian book shop at $65; and yes, the editor did purchase his own copy.

Second Collins-class sub commissioned at Freo.

Less than two weeks before the Australian PM announced (10/2/98) he was sending elite SAS troops by air to mix it with Mr Saddam in Iraq, the RAN's newest addition, HMAS *Farncomb* was commissioned with appropriate pubic pomp and ceremony dockside at Victoria Quay, Fremantle on 31 January. The general populace were allowed below decks the following day provided they did not take photos or do anything naughty inside. Construction commenced in March 1991 and the sub was launched in December 1995. The third in the Collins class, HMAS *Waller* , is due to come into service in the middle of this year.

Historic Heard Island fishing case set for long run

The skippers of two foreign fishing boats which were allegedly fishing in Australian waters near Heard Island last year appeared before a WA magistrate on 5 Feb and opted for a preliminary hearing, expected to last three days, in July. The initial incidents were mentioned in the last newsletter. In late February this year, the RAN intercepted another ship allegedly taking Patagonian toothfish in Australian Arctic waters, and this vessel too has been escorted back to Fremantle.

Popeye the Sailor was a transvestite?

Thought that would get your attention. Yuk, yuk, yuk. (The Ed. is a closet paparazzi). There is a favoured adage that nothing is what it seems, and so it was with Popeye, the animated diplomatically challenged cartoon character created in 1933 by Max Fleischer. Popeye's voice was originally provided by Jack Mercer, but WW2 took him away from the task. Unable to find a suitable male replacement, the studio allowed talented Mae Questel to take on the role. She was already doing Olive Oyl, Sweetpea and Betty Boop. In all there were 254 Popeye cartoons, and they created something of a unfortunate stereotype for sailors in one way or another. Ms Questel died on 3 January aged 89. Her obituary by Mark Juddery was in *The Australian* 23/1/98 p.16.

HMAS Sydney - December newsletter article - a rejoinder

Having expressed some concerns to the editor regarding his December 1997 article on the loss of HMAS *Sydney* I have been invited by the AAMH Executive to write a short rejoinder. While accepting the task, I do so with something of a heavy heart. It seems that the loss of *Sydney* is one of those unique events in history where those making the allegations are under no obligation to provide hard evidence or substantiate their claims. Instead imaginations run riot, hearsay and circumstantial evidence are taken as gospel and those with differing viewpoints are regarded as willing dupes. I had hoped that a professional organisation such as the AAMH might be immune, and perhaps instead unload the burden of proof where it belongs.

There is no need to provide the background to the story, nor the growth of the controversy in subsequent years, these aspects have been adequately covered elsewhere. Instead I will concentrate solely on the editor's promotion of an ongoing official conspiracy and his claims for real progress in identifying the body washed ashore on Christmas Island.

The continuing conspiracy

The first problem with the continuing conspiracy allegation is that it displays a complete ignorance of the way in which the Australian administration works. *Sydney* sank almost 57 years ago and, as anyone who has served in the Defence or Navy bureaucracy will be aware, internal structures and the individuals performing particular duties have changed countless times since then. To believe in an ongoing and deliberate cover-up, is presumably to believe that a secret handover of hidden information has been passed down, not only from generation to generation of uniformed and civilian bureaucrats, but also between a succession of elected representatives from all political persuasions. This means that hundreds, or more likely thousands, of people in Australia must either know the 'truth' or be party to the official policy to ensure that not all pertinent information is revealed. Moreover, in view of the era and the participants, a continuing conspiracy would of necessity be an international undertaking with a comparable number of persons involved in at least the United Kingdom, the USA, Japan and Germany. An edifice of this size and complexity could hardly expect to be watertight. Yet strangely, and despite the publicity, neither one piece of concrete evidence nor one credible whistle-blower has ever appeared. Instead in *Sydney's* case, we are more normally asked to place our faith in the recollections of junior personnel reciting vague oaths of secrecy, recalling overheard conversations from more than half a century ago, or allegedly sighting records that must subsequently have been destroyed.

Perhaps a more fundamental question though, is to ask why on earth the Australian and numerous foreign governments would still want to go to the trouble and expense of covering anything up after this length of time? What 'important matters,' concerning the loss of one Dominion light cruiser, could possibly be so sensitive from the perspective of all the major Axis and Allied participants? Controversial international issues, such as atrocities and intelligence relationships, were identified long ago. The specifics might be argued about, but the basic facts are certainly in the public domain. Furthermore, as those with experience will attest, even when an individual country might have destroyed or mislaid some of their own records, by accessing archives in several countries a reasonably complete picture can still be built up. To put it bluntly, without a substantial motive being established, allegations of conspiracy cannot even begin to be justified.

Unfortunately, conspiracy theories tend to snowball and feed on themselves, and it is also manifestly impossible to disprove their existence. Surely however, those espousing the theory should at least be required to provide something more substantial than a difference of opinion between a Federal Minister and his obsessed correspondent

The body on Christmas Island

To provide further justification for his stand, the editor writes that'... the RAN medical records of one sailor tie in very neatly with one of the original reports made on the body' found on Christmas Island. I would be very interested to know which RAN medical records and original reports the editor looked at to reach this conclusion. As far as I am aware no original autopsy report has yet been identified as having been submitted to Australia. Moreover the second-hand statements on Archives file AA1979/579, taken some time after the event, indicate only that the body was male, white and dressed in a boiler suit. To baldly state that these go anywhere near identifying a particular individual in a crew of more than 600 white males seems to be rather a large leap of logic. One wonders moreover, if the editor has taken the trouble to check the medical records of the Royal Navy and RAAF members, and civilians on board *Sydney* at the time of her loss.

No doubt the editor had his reasons, and he clearly places great faith in circumstantial evidence and hearsay, but the best that these can ever do is suggest that the body 'could' have come from *Sydney*. There still remains no hard evidence that the body 'did' come from *Sydney* and unsubstantiated allegations that simply cause angst and muddy the waters can expect to achieve no one's aim.

I could go on to include some of the editors glib generalisations concerning incompetent 'persons in the past' and the supposedly widely held views of historians, hydrographers and oceanographers, but I think the point has been made. I would hope in future that the Newsletter sticks to reporting news and that extreme opinions are withheld until the allegations can be backed by evidence gathered and assessed in an objective manner.

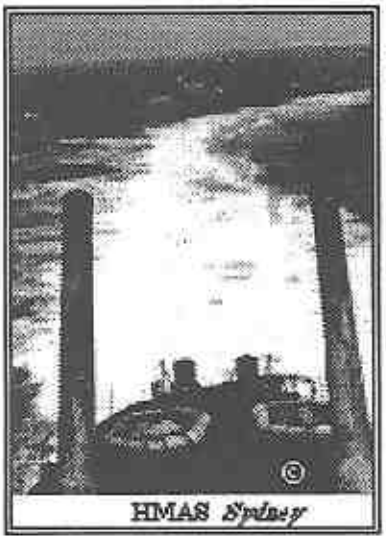
David M. Stevens, Hackett, ACT. .

The editor replies

Before addressing the issues raised by Mr Stevens, it should be noted that correspondence received from him earlier last year indicates that he is Director of Naval Historical Studies for the Department of Defence, (Navy). Mr Stevens originally wrote a hostile personal letter to myself on this particular matter on 23 December. He also circulated a copy of that letter which was subsequently reproduced and sent to all members of the AAMH Executive, and to every state delegate of the AAMH. I prepared a written response to that letter for the committee which was later distributed to persons who had been sent a copy of Mr Stevens' letter. I was absent from committee discussions on the subject.

The article about which he complains was based upon material published in newspapers, and these were cited at the time. It did not actually say there was a conspiracy, but said Federal Territories Minister Smith's decision "fuelled speculation that the official conspiracy continues." In hindsight it may have been more appropriate to have used the word "an" instead of "the." The article also said that the minister had clouded the issue in the "tradition employed in the past", and through discussions and interviews with various persons since, there is no doubt that he did. Since then we have also had eight volumes of submissions to the Joint Parliamentary Enquiry (JPE) into HMAS *Sydney* published, with more to come. Some reactions within them to Mr Smith and other matters are reported later in this response.

Because the *Sydney* affair is one of the most important events in Australian maritime history, and is a matter of considerable interest to the membership, I politely wrote to Mr Smith beforehand in an attempt to obtain clarification on his reported statements and copies of his press releases. All politicians have a duty to respond to such enquiries from the public but he did not in this case, and it was duly reported. It was not a matter of my being an "obsessed correspondent," but an attempt to obtain a clearer picture of a nationally important issue. A copy of this letter is available to anyone who cares to ask.


HMAS *Sydney*

This editor does not believe that government ministers or any other public servant should be immune from criticism. Protecting ineffective peoples in positions of authority has become a blight on our society, and if we are to believe Chris Masters' recent four part *4 Corners* series on the manipulation of the media, (through Jan 1998) there is no shortage of persons in government who would seek to distort or obstruct the views of outsiders. Regardless, Mr Smith has been moved to a new portfolio. In early February this year the federal government changed tack when new Territories' Minister Alex Somlyay indicated via a press release, reported in *The West Australian* (4/2/1998. p.3) that it was willing to approve exhumation of the Christmas Island grave if requested by the JPE. The Minister's office said it recognised some disturbance of other graves may occur in this process. I have also been told on 21 February by one of the applicants for exhumation, former Victorian Magistrate Edward McGowan that he has received a similar tentative assurance that permission might be forthcoming, and that preparations to visit Christmas Island with appropriate experts are now being made.

Mr Stevens is quite right that there is no official autopsy report on the Christmas Island body available. Like so much documentary evidence in this matter, it has disappeared, and there are various well known theories about this. However the body was accorded a funeral with full service honours, and the general, albeit unofficial belief at the time was that the float and body had originated from an Australian warship (JPE submission 94. vol. 8. p.1961). This special treatment of the body is corroborated in a copy of a 1983 letter from the War Graves section of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (JPE submission 75. vol.6. p.1200-1).

Anecdotal evidence handed down from people involved with the recovery and burial of the body was that it had perfect teeth, highly unusual for the time. Similar evidence in Australia has been turned up for one of the men on the *Sydney*. This can be considered in further detail in Mr McGowan's submission (JPE submission 64. vol. 5. p.895-6).

In the December newsletter article, reference was made to agreement about the teeth with RAN medical records. The article was incorrect in this respect, because Mr McGowan tells me since, that the Navy has steadfastly refused to release his brother's dental records. After four requests by him and the Sydney legal firm Heazlewoods, refusal eventually came. The decision flies in the face of several of the objectives set out by the JPE. Mr McGowan has received advice from a ministerial advisor, that the appropriate venue for a review of the decision is in the Federal Court. At time of going to print, this option was still being considered. The Navy position apparently is that it will only release the records to next-of-kin listed on the original records, which in this case is the deceased mother of Mr McGowan and his late brother, which is convenient for the Navy. There have been at least 49 refusals to other applicants for access to the medical records of *Sydney's* crew. Readers can form their own judgment of Mr Stevens' rhetorical question of whether I, or for that matter anyone else, has taken the trouble to check medical records of people on *Sydney*. Furthermore, there is a copy of an RAN signal floating about amongst *Sydney* researchers which was transmitted to all RAN establishments on 21 August last year. It said that because of the impending parliamentary enquiry and a high political sensitivity, no further information or comments on HMAS *Sydney* were to be released by any RAN personnel without reference to Canberra.

Then there is the matter of crucial part a missing paragraph from the Defence Department's Submission, (JPE submission 94 vol. 8. p. 1843) which the author was allegedly pressured to remove at the twelfth hour. It has probably

caused annoyance in some circles that the missing piece appears in an earlier copy version of the document which can be seen in Heazlewood's submission. The missing part reads:

> In February 1942 a Carley float of Australian manufacture containing a body was brought ashore on Christmas Island. The corpse was interred on the island. A postwar investigation stated that the float did not come from the SYDNEY. However the prevailing currents and the size of the marine growth on the raft are consistent with it being set afloat in the vicinity and at the time and place of the SYDNEY- CORMORAN action. Even more telling is that no other vessel can be identified from which the raft might have come. The weight of evidence therefore is that the raft and its deceased occupant were from the SYDNEY. (JPE submission 84A vol. 7. p. 1681)

The RAN and a succession of Australian governments have an unfortunate record of reluctance for bringing to light the full history of HMAS *Sydney*, and this is a view widely shared by many independent, but well respected historians, journalists and lawyers.

A feature article in *The Australian* 31/1/97 p.15, coinciding with the Fremantle conference on *Sydney* last year said, "So far, Canberra has been reluctant to throw light on information, kept in the shadows for more than 55 years that could support allegations of tactical blunders and suppression of information as to those responsible."

In the submissions currently under review by the Joint Parliamentary Enquiry, one of Australia's most respected authorities on the affair Barbara Poniewierski (Winter) wrote, "Perhaps the most unworthy aspect of the Sydney affair is the persistence with which certain government departments, including the navy, continue to attempt to discredit the origin of the Carley float and body found off Christmas Island." (JPE submission 36. vol. 2. p.324). No friend of conspiracy theorists, on page 313. She says, "Once the navy has taken a stand on a topic, it is unwilling to retreat from it.... the navy has foolishly laid itself open to accusations of "cover ups" in significant matters, because it has engaged in distortion in some minor ways, and in a few cases naval personnel have told outright lies." This historian points out that similar behaviour happened in the aftermath of the collision between HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS Voyager.

Glenys MacDonald of Geraldton, another highly respected *Sydney* historian said in her submission to the same review that she discovered from former Minister of Defence Kim Beazley in 1989 that a navy file (612/231/446) believed to relate to the body, and a piece of the Carley float had been destroyed by the Navy for unspecified reasons. She wrote:

> Given the constant denial by the navy that this body came from HMAS *Sydney*, and the denial that no inquest report or piece of the life raft was ever delivered to Fremantle Naval Base, the destruction of any file on the subject is tragic. I, like most researchers, believe that the body found on Christmas Island most certainly came from HMAS *Sydney*, (unless there was another sinking at the same time and in the same area, that has been kept secret. (JPE submission 26. vol. 1. p.165.)

There are many other critical submissions to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry and persons interested in the subject are urged to read them. James Eagle's submission is particularly interesting because it reveals the behaviour of certain RAN officers in the destruction of records, and how parts of Australia's true war record became obscured or distorted (JPE submission 42. vol. 2.).

Last year Australian Archives senior employee Richard Summerrell launched his excellent 188 page guide to to Commonwealth records relating to the *Sydney* incident. While he had unearthed a lot of new material he also said at the launch that an "intelligent" researcher may yet be able to find more. He admitted to questioning that it was possible for old documents to be attached to a new one and thus be squirrelled away for another thirty years. There is no doubt important documents are missing, and this may be what has happened to them, possibly even quite recently.

Then there is the problem of theft from within. A file transferred to the Commonwealth Archives from HMAS *Stirling* in 1992 was missing a collectible diary written by one of the *Kormoran* survivors (JPE, Submission 46, vol. 3. p.592). It is plain that other official records relating to *Sydney* have been stolen by various official persons for whatever reasons. Some of this material has been returned after their deaths. Information about these sort of matters lies within the eight already published volumes of submissions. There are also a number of confidential submissions, which the public will probably never see. Hopefully someone will do a summary of these without compromising the writers, otherwise they too will fuel future speculation.

As for a conspiracy in the past to keep the truth from the Australian public it is a matter of semantics. Personally, I think some persons involved have been treated far too charitably. It seems clear numerous individuals, especially in the RAN, over time have endeavoured to prevent a true picture of events reaching the Australian public. Equally, I am prepared to accept there has been substantial incompetence. The truth is probably a mixture of the two. Again this is personal view based upon the great quantity of material I have read. Those wishing to form their own conclusions could start by reading Summerrell, pp. 12 -17.

Persons who gloss over these matters generally assume that for a conspiracy to exist, secrets need have been handed down through generations of dull-witted naval officers and public servants. This is not the case. All it needs is for the philosophy of elite camaraderie to be nurtured and become ingrained in the culture of an organisation, and obstruction and dogmatism will follow. Australia has never been short of paranoid officials who have obstructed access to the most inane material.

The "Position Paper" on *Sydney* and *Kormoran*, written by Curator for HMAS *Sydney*, Dr Mike McCarthy, currently available from the Fremantle Maritime Museum says:

> On a philosophical level it is essential for Government to shoulder the burden of responsibility and to make an open and truly objective attempt to satisfactorily explain the circumstances by which those in its service are lost in battle. To fail to do so strikes at the very heart of the notion of service to one's country...In the case of HMAS *Sydney*, Government in its various forms has not satisfactorily undertaken the task of explanation following Commander Long's decision in 1945, and the release of the archives in the mid to late 1970s. (Page 7)

The hypothesis from Federal Territories Minister Mr Smith that the Carley float came from Indonesian waters lacked credibility. This, in my view, is addressed convincingly by several JPE submissions. It seems Mr Smith was very poorly advised, but as to who provided him with that that poor advice is a mystery. Perhaps people behind the scenes feel obliged to play the Devil's advocate? It is an easy game to play, especially if one can be anonymous. In this respect we should again consider the recent words of Barbara Poniewierski (Winter):

> A truly weird and puerile attempt was even made once to claim that the float might have come from HMAS *Perth*, even though it was found on or about 6 February 1942, while *Perth* was sunk on 1 March 1942, and North of Java at that. It seems that there are people who will not shrink from any degree of stupidity to discredit the origin of the float. (JPE submission 36, vol. 2. pp.324-325.)

The Defence Department's submission, (JPE submission 94, vol 8) takes a similar stance to Mr Stevens, although his name is not in the credits. Instead its authorship is attributed to a Mr J.H. Straczek, Senior Naval Historical and Archives Officer. It does supply a list of merchant ships belonging to various countries, sunk in various parts of the east Indies, and says the body could have come from one of them, but as to how credible is the argument lies within the expertise of others more experienced, whom no doubt at this very moment will be preparing supplementary submissions for the JPE.

There is one curiously inept statement from the Defence Department which seems calculated to cloud the issue: "During the period leading up to the Japanese occupation of Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies large numbers of craft attempted to flee the region to Australia. Many were lost." It then goes on to say, "No records are known to exist giving details of these craft or their occupants and it is possible the float may have originated from one of them."

An unexpected new insult to the memory of the unknown sailor also comes from the Defence Department, inasmuch as an unsubstantiated hypothesis is put that he and others may have jumped ship somewhere (p.1857).

Interestingly, on p.1853, this same submission also acknowledges there have been many claims from researchers that the Department is withholding files. This is acknowledged, and the writer says this is due to the large number of records (not necessarily relating to *Sydney*) still unavailable to the public, some predating WW2. Encouragingly there is a proposal that all pre-1946 records should now be declared open, without further vetting.

The last word on the *Sydney* has not yet been written, and it is perhaps worth noting the comment of former RAN Hydrographer Cmdr. (ret.) R.J. Hardstaff that there is a 75 year ban on the release of certain Admiralty documents relating to the vessel. (JPE submission 8, vol. 1 p.46.) In contradiction there is a 1996 document attached to the Defence Department submission, by an Admiralty Commander Wykeham-Martin denying this (JPE submission 94, vol. 8 p.1953). High ranking navy men no less, with opposite views. Who is right and who is wrong? I don't know.

The RAN has never been wise in the manner it has dealt with HMAS Sydney, and the memory of those 645 men. Clearly it wants to distance itself from the whole affair, but has absolutely no idea of the depth that the matter has ingrained itself into the Australian psyche. The mourning process for the nation has not been completed, and there needs to be something more significant to occur than what has happened so far. Personally, I think Mr Stevens' dismissive description of the men as " more than 600 white males" is highly offensive to their memory, but perhaps someone else should comment on this.

In conclusion I would like to say that as a working ethnohistorian who is sometimes obliged to address the most minute scraps of information, I understand and sympathise with the many dedicated historians who have embarked on a long and risky journey to try to discover answers about HMAS *Sydney* where none were believed to exist. There has been some exemplary work. Unfortunately there is also an intellectually impoverished school of historians who will attempt to thwart innovative strategies at every turn. They base judgements upon "facts" they can see. If it is not on file, then it does not exist. For them, the term generalisation is a dirty word. If I may draw upon the remarks of retired Magistrate McGowan in his submission, the demand for matters involving *Sydney* to be established beyond reasonable doubt after such a time is unrealistic, but sensible decisions can be made based upon the balance of probability (JPE submission 64, vol.5. p.890).

Paul R. Weaver.

East Indies talk gets good reception from AAMH members

Our invited guest at last year's AGM was Mr Michael Young, a leading Fremantle historical researcher into matters relating to the VOC and particularly its activities in the East Indies. Michael was one on the instigators of the *Duyfken* replica project at Fremantle, currently approaching completion on the grounds of the Fremantle Maritime Museum.

During the course of his research, Michael made several trips to out-of-the-way spots in Indonesia in search of architectural traces of the VOC and of *Duyfken*. In particular he looked for and found numerous remnants of old forts. In a number of cases these old buildings have over the years, deteriorated considerably. In a few cases buildings have survived and are now put to other uses. Some no longer exist. Indonesians are generally not as excited as foreign visitors about these relics, but Michael did find examples in the oral tradition of where certain early Dutch activities used to take place. He feels sure that attitudes are changing, as recognition of the international interest in these historical treasures increases.

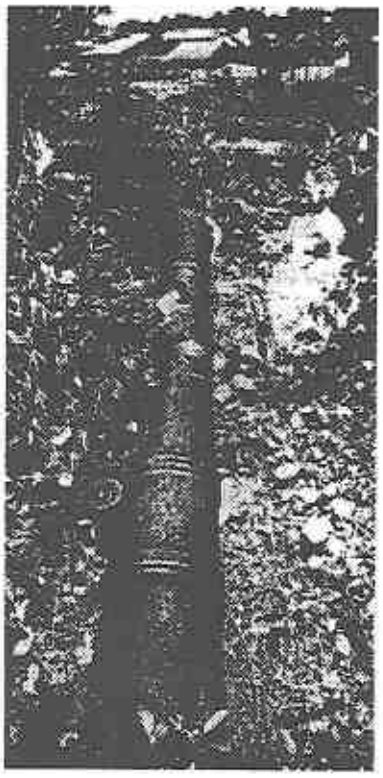
In 1995 Michael and WA Museum Director Graeme Henderson undertook an expedition to Ternate Island, which had previously been identified from old documents as the place where the wreck of *Duyfken* most likely lay. Not that they expected to find very much, because the vessel had been broken up after being careened in 1608.

Ternate was the principal clove island in the region, and access was jealously guarded by the Dutch. However they were not the first Europeans to occupy the island. Portugal and Spain had squabbled over the Spice Islands throughout the 1500s until the Dutch took over completely in the 17th century. (Magellan had planned to oust the Portuguese and capture the priceless islands for Spain, but this was thwarted by his death in the Philippines in 1521.) Spices were used to enhance food, especially meat, in order to be more palatable and digestible. Some spices were said to be more valuable than gold. Pepper, with salt was particularly in demand for preserving meat obtained from the annual European slaughter of livestock, just before the onset of the European winters. Clove oil is still valued as a medicine throughout the world, especially for toothache.

The dangerous sea and land routes from the east, ensured spices remained scarce and therefore extremely valuable. The Dutch presence commenced in 1599 at the island of Maluku, and they had taken effective control by the time Spain withdrew from Ternate and nearby Tidore in 1512. Their rule lasted 200 years.

Much has changed in the Spice Islands since those times, due in no small part to the volcanic activity. Indonesians living on Makian Island were amazed when Michael showed them historical drawings of the many Dutch and Portuguese buildings which once existed. Michael feels that a significant eruption in 1546 probably accounted for these, and that rich archaeological material remains to be discovered.

On Ternate the remains of Fort Orange can still be seen. On Bacan where Fort Barnveld was located items such as cannon are scattered about like so much rubbish. That they still survive seems miraculous, but it seems inevitable that some entrepreneur may think of a use for them. Michael is hopeful that the Indonesian government will recognise the worth of developing a restoration project, and ensure that the associate artifacts are preserved. As for the *Duyfken*, disappointingly, it seems that no traces now remain, although there is the possibility that there is a pile of ballast stones existing somewhere beyond a reef near where it was careened.

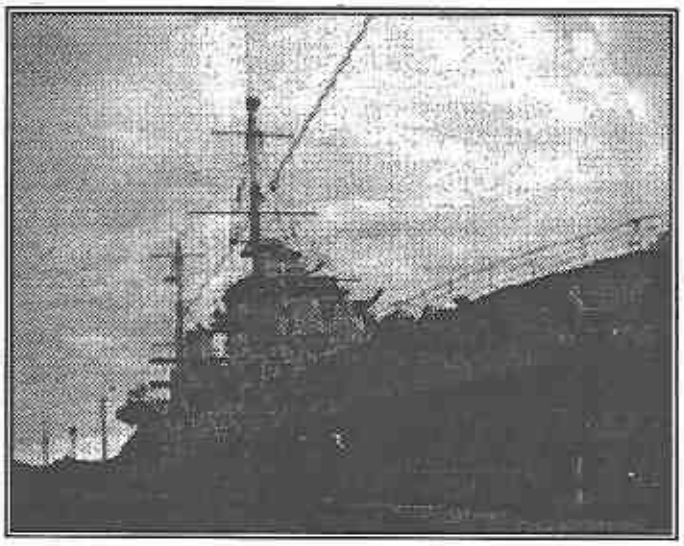


Something to stub your toe on when bushwalking near Fort Barnveld, on Bacan, Indonesia.

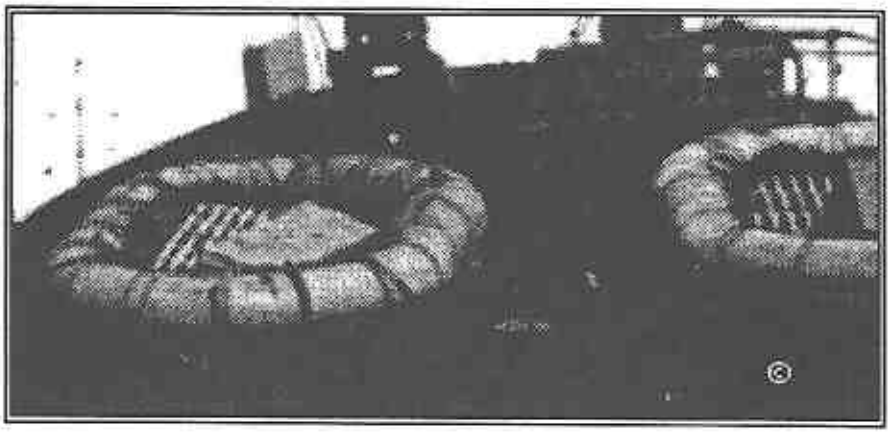
Michael's talk was accompanied by a large selection of slides of the region and early documents, and no one was left in doubt that the region has rich potential for many researchers in the future. The AAMH thanks Michael for the considerable care he took in the preparation of an extremely interesting presentation. PW

Some 'new' original photos of HMAS *Sydney* turn up

Apart from slogging away at this newsletter, the editor also does contracted maritime related historical research on behalf of various federal and state government departments. While recently perusing a private photographic collection on another matter he came upon this photo of HMAS *Sydney*, berthed at the Albany town jetty. The owner, Mrs Swarbrick, snapped the ship with her Brownie box camera. According to a former crew member Ern Ryding, this visit took place in when he was on the ship in 1937 and was during a goodwill tour of Australian ports to show the Australian public what the government had been spending its money on. The photo on page nine, of Carley floats on the stern HMAS *Sydney* belongs to Mr Ryding. The editor is currently cataloguing Mr Ryding's collection. Note the scorched paint on the guns, which had been hard at work sorting out some Italian warships in the Med. There has been much discussion about Carley floats over the years, and in anticipation of interest these pictures, an enlargement of the floats is presented below. There is no suggestion either of these is the Christmas Island float. A picture of floats in this position on the ship, published in T. Frame's book shows a smaller raft was at some time stored inside one of the larger ones. It is absent here. A discussion on other previously unrecognised images relating to *Sydney* will appear in a future newsletter. Many thanks to the owners for the use of them. Unfortunately the reproduction quality here is limited by the available equipment.



HMAS *Sydney* at Albany in 1937



Carley floats on the stern of HMAS *Sydney*

The *Quarterly Newsletter - The Australian Association for Maritime History* is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Views expressed within it do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History. The newsletter is compiled and edited in an honorary capacity by (Dr) Paul R. Weaver, 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157.
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