



E-Newsletter

Edition No 29 - February 12th 2012

Australia Day 2012 Honours - CONSPICUOUS SERVICE MEDAL (CSM) Congratulations go to Dennis and Andrew.

Chief Petty Officer Dennis BENTLEY, NSW

For meritorious devotion to duty as the Operations Manager, Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund. Chief Petty Officer Bentley personifies the highest qualities of a senior sailor.

Chief Petty Officer Andrew William MASKELL, NSW

For meritorious devotion to duty as the Personnel Officer aboard HMAS *Manoora* and for services to the wider naval community.



New Fleet WOWTR

January 2012 saw Andy Beales taking over as the Fleet Warrant Officer Writer at Garden Island.



At a recent HMAS Sydney dinner in Melbourne this photo was taken with some old Sydney crew: (l-r)

Lew Horsfield (our President)
Fred House [95 Years young] and
Gordon White [90 Years] who were
commissioning crew of HMAS Sydney 2.

Marty Grogan (our Vice) and Russ
Loane.

Birthdays 8 February 2012 to 12th March 2012

12th Arthur Skene and Scott Stevens, 13th Frank Shugg, 15th Dave Saffell, 17th Jill Kelly (Nee Hildebrand), 18th Bob Campbell, 19th John 'Olly' Twist, 23rd Janelle Hermann (Nee Domjahn), 24th Judy McMullen and Paul 'Blue' Walters, 25th John Major, Lorraine Lewis and Alison Knudsen (Nee Finn and Woods), 25th Shirley Makin, 27th Greg Gadd, 28th Peter Swindells, 2nd March Grace McDonald (Nee Griffith) and Lynzey Lake, 4th Roy Sly, 7th Steve Walker, 8th Ellen Saxby (Nee Blayden) and Garry 'Stony' Burke, 9th Leonard 'Knocker' White. 10th Jim 'Wacka' Wylie and Peter Bergin, 11th Chris Cohen.

Lest We Forget:

Springhall, Margaret Jamieson Nee Davis

Born 29th October 1924. Passed away 2011. Margaret joined the RAN 8th December 1942 and served until 28th June 1946. Her main posting after entry training was at *Penguin II* at the Degaussing Range Recording Base.

Byrne, Brian Edward

Born 19th July 1924. Passed away 2011. Joined the RAN 2nd February 1942 and was demobbed 19th June 1946. Brian served in *Cerberus*, *Basilisk*, *Ladava*, *Assault* and *Penguin*.

Harry, Colin Morgan

Born 4th March 1919. Passed away 2011. Joined the RAN 2nd April 1941 and was demobbed 23rd May 1946. Served at *Cerberus*, *Napier*, *Ladava* and *Lonsdale*.

Warner, John Linton Henry

Passed away 22nd January 2012. Born 27th January 1930. Joined the RAN 2nd April 1951, his postings were *Cerberus* and *Lonsdale*. before his release to the Army in 1953.

Hamilton, Peter James

Passed away 27th January 2012. Born 23rd August 1947. Official Number R59889. Joined the RAN 16th March 1963 for 12 years. He served at establishments *Nirimba*, *Cerberus* and *Platypus*. His sea postings were *Gascoyne* 1964, *Yarra* 1966-67 and *Anzac* 1967.

Are you a Member ?

If you are a retired or serving Writer and have not joined the Association, why not join now. The memberships costs are \$12 a year or \$110 for life. Your one year membership will take you through to 30/6/2013 from now.

All the details can be found on our web site under Membership.

Our site:

Marty Grogan talks about Wettex Curtin:

He did 27 years RAN service paying off as a CPOWTR then did nearly permanent Rocky time at *Cerberus* for the next 10 years until he reached the then retirement age of 55. He has a combined RAN/RANR service of 37 years.

Probably the highlight of his service was his time (about 6 months) onboard the Royal Yacht *Britannica* in 1969 as a LWTR. Before he left *Cerberus* for this Posting he was Commanders Writer where he was affectionately known (self imposed title) as the Commanders Quill. His next self imposed title was obviously "Queens Quill".



The highlight of this trip was to slip a typed thank you card in to the official correspondence for signature by Princess Anne thanking one Martin Grogan for his lovely poem and best wishes to the Princess. I still have this priceless document. I don't think I could even spell Princess in those days. Nothing much has changed over the years - I guess.

The lowlight ??? of his Career was probably the posting to Manus which was in fact a posting to the Oil Fuel Installation in Port Moresby where he lived in a tent in the lines at Murray Barracks with an Army Corporal from the Korean War. His boss was Chief Stoker Zammit whom I suspect did not know what hit him after Wettex posted in. Many years later, visitors to Port Moresby often spotted lightly coloured semi tree apes swinging from trees doing Curtain calls. Wettex now suspects he was probably taken advantage of by local females after he had gone to sleep at night. To his knowledge, waking hours in the tent were spent writing letters to his family and friends in Adelaide. That started his eventual life time habit of burning the candles both ends.

Whilst serving onboard *Yarra* in the mid to late 60's his written report in his SC's read something along the lines of "An excellent Leading Writer whilst at Sea, but once land is sighted, he is extremely unreliable."



Lunch and Drinks

Three ex Writers met at the Grand Central Hotel, Brisbane 8th December for lunch and drinks.

From l-r
Glen MacAndrews (WO)
Gary 'Gus' Russell (CPO)
Gary Brazier (CPO)

Gus has now retired and off to the United States for 6 weeks holidays on 21st March. Gus turns 65 years on the 2nd March and says that Glen is exactly 1 year older than him. Gary's birthday is the 15th February and he will reach double six's that day.



HMAS MK III By LDG Wtr E W Norwood

Cameos of the Little Ships

The little ships have kept the seas, off the Australian coast, since the outbreak of the war. Ceaselessly they carry on, on their mysterious occasions; no glamour or limelight attaching to their endless journeying to and fro, often within sight of the coastline, but in waters lurk all the of modern war at sea. For weeks on end, with little more than a few hours in harbour at a time to relieve the monotony. Roughly, once a week, in they come to refuel, take on fresh provisions and replace ammunition. The fortunate watch ashore find a few brief moments to drink a pot or two of beer in congenial surroundings, spend an hour or so with kith and kin, and then

away again.

The ships, at times, have been at sea on every day for forty to fifty days without a whole day's break, until the welcome and imperative boiler cleaning gives relief for perhaps a week at most. That is the story of the little ships, of which nobody hears. In a Silent Service this is the most silent part of it - the sloops, 'corvettes' and lesser craft, besides a host of converted merchant vessels which, with their addition of a 'sting' in head and tail, play their part in, firstly, keeping intruders away and, secondly, dealing with those that venture where their presence becomes a menace.

With the advent of Hirohito's minions into the fray, the little ships found a new activity to add to the minesweeping and surveying of the earlier stages of the war. In Australian waters the midgets had wider duties in escorting and patrolling, and tackling the screaming bomber and the lurking submarine. The threat was met with typical British doggedness and endless patience, for patience is the principal characteristic men of the little ships must learn. Patience to suffer every inconvenience and oftentimes, the murderous moods of the sea, and this is so often without tangible result for encouragement.

If Tojo does not attack because he has an uneasy feeling that our charge is too strongly guarded, if he annoys the escorts by keeping out of range, if we know he is not so far away but cannot get at him, if our vigilance cannot falter for a moment, then we curse him bitterly, but our charge is safe, a positive result of our work, out negative, not tangible, in the sense that we have not had an actual go at the enemy. Sometimes he attacks, but preferably unescorted ships. Very occasionally he risks his all and, from maximum range, speeds his metal death fish in the hope he will claim a victim, and get away himself. Now and again he has collected a scalp in this tip-and-run warfare, but he seldom gets away.

At a point on our coastline, not so far from Melbourne, and not so far from Sydney, either, a Japanese submarine made a kill a few months ago. Ten men survived the sinking their ship. Thirty-four put 'paid in full' to the debt that all men owe to their native land. Most of them were not Australians. The ship and the greater part of the crew hailed from a state which has been overrun by Hitler's hordes. They did it in the Cause, which eventually freed their homeland.

It happened on a bright, sunny Sunday. The sea was calm; cheerful wavelets rippled merrily to the distant blue mountains which marked the coast. Not a setting for a tragedy, yet tragedy was presented with a dull 'crrump' echoing through the water. Nothing had been seen or heard until the explosion threw up a great cloud of reddish brown dust, in which the escort's lookouts dimly saw the stark red-bottom bow of a ship standing on end. Briefly it poised in the murk then silently, swiftly, slipped into the depths below. She sank in fifty-two seconds.

"Action stations!" The strident alarm rattlers blare in the bowels of the escorts. Engine telegraphs jangle and speed increases to maximum. Guns are loaded, breechblocks snap home, depth charges are set. Every man is in his place, and the hunt is on. Our ship, nearest to the direction from which the torpedo must have come, casts away on the most likely course to find the lurking sneak who is now, we imagine, bent on getting away. Time passes, the screw races, and we forge ahead faster than the underwater craft can flee.

A black flag flies at the yard. We have located her. Quickly we are above her, orders from the bridge are repeated over the phones. "Bang! Bang!" go the depth-charge throwers. Two charges hit the water out on either beam. Splash, splash, splash, splash, four more charges slip into the water astern. We race away. Everybody is tense - waiting. Waiting for the stomach-sickening heave of our little ship, as in the depths the charges explode. Six times we hear the solemn 'briump' as the sea right aft heaves and boils, to rise angrily in a mountain of tom white spume. Have we 'got' the menace below? We hope so.

Anxiously the sea is scanned for telltale signs. Nothing appears. Again we cast around and quickly locate her again. Again we deal out death. She hasn't moved far; she must be crippled, Down, down into the depths she goes; five hundred feet down, where water pressure threatens to burst her seams. Can we force her deeper down where her plates must collapse? Once more the charges leave our ship. The sea settles; the noise and tumult have gone. The submarine has gone. Have we put paid to her account? Who knows? After the war we may learn the fate of this particular Yellowman's U-boat, but we think now that we 'got' her.

What of the ten survivors of the sunken ship whom we had seen earlier in the afternoon as we surged past masses of wreckage on our way to exact revenge? We could not stop then; they had to be left to the mercy of the sea, but we sought them on our course to resume our patrol, and found them among the spreading flotsam of the wreck. Nine men on a raft; the tenth a lonely figure, lying half in and half out of the water, supported by a heap of smashed planks to which he was feverishly adding as we drew closer. He waved; we waved back.

They were taken from the water as the result of superb seamanship by our Commander, who realised the riskiness of stopping to lower a boat. Cork and rope were scrambling nets were hung over the side. At high speed we came upon the raft bobbing in the waves a short distance ahead. Engine bells rang "Full astern!" was the order. The wheel was put over, and gently in a momentary pause touched the raft. Quickly nine pairs of hands grasped the forward net. Still going astern we swept down on the lone man's precarious heap of planks, and nearing him veered out stern away. "Full speed ahead!" was the order now, and once

again we gently came up against the wreckage for a moment. He too grasped the net was hauled inboard.

Soon the ten of them were stripped of their wet clothes, those that had them; they were warmed by hot food; those with injuries were attended to, and all were reclad. One of the survivors, a little snowy-haired Australian of sixteen years, typified the spirit of them all. His first words as we drew near the raft were "Hey! what have you got for tea?" More serious was the remark of an officer among the group of bedraggled castaways, who in broken English expressed his thanks for being picked up. He said, 'We thought you would leave us. It was very dangerous to come to us. But you did not leave us. Thank you.'

The little ships, at times, have other interludes in their patient steaming here and there. Many strange things happen at sea and many stories will be told of incidents outside the common round. One such concerns an errand of mercy, the life of an Allied airman being saved when, far from the aid of modern hospitals, he had been stricken by an acute illness that required immediate and expert surgical attention.

This happened at night, when a heavy and sloppy sea was running. Out of the whispering ether came a vital message from a ship, reporting the presence on board of a very sick man, and asking that he be transferred to a fast vessel for passage to the nearest port in a desperate attempt to save his life. But even our fastest ship could not get to port under many hours. What was to be done? A valuable life was hanging in the balance.

The problem was solved. Our ship, a little bigger than most, has the dignity of carrying a doctor, and has a sick bay large enough in which to perform an operation. Two sick-berth attendants were also borne to care for the sick. The sick man's ship was directed to proceed with all speed to a large, sheltered bay. This took about three hours' steaming. We went in too and both ships dropped anchor.

"Away motor skiff" and the doctor was on his way to examine his patient. He returned a little later over the pitch-black waters accompanied by a mummy-like figure strapped tightly in a patent stretcher. Poor patient, if his pain let him, he must have many an anxious moment as he was lifted from the heaving skiff up the ship's side, in the darkness. But he was soon down below in the "bay", which had been prepared in the meantime for an emergency operation. Three days later, now well on the way to recovery, the sick man was landed in an Australian port and rushed straight to hospital where, under the care of his own nationals, he would soon recover to fight again in our joint cause.



This is the story of difficulties which had to be overcome; the reward for being solving was the life of a man. The men of the Little ships are accustomed to overcoming difficulties, and no matter what the call on them may be, they will solve them in the traditions of a Service with which so many of them have only a temporary active association. - Leading Writer E.W.N