December 1998
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Quarterly Newsletter

⚓ The Australian Association for Maritime History

Publisher of *The Great Circle*

Special: Subs, subs and more subs issue

Seasons Greetings to all our members and friends

President's Report to the 20th AGM of the Australian Association for Maritime History Adelaide, 31 October 1998

It gives me great pleasure to be at the South Australian Maritime Museum to present the Presidents' Report for the year ending 30th October 1998. This AGM is a turning point as it represents the end of the fourth executive since the AAMH was established twenty years ago. The practice has been for the Executive to rotate every five years and tonight the mantle passes from Western Australia to South Australia. This is the first time the AAMH is to be managed from South Australia and I hope this will be a boost to maritime history in this state. I will now review the past five years.

Membership and finances

In 1993 the previous President listed the membership at 390 and at the end of 1998 it stands at 332. While membership numbers have declined, the 1993 statistics included a large number of non-financial members. The current practice is to retain nonfinancial members on the books for at least six months in the hope that they will eventually renew, so that it is difficult to be precise about the number of financial members. The current Executive has always sent reminders to members before deleting them from the list.

An exit poll of resigning members indicated that the decline was mainly due to deaths and retirements and not dissatisfaction with the services provided by the AAMH. The Executive has undertaken initiatives to attract new members, including an incentive scheme to encourage existing members to sign up new members and the printing and circulation of attractive new brochures with information about the AAMH. The most successful recruiting effort was the distribution of brochures earlier this year in the Australian National Maritime Museum's *Signals*, arranged with the kind assistance of Jeffrey Mellefont. Under the capable management of our Treasurer, Peter Ridgway, the financial position of the Association has steadily improved over the last few years:

1994/95 - $57,000
1995/96 - $62,3 82
1996/97 - $65,532
1997/98 - $67,988

Peter Ridgway has provided an audited financial report.

The Great Circle

The Great Circle is the academic flagship of the AAMH and I am pleased to report that Graydon Henning continues to produce a high quality journal. Unfortunately, publication of the journal has fallen behind schedule. The Executive had made additional funds available to the Editor for proof-reading etc when requested. Graydon has indicated his intention to retire after the completion of volume 20. He will have served as editor for ten years, a very long period in which to undertake such an onerous and time consuming task in a purely voluntary capacity. I have already written to him on behalf of the Executive, thanking him for his contribution. In recognition of Graydon's service I have proposed him for life membership of the Association. The AAMH is looking for a new Editor with a suitable professional and academic background. It has been suggested that an honorarium might be paid to attract a suitable person, but this will be a matter for the new Executive to consider.

Newsletter

When Vaughan Evans retired as editor of the *Newsletter*, he was succeeded by Marten Syme in a temporary capacity. In 1995 Jeffrey Mellefont of the Australian National Maritime Museum took over but due to work pressures he resigned at the

end of 1996. Dr Paul Weaver took over and has succeeded in producing, on schedule, an informative, interesting and occasionally controversial publication. Unfortunately, he has indicated that he wishes to resign at the end of 1998 and the AAMH is looking for a successor.

Some have suggested that the *Newsletter* may have outlived its usefulness, but I would like to stress that the outgoing Executive is strongly of the opinion that it is a core part of our services to members; it caters for the broad range of our members and includes news and other items that are not suitable for inclusion in the more academic *The Great Circle*. It currently costs less than $1,000 per annum to produce and distribute four issues of the *Newsletter*, which makes it a cost effective service to members. I would like to thank Marten Syme, Jeffrey Mellefont and Paul Weaver for their valuable contributions to the *Newsletter*. The AAMH is currently looking for a new editor and, as with *The Great Circle*, it has been suggested that an honorarium might be paid to attract a suitable person.

Vaughan Evans Memorial Lecture

The Executive decided to establish an annual lecture to commemorate the memory of Vaughan Evans who passed away in November 1993. Vaughan played a vital role as one of the founders of the AAMH and as founding Editor of the Newsletter.

The inaugural lecture was given in November 1994 by Commander James Goldrick, on 'The problems of modern naval history'. The second lecture was given by Dr Stuart Frank, Director of the Kendall Whaling Museum in Sharon, Massachusetts. His topic was 'Oooh, you New York Girls! The Urban Pastorale in Ballads and Songs about Sailors Ashore in the Big City.' The third Vaughan Evans lecture was given by the Dutch scholar Dr Femme Gastra on the Dutch East India Company. This lecture was timed to coincide with a colloquium on Australian-Dutch maritime history held by the WA Maritime Museum in January 1997 and attracted a record turnout of about 200. The fourth lecture will be given by Associate Professor Keith Trace at the Australasian and Maritime History Conference in Wellington, 22-25 November 1998. His topic is "For Tyranny of Distance read Tyranny of Scale: Australia and the Global shipping Market'.

All the lectures have been published (two in The Great Circle) in order to make them available to members who were unable to attend. Stuart Frank's Vaughan Evans Memorial Lecture was published jointly by the AAMH and the Kendall Whaling Museum in the latter's monograph scenes. This Lecture series has helped both to promote maritime history to a broader audience and raise the profile of the AAMH.

Publications and research activities

The AAMH, together with the International Commission of Maritime History, organised a conference on 'New Directions in Maritime History' at the Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle between 6-10 December 1993. The conference attracted 82 leading maritime scholars from all over the world and 37 papers were presented on diverse aspects of maritime history. A number of papers from the conference appeared in maritime history journals including *The Great Circle*.

In 1996 a Bibliography of theses on Australian maritime history was jointly published by the AAMH and the International Maritime Economic History Association and some copies are still available. Some copies of Stuart Frank's Vaughan Evans Memorial Lecture are also still available. The Executive provided some seed money to assist with the publication of member Ms P. Brown's book *The Merchant Princes of Fremantle*, 1870-1900. The University of Western Australia Press published the book in 1997. Financial assistance was also provided to Graeme Broxam to assist with the publication of *Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Tasmania, Volume III, 1843-1850.* This book was published by Navarine Publishing in October 1998.

Victorian Councilor, John Anderson, organised a maritime history panel at the Australian Historical Association's Biennial Conference at the University of Melbourne, 14-17 July 1996.

The AAMH is involved with the organisation of the Australasian and Maritime History Conference in Wellington, 22-25 November 1998, at which the 1998 Vaughan Evans Lecture will be given.

The AAMH has provided some seed money to a conference on the Indian Ocean fisheries: *Past, Present and Future* to be held in Fremantle on Sept 28-30, 1999. Three AAMH members are on the organising panel.

All the above activity helps fulfil the aims of the AAMH, which include encouraging the study, discussion, writing and publication of maritime history.

International Commission for Maritime History

The AAMH has maintained its membership of the ICMH and has received a number of issues of the ICMH Newsletter.

Branch activity

Branch activity has never been great, but a number of Branches have organised activities and lectures from time to time. I remind members that the Executive is willing to provide small grants to assist with establishing Branch activities. I would like to extend my thanks to all members of the Executive and Councilors for their efforts over the past five years. Thanks to your endeavours, in the last five years the AAMH has made substantial progress in meeting its aims as outlined in the Constitution. 1998 is the 20th anniversary of the founding of the AAMH and I see no reason why the organisation cannot successfully continue for another twenty years. Finally, I would like to wish the incoming Executive and Council well for their five year term. **Dr Malcolm Tull**

Introducing the new members of the AAMH Executive Committee

Mark Staniforth - President.
Mark is currently a Lecturer in Maritime and Historical Archaeology in the Archaeology Department at Flinders University. He has been a member of AAMH for more that a decade and has been an AAMH executive council member on two occasions; for Victoria in the 1980s and for SA in recent years. Mark has published papers on maritime history topics in the *Great Circle* and the *International Journal of Maritime History*. He is a former President and Vice-President of the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology (AIMA). His current research interests include whaling in southern Australia and the importation of material culture into the early Australian colonies.

Dieuwke Jessop - Vice President
Dieuwke is the Director of the South Australian Maritime Museum where previously she was the Curator. Dieuwke has been an AAMH Council member representing South Australia for nearly a decade. Many years ago she trained as an archaeologist, historian and in tourism. Her focus is now the South Australian Maritime Museum and Landcare.

Marie Boland - Secretary
Marie is the Curator of the South Australian Maritime Museum. She was born in Dublin and emigrated to Australia in 1992. She worked for two years as Curator of the Migration Museum and for four years as Curator of the City of Unley Museum. She took up the position at the SA Maritime Museum in March 1998. Her focus in on social history and she looks forward to working with those in the maritime field and with the members of AAMH.

Terry Arnott - Treasurer
Terry is a Maritime Heritage Officer with Heritage SA (Department of Environment, Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs) and has been a museum curator in Victoria. He is a former Secretary of the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology (AIMA). Terry is a former president and a life member of Maritime Archaeology Association of Victoria (MAAV). He has a long standing interest in maritime archaeology and history. He has participated in maritime archaeology expeditions around Australia for nearly twenty years.

Nathan Richards - Publicity Officer
Nathan is a PhD candidate in the Archaeology Department at Flinders University. In 1996 he was awarded first class honours for a thesis. "The history and archaeology of the Garden Island ship's graveyard, North Arm of the Port Adelaide River, Port Adelaide, South Australia."

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Yep, he's baaaaack!!!!

Actually I never quite got away. I was quitting as newsletter editor at the end of this year, but since the AGM, the new executive in SA have induced me to stay on as newsletter editor for another year. In reaching this decision I again ask that interstate members and organisations to please send me more stuff. Local newspaper clippings, publicity brochures, forthcoming publications, press releases, photos of interesting maritime related subjects, short interesting original essays like the one by Vic Jeffery on page 13 in this newsletter are all grist for the mill. If you are undertaking some sort of research project or thesis a few descriptive lines about it would be of great interest to others, and may even bring dividends in unexpected ways. Send anything for the newsletter direct to my above address. Remember, contributors do not need to be expert writers. Please include a stamped addressed envelope if you need a reply or material returned. Paul Weaver

Help requested

Michael Dwyer is researching 408 ton barque *Runnymead*, which made a voyage between Liverpool and Portland in 1852. He is after plans, drawings or anything. His address: 6/3 Lancaster Ave. Newcomb, Geelong. 3219. Ph. 03 52585705.

Barbara Barnes is trying to find any information on a ship *Amalfi* which she says sailed from Marzdorf (Prussia) to Melbourne in 1883. Brick wall so far. Her address: 33 Olympus Dr. Lower Templestowe. Vic. 3107. Ph 03 94886805.

Melanie Chappel is willing to pay someone to research a crew member on *Duke of Buccleuch's* trip to Brisbane, Dec. 1887. Her address: 21 Punari St. Currajong. Qld. 4812.

Research avenues - newspaper indexes - convicts

Any researcher who has looked at early Australian newspapers will appreciate the value of a comprehensive index. Unfortunately most of the many hundreds of such publications in various archives are not indexed. The few which are are due to the efforts of dedicated persons who often spend years notating significant material, which means just about everything. Wendy and Rod Gow have taken up the challenge and compiled an index for the *Maitland Mercury*, for 1843, its first year of publication. The *Mercury* is NSW's oldest provincial newspaper, and of course contains much relating to maritime matters, not only for NSW but for VDL, SA, WA and overseas. Inquiries can be directed to the Gows at PO Box 73 Cundletown, NSW. 2430.

In Western Australia volunteers at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society have been working on indexes of old WA newspapers for some years, and these can be consulted at that organisation's library, 49 Broadway, Nedlands. WA. 6009. 9.30 to 3.30 Min - Fri. The RWAHS has a very good library mainly relating to WA and also operates a well stocked bookshop. Friendly volunteers in the library are always willing to assist visitors, and you do not have to be a member. For those interested in researching convict history there are two serious stops in WA, the state government's Battye Library in central Perth and the WA Genealogy Society. The latter has a really excellent library which can be accessed by non-members for a small daily fee. The collection contains a great quantity of published and unpublished material relating to the early maritime history of Australia. Furthermore the Society has within its membership some expert researchers who have published inexpensive guides to various archival collections. These can be purchased from the Society. The phone is 08 9271 4311 or email wagscleo.murdoch.edu.au

Women of the sea, unite

There are several discussion groups relating to maritime history on the internet, and as anyone who has entered that electronic domain knows, there is an enormous quantity of material available for those who have the time to wade through it. One of the great advantages is that people with common interests are able to meet eachother and exchange information on specialised archives. *The Woman and the Sea* is one such network, and is coordinated by Jo Stanley at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Her email address is jo.stanley@dial.pipex.com Send her a line and she will tell you how to connect to the group. The Museum also has a website http://www.nmm.ac.uk/rcs/index.html with lots of information about that fabulous repository. Of course not everyone has email access, and Jo's organisation has recognised this by publishing a free (at the moment) occasional newsletter, *The Newsletter of the Women of the Sea Network*. The newsletter is a digest of selected material from the net, and the latest edition (Vol 2 No 1) contains a wealth of information on members' research interests and backgrounds. For a copy contact Jo at the Research Department, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. SE10 9NF UK.

Book about 19th Century immigrant diaries reprinted

A publicity leaflet says Don Charlwood's reprinted *The Long Farewell* has drawn on 120 immigrant diaries maintained on 19th century voyages to Australia involving 108 ships. Cost is A$19.95 plus $2 post. Further details from Burgewood Books 3 Mount View Rd. Templestowe Vic. 3106. Ask for a list of other maritime related works by the author is available.

Joseph Conrad waving, not lost

On page 7 of the last newsletter there was a photo of the ship *Joseph Conrad*. The accompanying text said it reportedly vanished at sea with the loss of all hands. This was incorrect. *Joseph Conrad* ex *George Stage* was a Danish training ship acquired by Australian seaman/journalist/author/adventurer, Alan Villiers for a world encircling voyage to train young boys in the art of square rig sailing. This voyage commenced on 22.10.34 from Harwich, England.

The *Joseph Conrad* sailed from Melbourne on 31.1.36 towards Samarai, New Guinea via Auckland. From there she sailed down the Queensland coast, through Cook Strait towards Tahiti. From Papeete she sailed around Cape Horn towards New York arriving there on 10.11.36..Villiers, out of funds, was forced to sell *Joseph Conrad*. Millionaire Huntington Hartford bought her for use as a yacht and during World War 2 the US Coast Guard used her as a training ship. She is still afloat and is now owned by the Maritime Museum at Mystic, Connecticut, USA.

The first mate for the voyage from Auckland to New York, Gordon Chapman still resides in Newcastle, NSW. Villiers book, *Cruise of the Conrad* describes the voyage in detail, and in it he mentions 'a small destroyer being near by', as they left Port Phillip. (HMAS *Tattoo*?) The only significant sailing ships leaving an Australian port that I can recall as having 'disappeared without trace' in that general period, was the Danish five masted barque' *Kobenhavn*' in 1929 and the German four masted barque *Admiral Karpfanger*, ex *L'Avenir* in 1938. Both were probably victims of icebergs, or else broached to, on the run to Cape Horn. **Robert Carter**

English church bells with maritime history link to ring in WA

In WA, Premier Richard Court has announced a multi- million ($5>) dollar tower-project on the riverside in Perth to house a set of bells from St Martin's in the Field church in London. These were a sequicentenary gift to the state many years ago, but no one knew where to put them so they have been in storage. An extra bell was cast this year with Mr Court's name on it and not long after, the project was announced. In an attempt to whip up public enthusiasm for the project he told the populace that the metal in the bells (they have been recast a few times) had once been rung in celebration of England winning the Battle of Trafalgar. News of this, and the project has generated some colourful responses in state parliament and the media.

More on old oil measurements

I, John King, happen to be the 'Joseph' King who initiated the discussion on whale and seal measurements through the pages of of our newsletter. I am currently trying to collate elephant seal oil yields from King Island in the early eighteenth century. Until the ensuing discussion took place, I had adopted the following measures:

TUN: A large barrel, cask or hogshead holding 252 old wine gallons. Four Bordeaux wine casks occupied one tun (= 32 cu ft) of shipping space and held 2016 English pounds weight of 15 ounces to the pound; equalled in weight of water to 2,000 lbs (Cumpston 1968).

CASK: A wooden barrel of no fixed size; but commonly varying from 42 to 50 gallons capacity. Thus six casks of 42 gallons equals one tun. (However, it should be noted that 42 imperial gallons equal 50.4 US gallons. Hence I tend to use the figure of 42 gallons in the context of colonial sealing).

TIERCE: A small barrel holding 12 gallons.

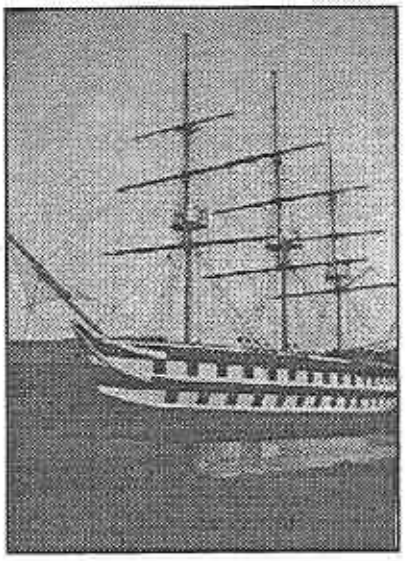
BUTT: A large barrel holding 96 gallons.

One wonders whether and how consistently imperial measures were used by British and Australian sealers and whalers and US measures were used by American mariners. **John King.**

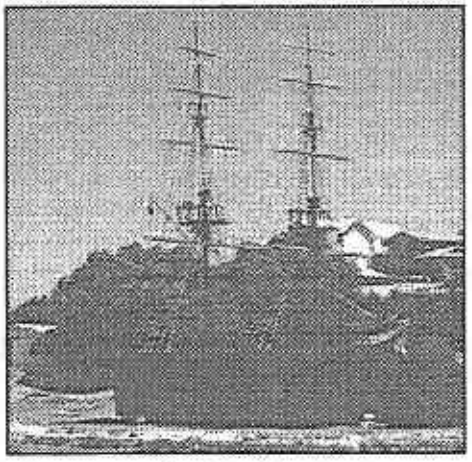
Fake is good

Throughout this great land of Oz we have monuments to glorious human achievement such as the "big pineapple" and "big crayfish." Last month Mr Kennet floated the idea of a "big vanilla slice" in a Victorian town; and why not indeed.

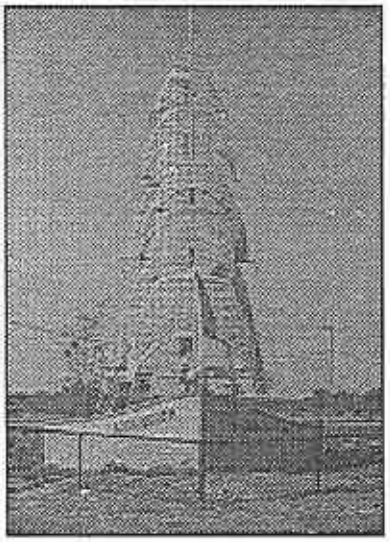
Well where did all this curious business start? Could it have been our friends at the RAN? Prior to WW2 at HMAS Flinders there apparently was the replica of HMS *Victory*. Attempts to find out more about this inspiring matelot monument drew a blank from the navy, although one PR person thought it might have been eaten by white ants during the war. In the late- twentieth century there have been a couple of interesting fake ships in the west, photographs of which are brought to you by your sometimes controversial editor. The first is of the *Amity* at Albany. The original tub brought the first garrison and its convict labourers from Sydney in 1826, and by reports they were pretty glad to get ashore and start bestowing the benefits of being British on the locals. The land-bound wooden replica was built in the 1970s and has become a popular focal point for period-costumed citizens during innumerable historical celebrations since.



Victory replica



Amity replica
Photos: P. Weaver



Rockingham replica

Without a doubt the *Rockingham* located on the northern side of the town of the same name, south of Fremantle and adjacent to HMAS Stirling base, is a sight few maritime historians will forget. Next to some high-tension power lines and imaginatively constructed of brick, with steel weldmesh sails, this really is a replica vessel for landlubbers. Reportedly there were some emotional gasps, presumably of admiration when it was unveiled by the Mayor in November last year, and it too now serves as an inspiring reminder of the pioneering past when the original ship dumped itself and its very pale passengers (97 adults and 75 kids) on the nearby sandy seashell strewn shore during a storm in 1830. Incidentally, the town of Rockingham wants to utilise the now defunct 2,500 ton destroyer escort HMAS *Torrens* as a dive ship. but the navy wants to use it for torpedo target practice in deep water off WA in March next year, provided they can get a sub organised.

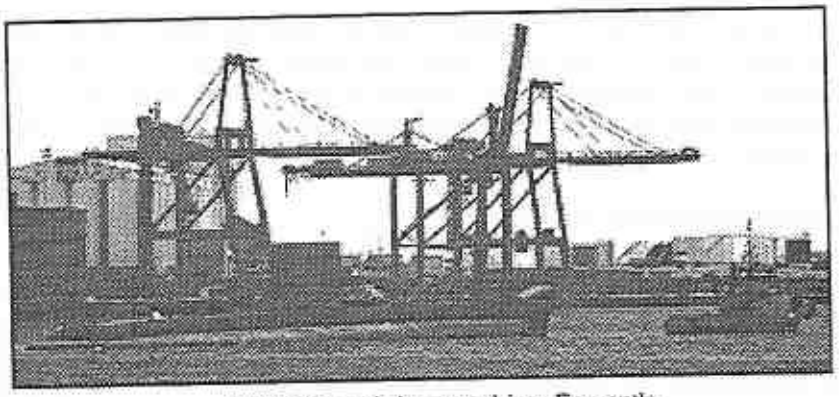
Old sub stuff

The RAN corrected WA's *Sunday Times* over an August report "Bargains galore in biggest garage sale." (16/8/98) which said that submarines *Orion*, *Ovens*, *Onslow* and *Otama* were for sale by tender. *Ovens* and *Orion* were decommissioned and laid up at HMAS Stirling. HMAS *Onslow* and HMAS *Otama* were still in operation and not for sale. *Ovens* was designated for the Fremantle Maritime Museum, and *Onslow* is to go to the Sydney's National Maritime Museum.

On 17 November *Ovens* was towed from Garden Island (WA) to Fremantle Harbour (see photo) where it will be prepared for public display by an enthusiastic group of museum volunteers known as FOSM (Friends of the submarine). The handover is the result of many years of lobbying. The group has several ex-RAN and RN submariners. Their president is Steve Dyer, who can be contacted through the museum. *Ovens* went into service in 1969 and in 1986 was the first to fire a Harpoon missile. During its 26 years it clocked up 420,000> NM. The boat and associated display are intended to serve as a reminder that Fremantle was a major allied submarine base during WW2. AAMH members interested in that period are advised to seek

out a book by Cairns, Lynne. (1995). Fremantle's Secret Fleets. Fremantle: Fremantle Maritime Museum.

At Gallipoli the survey of *AE2* concluded in early October. The scuttled Australian sub lies in mud in an upright position in 72 metres of water, a depth which requires specialised gas mixtures of oxygen, helium and nitrogen and complex staging times for the dive. Even so, divers could only spend 18 minutes on the bottom. An Australian team led by Dr Mark Spencer cooperated with a team from the Rhami Koc Museum in Turkey in the project. Several enthusiastic and descriptive email letters from Australian team members were published in the November edition of the newspaper *Dive Log Australia*, which is available free from most dive shops. A less descriptive report appeared in *The Australian* 6/10/98:8.

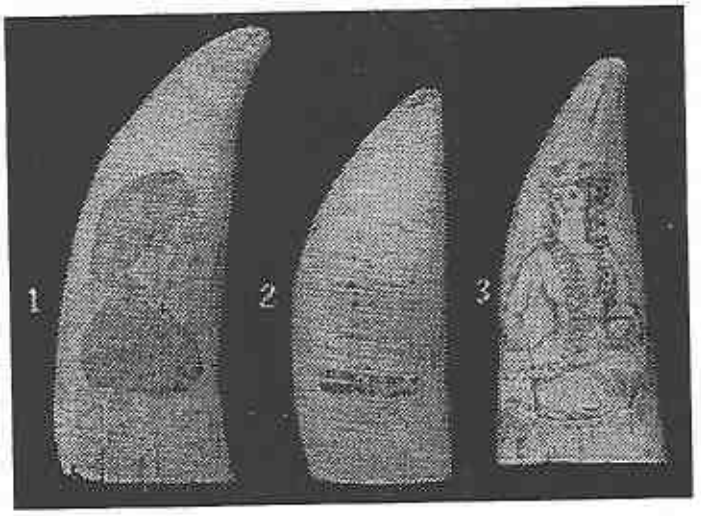


HMAS *Ovens* being towed into Fremantle
Photo: P. Weaver

Some readers will recall that in the June newsletter there was a photo of the bow section of *Otama* on display at Exmouth, so the navy was contacted for clarification. The bow section at Exmouth was removed when new sonar equipment was fitted to the sub, and *Otama* is still in service.

Stolen scrimshaw alert

A collection of antique and modern scrimshaw was in a briefcase in a car stolen in Western Australia on September 8. The car and briefcase were recovered, with the teeth being the only items missing. In the photograph here, item 1 is a whale tooth, approximately 8.5 inches long by 2.75 inches wide. One side (not shown) has a crinoline dressed woman the full length of the tooth. The side shown here has a woman's head and shoulders. Item 2 is a tooth measuring approximately 6 by 2.25 inches. The engraving is of the ship *Martha*, which visited Sydney in the mid-nineteenth century. The ship's name is on a masthead pennant. The ship and pennant are tinted pale red. Item 3 measures about 6 by 2.75 inches. The picture of a woman has been copied from a fashion plate and is described as very fine work. Two other teeth are not shown here. One is modern, signed by G. Tonkin. The design on one side only is of the ship *Vasa*. The tooth is slightly polished. The other is a modern composite (resin) replica of an American museum piece. The engraving is of the state hall, Boston. The first three items are quite valuable, and being portable, might turn up anywhere in the world. There is a reward offered. Phone the owner 08 9362 6475.



Maritime museum accidentally discovered in Queensland

The various maritime museums scattered around Australia are not remarkable for transmitting news of their existence or activities beyond their corporate boundaries, which is a pity because many Australians in other states would be interested in visiting their displays, or even purchasing their publications. During the post-election doldrums the Queensland Maritime Museum inadvertently got into the national press after one of it's exhibits HMAS *Diamantina* was accidentally refloated when the 117 year old South Brisbane dry dock sprang a leak. Reportedly the dry dock is in pretty bad shape, having been patched up repeatedly since *Diamantina* came to roost 17 years ago. The report in *The Australian* 6/10/98:8 actually said the dock was beyond repair, which sounds a bit sad.

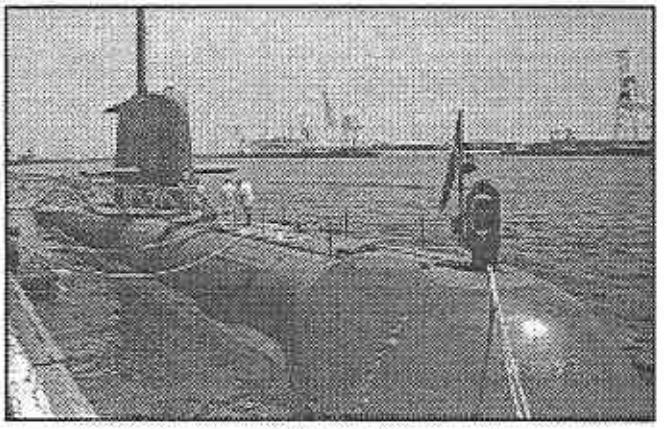
Baudin bicentennial approaches

In celebration of the Baudin expedition to Australia 200 years ago, Imprimerie Nationale in Paris is to publish *Mon voyage aux Terres Australis: Journal personnel du commandant Baudin*. The 16.5 x 24cm work of 640 pages will contain 210 illustrations and 8 maps. Going by the brochure it looks like a "must have." For those wishing to place advance orders the price will be 360 francs plus post and packing. 360 francs is close to A$100. Enquiries can be made with the publisher at

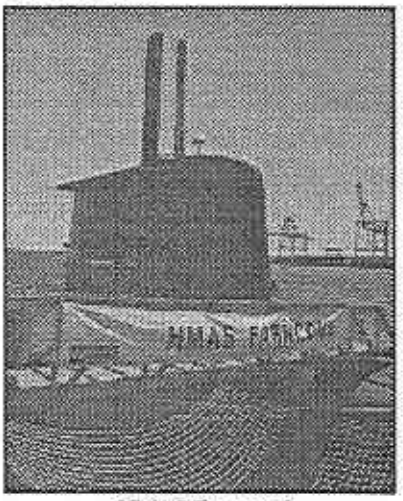
27 rue de la Convention, 75732 Paris Cedix 15. However, there is a much easier way to obtain this important work and that is to contact one of our members, Jean-Louis Boglio, PO Box 72. Currumbin Qld. 4223. Ph 07 5534 9349. Jean-Louis is a specialist seller of maritime books. He will be happy to take orders. A translated version of the journal was published in Adelaide in 1974, (tr. Christine Cornell) and certainly has pride of place on this editor's bookshelf, but I have always had a craving to compare it with the original.

Annus horibilus for RAN

1998 has not been a good year for the RAN spin doctors. The fire on HMAS *Westralia*, recurrent allegations of the ADF's inability to cope with a sexist culture, deteriorating moral, and the AAMH Newsletter were bad enough, however the big issue has to be the onerous reputation developing around the Collins-class subs. "Subs are duds" screamed the headlines around the nation. It seems short and thick does not always do the trick when it comes to running silent and deep with these very expensive boats. They are relatively noisy according to a US Navy report, and easily detected. The leaked report was highlighted in many Australian newspapers 8-10 October and brought vigorous denials from the PR people that the things were floating lemons. These "teething problems" will be fixed, said they. Understandably such reports have not gone down well with the Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC) and its head was reported mid November as saying the leaks were "utterly mischievous" (Aust 13/11/98:2). *The Bulletin* in the same week carried a claim from a parliamentary senator that one of the boats had nearly gone to the bottom following a systems failure. The navy PR people quickly denied any such incident had occurred.



HMAS *Collins*
Photo: P. Weaver



HMAS *Farncomb*
Photo: P. Weaver

The Swedish design was selected in 1987 by the Keating government with Kim Beazley as Minister for Defence. A Sydney newspaper alleged on 8/10/98 that documentation exists which shows the navy enhanced performance indicators for the Swedish design ahead of a German competitor during the design selection process. Six boats were ordered at A$5 billion per copy. In the leadup to the election this year, Mr Beazley said if Labor was reelected he would be moving to order two more. Only two boats have been commissioned so far and one of those HMAS *Farncomb* has reportedly been laid up in Darwin this year for several months with battery problems. *Waller* and *Dechaineux* are undergoing trials in SA but are not yet commissioned. *Sheean* and *Rankin* will complete the order.

Innumerable statements continue to appear in the post-election press from the Navy's PR department now headed by Commander R. Dudfield that the subs are not "duds". Astonishingly a report appeared in *The Australian* 13/11/98:1-2 that a witchhunt has begun within the navy in Canberra to identify a group of senior officers believed to be engaged in a conspiracy to discredit the boats. Analysts have been scrutinising every piece of published material on the subject to try and finger the culprits, and a steely female security officer has commenced interrogations.

It remains to be seen if any of the remaining tired Oberon-class subs may be operating a bit longer than planned. As the navy appears confront one disaster to another it may only be a matter of time before serious questions are raised if the nation's defence needs might be better served by a greater emphasis on other sectors of the defence network, and this is what the navy is most worried about. There is an unmistakable air of concern about unravelling events overseas, particularly in northeast Asia, which was something noted by the retiring joint-service chief when addressing the National Press Club a couple of months back. He also commented wearily that bringing the new subs into service seemed to be taking an inordinate amount of time. Meantime the Hon. Mrs Bronwyn Bishop has lost the defence portfolio in the new government and instead will be looking after the interests of pensioners and other elderly folks.

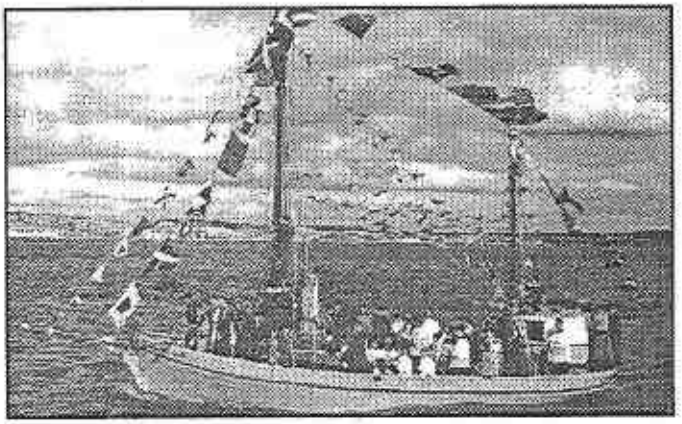
50th Blessing of the Fleet at Freo

October 18 marked the 50th anniversary of the Fremantle fishing industry's Blessing of the Fleet. First held at the port in 1948, the ceremony owes its origins to Italian fishermen from Molfetta in southeast Italy.

Festival preparations began with a holy mass and communion at St Patrick's Basilica in Fremantle the previous month (6 Sept.) On the day the fleet was to be blessed, proceedings began at St Patrick's with an 8.30am mass. In the afternoon a

procession made it's way though the streets of Fremantle to the fishing harbour.

The Catholic fishers have as their religious patroness a statue of Madonna dei Martiri, thought of as the Star of the Sea and Queen of the Universe. Since 1950, this has been carried by men in the procession. A second statue, Madonna de Capo d'Orlando joined the procession in 1954 and is carried by young women.



Blessing of the Fleet on *Maddalena* in 1955
Photo courtesy of Blessing of Fleet Committee

Eventually the statues and their guardians are taken on board large fishing boats, selected for the honour in a previous ballot. The statues are taken around the harbour amid a confusion created by other boats, loud fireworks and thousands of curious onlookers. This year the benediction was bestowed by visiting Bishop of Molfetta, Donato Negro. The Bishop was accompanied by a delegation of 25 other personages from Italy. As usual, in the evening there were more fireworks.

While the complex ritual is of Italian origin other ethnicities also participate, and blessings are now performed annually at several Western Australian ports, all with the intention of invoking divine protection, and of course, the blessing of a bountiful catch in the forthcoming season. The ceremonies reflect the religious composition of the resident fishing population. At Bunbury there is more of an emphasis on Greek tradition, where an Orthodox priest casts a crucifix into the water for the young men to recover. At Albany there has been more of a multi-denominational effort. Ceremonies are also held at the main crayfishing ports on the west coast. (Not all on the same day as Fremantle.)

The entry of Italians, the most significant group of non-British fishers into the Western Australian ocean-fishing industry, appears to have commenced in 1863 when Guiseppi Marselli, a ship's carpenter, arrived from Tuscany and took on the role of boat builder and part-time fisherman at Fremantle.

According to respected geographer Joseph Gentilli, a myth has persisted amongst the Italian community in Fremantle that 200 Sicilian fisherman arrived from Grottaferrata, Sicily in 1847 to help Dom Salvado and his monks build the New Norcia Monastery. These men were said to have then founded the the Western Australian fishing industry at Point Peron south of Fremantle. However, there were no fishermen listed with Salvado and the belief is completely unfounded.

The story might have been originally devised to provide a cover for illegal immigration in the 1880s. About then a small colony of mostly Sicilian fishermen had established themselves at Point Peron, south of Fremantle. Exactly how and when they arrived is uncertain because they are not mentioned in official immigration records. An Austrian registered ship *Honor* which called at nearby Rockingham to load timber in 1883 and 1885 is suspected of being their carrier. Sailing under Captain F.G. Mareglia this ship also visited Spencer's Gulf in South Australia on at least two occasions and is believed to have landed Italian fishermen there. Because *Honor* travelled from the Mediterranean via Capetown it avoided the close scrutiny and passenger charges normally imposed by the British owned Suez Canal Company. Presumably too there was a risk of news of such movements filtering though to Australian colonial authorities.

The arrival of Italian fishermen in the southwest coincided approximately with the first discovery of gold in northern Western Australia in 1882, although their arrival is thought to have been related to the collapse of the Sicilian tuna industry rather than gold. Gamba in his pioneering 1952 study of Italian fishermen at Fremantle also points out that Sicily was politically unstable and poverty was widespread at this time, with prices obtained for staple fishes such as sardines being extremely low. **Paul Weaver**

French plonk bottle from Shark Bay is a fizzer

In the June newsletter it was mentioned that in early April a team of volunteers and WA Maritime Museum archaeologists had found a sealed bottle near where a French coin was found on Dirk Hartog Island late last year. The items were purportedly left in 1792 by French explorer/navigator Francis St Alouarn, who arrived on the west coast after a scientific expedition into the Southern Ocean in *Le Gross Ventre*.

A public servant in the museum has been to Paris this year to research its circumstances, but is yet to disclose the results. Another source revealed the corked bottle had been subjected to an ultrasound and a CAT scan test which indicated there was something inside. A local newspaper report on 5 November said that a wired-on lead cap containing a French coin had been teased from the bottle with the aid of a brush and hair dryer. It said the museum was going to ask a medical surgeon to poke an endoscopic type camera-probe through a small hole which existed in the cork and have a squizz inside. The following day (6 Nov.) the cork was removed and the contents tipped out. No note, just some sand, fine roots, and indication of past insect visitation.

Another French message story worth retelling

The West Australian newspaper in a children's education supplement (20/10/98) reminded readers of a tragic nineteenth story first reported by the paper during the late nineteenth century. On 18 September 1887 two boys found a dead albatross on the beach at Trigg Island near Perth. Around it's neck was a tin collar with a message punched on it with a nail. Written in French it said that thirteen sailors had been stranded on Crozet Island since 4 August. The information was immediately telegraphed to London, but did not reach French authorities until 6 October. On December 2 a French warship called into Crozet Island and found a rough shelter containing a letter from the captain of the French ship *Tamaris*. It said they had been wrecked on March 9 and had survived on emergency rations for several months. By September things were becoming desperate and they eventually put to sea in a small boat on 30 September, hoping to reach another island they believed was inhabited. They all perished.

Australian Archives additions

The following have recently become available at Australian Archives:
Smokey Cape lighthouse logs C757 (Brisbane).
Applications by British migrants for assisted passage to Australia 1948-56. PP4/1 (Perth).
Antarctic station reports and logs. 1954-55. P1556. (Hobart)
Cruise documentation for research vessel *Franklin, 1987*. P2355. (Hobart)
Also, the full text and imagery of Research guide 3, *The Sinking of the HMAS Sydney* is now available online at www.naa.gov.au./publicat/guides/index.htm

Tasmanian 19 cent. shipping lists published with help of AAMH

AAMH member Graeme Broxam has published through Navarine Publishing, *Shipping arrivals and departures - Tasmania - Vol 3 - 1843-1850*. This is No 45 in the Roebuck series. Publication was assisted with a $500 grant from the AAMH. At 603 pages with an attractive dust jacket, the book has a lot of shipping data which Mr Broxam says took eight years to compile. Numerous interesting pictures are sprinkled throughout. No doubt a book of value to persons interested in the movements of shipping and cargo to and from anywhere. Also has interesting info on things like Tasmanian regattas. RRP is A$50 but there was a discount deal running until 1 December which was about when this newsletter was posted out. It may be worth contacting the author who shares the same postal address as Navarine at Reply paid 13, PO box 1275. Woden. ACT 2606 to see if he will extend the offer. Mr Broxam is apparently also associated with the marketing of two other recently published books. *The Brothers Taylor, a Tasmanian maritime history*, by Colin Taylor RRP$A25; and *Tasmanian Shipwrecks 1797 - 1899* by Graeme Broxam and Michael Nash RRP A$40.

HMAS *Sydney* inquiry

The Joint Parliamentary Inquiry amassed a huge quantity of material relating to the investigation of circumstances relating to the sinking of HMAS *Sydney*. Not all of this reached the public eye, but will ultimately be archived for some as yet possibly unborn revisionist historian to rummage through in 30 years. There is for example a newspaper clipping file, and associated material from other publications, plus the accumulated correspondence, interesting inter-department memos, etc.. Perhaps of most interest is a fair quantity of submissions which the originators requested be not published. Unless there is some sort of analytical summary of their content produced by the Inquiry, there is a widespread feeling they will serve to fuel continuing public speculation that there has indeed been a long running conspiracy. There has also been criticism that some of the less legible hand-written submissions which contain some important information may not receive the full attention deserved, and it was suggested by influential persons that it would have been appropriate for the inquiry to provide typed copies, but they were not influential enough. Apparently a draft final report had been prepared prior to the election. As we went to press there had been no confirmation that the inquiry would be reopened.

Former RAN chief dies

The Australian 6/11/98:16 carried a lengthy obituary for Sir (Hugh) David Stevenson, AC, KBE Vice-Admiral, RAN, who died on 26 October aged 80. Stephenson headed the Australian half of the joint enquiry into the tragic June 1969 collision between HMAS *Melbourne* and US destroyer *Frank E. Evans*, an incident which claimed the lives of 74 US sailors, and was described in our last newsletter. The enquiry became controversial when it appeared some members of the Australian Naval Board were colluding with senior US officers to achieve the least damaging outcome for the US Navy. Of this, defence historian Chris Coulthard-Clark, the author of Stephen's obituary wrote, "Recognising that the point of this exercise was to apportion blame on to the Australian ship, even though the *Evans* was clearly at fault, the experience was a distasteful one which he accepted as 'the way it has to be' for political reasons." Stevenson served 44 years in the RAN and became Chief of

Naval Staff in 1973. He retired in 1976.

Kay Cottee stirs

Former solo-circumnavigating-yachtswoman and now chair of Sydney's National Maritime Museum cruised into Perth in early November to promote her second book *All at sea on land*. Ms Cottee took the opportunity to stir up the locals by saying that *Australia* II which is on display in Sydney should remain there. In television interviews she said she had done a survey which revealed that most West Australians feel proud that the yacht is the highlight of the National Maritime Museum. She claimed she had talked to a broad range of West Australians who had condemned the plan to move the yacht back to its birthplace. She said all Australians contributed to the America's Cup campaign and the yacht therefore belonged to the whole country. WA Premier Richard Court was not impressed. An agreement in principal was established with the Federal government some time ago that *Australia II* would remain in Sydney until after the Olympics, then be brought back to Fremantle to feature in a new $35 million purpose-built museum building.
Now those of us with a suspicious outlook might wonder if the brouhaha created by Ms Cottee was dinkum. The Fremantle building plans have encountered a fair bit of local controversy since they were announced earlier this year and what better way to gain acceptance if the public is persuaded to believe the Sydney mob are stonewalling. Is the yacht really the centrepiece display in Sydney, or is that just what they would like us to believe so they can be sure of getting rid of it?

US Navy tidies up WW2 tragedy

In March 1942, 20 year old US sailor Jack Waugh on leave from USS *Whipple* was killed in a traffic accident in Fremantle. Subsequently he was buried in Perth with full military honours. After the war his remains were disinterred and returned to his home in Illinois. Last year old shipmates wondered about a headstone they had subscribed to and inquiries with Australian authorities revealed it still existed at the Karrakatta cemetery. Permission to remove it to Illinois was forthcoming and on 5 November a combined US - Australian memorial service was conducted over the now empty grave. The headstone will be restored then flown to Sydney by the RAAF for transfer to a USAF aircraft, and ultimately to Jack Waugh's father in the US.

New Oz & NZ whaling book out

Our new South Australian president, Mark Staniforth has co-edited with Susan Lawrence *The Archaeology of Whaling in Southern Australia and New Zealand*. Cost is in the region of $A40 plus postage. Inquiries on a discount price for AAMH members to Mark at his address which is listed on page 3.

Vlamingh voyage to WA revisited

Geologist, WA historian and chair of the natural science department at the WA Museum Dr Philip Playford has produced a book *Voyage of discovery to Terra Australis* by Willem De Vlamingh. The work launched in November is based on a French translation of Vlamingh's private journal which is in Perth's Battye Library. It is available from the WA Museum or can be ordered through bookshops. Vlamingh visited WA with three ships in 1695-6 during a search for a VOC ship *Ridderschap van Holland*. Newsletter readers will recall our March 1997 issue carried some background material on Vlamingh.

Winners are grinners

Congratulations to Brian Pope, Perth, WA. and John Laing, North Parramatta, NSW. who each won a mystery parcel of goodies by sending a postcard to the editor from where they live: A valuable package of rare books etc for each of you is on its way guys in time for Christmas.

Croatian shipwreck memories rekindled

In 1875 a Croatian barque *Stefano* came to grief at Northwest Cape and only two men survived. The following year Fremantle citizens held a series of functions to eventually send the impoverished men back to Croatia. Gustav Rath, a descendent of one of the men wrote a book about the incident, *The wreck of the barque Stefano off the North West Cape of Australia in 1875*. Associate Dr Josko Petkovic of Murdoch University is currently working on a documentary film of the incident. During mid-November a small function for descendants of the men, the WA rescuer Charles Tuckey and Fremantle Maritime Museum people who have researched the wreck was held by Fremantle Mayor Richard Utting.

Rare Bass and Waterhouse letters go on display

The State Library of NSW spent about A$1 million dollars acquiring a collection of documents written by George Bass and

Henry Waterhouse to their families in England. Bass married Waterhouse's sister Elizabeth. The collection includes some 80 letters. The Australian's "Review of Books" November 11 1998 carried a three page description of some of them by freelancer Sally Blakeney. The papers are on show at the State Library of NSW until 30 June 1999, then will move to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 7 - 15 November, then to the Liverpool Regional Museum, Sydney for display between 23 November to 12 December next year.

Another irresistible AAMH offer - take a chance - be quick

The newsletter editor has recently received at his house a fair quantity of back issues of *GreatCircle* and other AAMH sponsored publications, and with the blessing of the Executive, the time has come to get the stuff moved out into the real world. **This is a great deal for our new members.** For $20 including postage, members with an Australian address will be sent a generous and large mystery selection of this timeless material valued well in excess of what is being asked. The early birds will get the most stuff. Post your $20 cheque **made out to the AAMH** to Dr P. Weaver, 23 Waddell Rd. Palmyra. WA. 6157. Sorry there are no full sets of *The Great Circle*. Sorry too, orders without payment up-front will not be accepted.

Editor wraps up fish histories

Aside from scribbling stuff for the newsletter your editor has a more serious side and recently completed two oral histories of fishing for the National Fishcare Program, WA's Conservation and Land Management Department and Fisheries WA. The projects related to fishing on Ningaloo Reef, which is a 260 km near-shore coral and limestone structure running south of Northwest Cape, and separately, to estuarine fishing along the south coast of WA, east of Cape Leeuwin.
The aim of the projects was to identify persons who had a long standing knowledge of fishing activity with the respective region and to record their recollections. At the same there was an intent to develop and refine a methodological model appropriate for the compilation of an oral history of fishing.
It was hoped that the experience and observations of people interviewed would contribute to a better understanding of human interaction with the fishery in the past, and that this would contribute to the objectives of the State and Commonwealth Fishcare programs; namely to enable management of Australia's fisheries on a sustainable, more productive level, to encourage greater community awareness of the need for protecting and restoring fish habitats, and to involve the community with integrated approaches to natural resources management and conservation.
In all, focussed interviews with 42 persons were transcribed and analysed for preparation of reports to the sponsoring agencies. Needless to say the material gathered was extremely interesting. Ultimately, copies of the interviews, transcriptions and the reports will be placed with the Battye Library's Oral History Collection in Perth. AAMH members will be treated to occasional choice snippets in the newsletter next year as space permits. Paul Weaver.

Big Queensland reunion of pioneer families next year

During seven months in 1849 three ships, *Fortitude*, *Chasely* and *Lima* chartered by Rev. John Dunmore landed 600> settlers at Moreton Bay. In 1899 there was a reunion of passengers and descendants on the banks of the Brisbane River. In 1949 a centenary celebration was organised by The Royal Geographical Society of Qld. Next year on 1 May there will be a sequicentenary reunion at Captain Burke Park under the Story Bridge in Brisbane. The number of registrations so far is approaching 200. The organising committee can be contacted through Barry Alexander, 62 Penarth St. Runcorn. Qld. 4113. Ph. 07 3345 5008. email. barry@star.brisnet.org.au There is a $10 registration fee, and some form of commemorative publication to include lists of descendants is planned. The Newsletter ed. knows he had a couple of rellies on the *Lima*, WHC Marshall and EE Fairfax, but not much else. Are there any members who would like to pen a few notes about the significance of the original settler scheme for use in the next newsletter?

First history of Australian spearfishing and SCUBA diving breaks surface

Author Tom Byron has produced the first book on the history of spearfishing and SCUBA diving. Tom says that the sport of spearfishing had its beginnings with Alex Wickham in Sydney Harbour in 1917. The hardcover book has 311 pages, 250 photos going back to the 1920s and lots of information about all manner of subjects which one suspects will provide inspiration for other researchers interested in the subjects. Anyone familiar with Tom's lucid writing style in the various short articles he has penned in the past will realise this will be a book to be enjoyed from cover to cover. *History of Spearfishing and Scuba Diving in Australia: The first 80 years* is available direct from him at 1 Bastile Close, Padstow Heights. Sydney. 2211. $A45.95 including P&P. and a free copy of *SCUBA Divers' Guide to the Whitsunday Islands* is included.

The Dutchman who stayed

The decision in recent years to move the Australian Submarine Squadron to Cockburn Sound (WA) revives the rich submarine history of the local area

During World War II, the Port of Fremantle was the largest Allied submarine base in the southern hemisphere, being the home of numerous American and Netherlands boats from 1942 and later in 1944, the Royal Navy. Cockburn Sound, which is classified as the outer harbour, was used for diving trials after refits and as a training ground for top secret midget submarines of the marine section of Z-Force. On Garden Island Porpoise Loop which today borders the oil-fuel installation at HMAS Stirling honours the British submarine *Porpoise* which virtually beached itself on the shores of Careening Bay at Garden Island to enable the loading of Sleeping Beauty submersible canoes and equipment for the ill-fated Operation Rimau raid on Singapore in 1944.

One Netherlands submarine, the HNLMS *K.VIII*, came to Cockburn Sound during those grim days and stayed; some of its rusted remains still lying below the waves and largely hidden by sand. Ordered from the Koninklijke Maatschappij de Schelde at the Dutch seaport of Flushing on October 31, 1917, she was launched on March 28, 1922 and commissioned on September 15 that same year. A coastal submarine, the *K.VIII* originally displaced 583 tons (surface) and 810 tons (submerged). She was armed with four 17.7 inch torpedo tubes, a 3.5 inch deck gun and machine guns. The boat was capable of 15 knots and carried a complement of 31 crew.

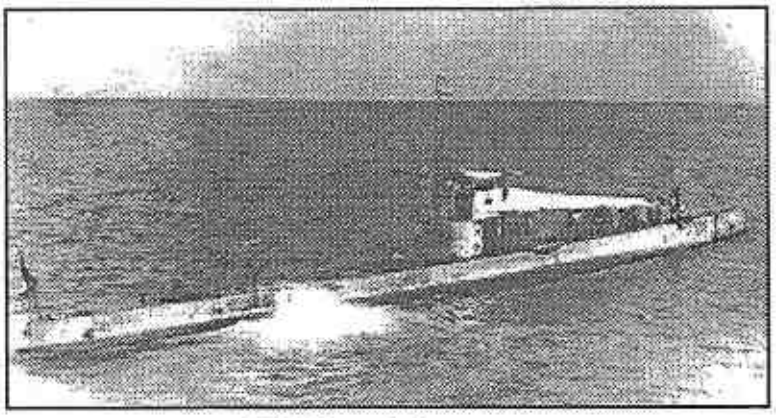
HNLMS *K.VIII* sailed for the Dutch East Indies on September 18, 1923 in company with two other submarines, *K.II* and *K.VII*, in company with the submarine depot ship HNLMS *Pelikaan*. *K. VIII* had a largely uneventful career, undertaking the normal training and exercises in the humid tropical conditions before being paid-off into reserve at the Surabaya naval dockyard, Java in the 1930s. Considered obsolete, there was little chance that she would be once again put back into service - until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941.

She was hastily reactivated and recommissioned on January 6, 1942 for coastal defence and ASDIC training duties. Her crew had transferred from the damaged *K.XIII* which had suffered a battery explosion in Singapore which saw her escorted back to Java for repairs. *K.XIII* was later scuttled at Surabaya on March 2, 1942 to avoid capture by the advancing Japanese.

The gravity of the situation saw *K.VIII*, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Derksema, make several war patrols between Bawean and the north coast of Java before being ordered to proceed to Fremantle on March 3 to avoid capture by the Japanese. *K.VIII* reached Fremantle on March 17 and after inspection by naval authorities was declared unfit for operational duty and subsequently decommissioned on May 8, 1942 at Fremantle. Sold for scrap on August 8, 1942, *K.VIII's* 220 volt, 2200 amp main electro-motor was removed for installation on the WA Public Works Department's main slipway (today Swandock) in Fremantle Harbour where it was in service supplying DC power to vessels on the slipway until the 1970s.

When *K. VIII* was stripped, the conning tower was removed and erected on the Fremantle pilot boat *Lady Forrest*. On completion of stripping, the hull was towed out of the inner harbour, bound for Jervoise Bay in Cockburn Sound where she was to be beached and broken-up. However, as the end of the tow neared, *K.VIII* foundered 100 metres offshore and was subsequently abandoned.

With the opening of the Kwinana oil refinery and the opening-up of the area to industrial development and increasing shipping the wreck was declared a navigational hazard in 1957. *K.VIII* had to go.



K.VIII in tropical waters

During July and August, 1957, two brothers Terry and Jack Sullivan who were both divers, used 24 cases of Plastogel to blow the tough old submarine into removable sections. Seemingly suffering from the well known divers' habit of using too much "umphhh", the Sullivans managed to blow the bow section into the air and land it in the sandhills of Jervoise Bay!

Fortunately more than 40 years ago the area was not heavily populated and no local resident was out walking the dog. Ironically the bow section remained there forlornly pointing toward the sea until it was finally removed around the time that HMAS *Oxley* made her first visit to the then yet to be completed Stirling naval support facility, way back in 1975. Even today, more than 50 years since foundering, there are traces of the last resting place of *K.VIII* with rusting ribs and sections of metal protruding from the ocean floor. **Vic Jeffery**. Navy Public Affairs Officer (WA).

The *Quarterly Newsletter - The Australian Association for Maritime History* is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History. Contributions are always welcome. The editor is Dr. Paul R. Weaver, 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157. During 1999, the newsletter is scheduled for publication 30th days of February, May, August and November. Material for inclusion should be sent direct to the editor's address well prior. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of submitted material