

# MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

Newsletter of the Merchant Navy Association and the  
Merchant Navy RSL Sub-Branch NSW

Edition 18  
Autumn 2019



TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA



Imposing waterline view of the BHP Bulk Carrier *MV IRON PACIFIC* - from the photograph collection of retired Sydney & Port Kembla Marine Pilot Capt. Cyril Cocksedge

118,491 gross tons, 71,793 net, 231,851 dwt. Lbd: 351.2 x 55.73 x 18.201 metres. Depth of hold 25.02 metres. Heaviest ship owned by Australian interests ie: BHP Transport. Built by Samsung Shipbuilding & Heavy Industries Co Ltd, Koje, South Korea (Yard no 1043) for BHP Transport Ltd, Australia. At launching on 1st February 1986 was actually floated out of the dock. Machinery Two x 4 cylinder 2SA Sulzer oil engines manufactured by Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries, Aioi Japan. 24,600 bhp. Twin screw, twin rudder dry bulk carrier, at the time the largest in the world, with specific design of a wide beam, catamaran stern and shallow draught allowing for greater manoeuvrability at future designated ports of her intent as blueprinted by BHP Architects, such specifications streamlined at the final construction stage. Service speed 13.5 knots on 60 tonnes marine fuel per steaming day. Crew 26.

Courtesy of: <https://www.flotilla-australia.com/2bhp.htm#iron-pacific-2bhp>



Maiden voyage from builder's shipyard 24 June 1986 to Port Hedland. Registered 30 May 1986 at Melbourne. At Port Hedland loaded an Australian record 179,351 tonnes of iron ore for Port Kembla, arriving there 26 July 1986. Her mainstay of cargo service was Port Hedland to Eastern Australian destinations Port Kembla and Newcastle, interspersed with cargoes of coal bound for South Korean terminals of Pohang and Kwang Yang Bay.



Left side images courtesy Matterson Marine/Shipping Database & top right image taken by Mick Macauley with many thanks

On 15 July 1986 held the distinction of being the largest vessel to enter Sydney Harbour, being berthed at the passenger terminal for public inspection. At the time, and since where records are concerned, she rules as ahead of the famous French Line's 'France' the 'longest' to berth in Sydney Harbour, and of course ahead of the 'Queen Mary' (who had berthed during the second world hostilities) on weight factor and again ahead of the USS Enterprise the American Aircraft Carrier where, on all accounts of length, breadth and depth she could actually 'carry' both the 'France' and the 'Enterprise' alongside on her upper deck. (Australia 3 - Rest of the world 0) 1998 and ironically, she was purchased by Norwegian interests, P/R Bergesen GOIC DA (Managers Bergesen d.y. ASA ) noting that Scandinavian Shipbuilders were at the time leaders in in ship construction until the advent and distinction of this vessel, as credit to both Australian ingenuity and Japan/Korean construction. '1998 sold to Bergesen dock yard & Co, Norway and renamed Berge Pacific From August 2011 scrapped at Chittagong'

Courtesy of: <https://www.flotilla-australia.com/2bhp.htm#iron-pacific-2bhp>



Courtesy - Capt. Cyril Cocksedge photograph collection: *IRON PACIFIC* Starboard anchor



# MSB Pilot's Last Endeavour



*Port Kembla Port Corporation senior pilot Captain Cyril Cocksedg went out in style when he guided the \$17 million Endeavour into the Harbour*

*It was trip number 3049 and the last time Captain Cocksedg, 60, would pilot a vessel into Port Kembla. Capt. Cocksedg has decided to retire after a 45-year maritime career which has taken him all over the world.*

*He began his seafaring life in England when he started training on the H.M.S. Worcester. He served on City Line Ships for six years and his first visit to Australia came in 1956 when he was third mate on the City of Edinburgh.*

*He joined the Swire Group's China Navigation Company which was based in Hong Kong and traded in Australasian and South Pacific waters.*

*He obtained his Masters Certificate in 1952 and from 1956 sailed as a captain for eight years,*

*He joined the MSB in 1975, transferring from Sydney to Port Kembla 16 years ago.*

*He has a fund of memories, including the responsibility of piloting BHP's massive Iron Pacific and some daunting moments in wild weather*

*He also has recorded the life of Port Kembla Harbour with an extensive log book detailing the arrival, departure tonnage and Captains name of the ships he piloted during his last 16 years.*

*Capt. Cocksedg also is well known for his marvellous*

*collection of ship photographs and he plans to continue this and his interest in maritime art during retirement. [Source: MSB Ports Magazine 1995.](#)*



***Editors note:** Capt. Cocksedg, now 84 years old, and is in good health. During his 5 years as a Pilot in Sydney, he piloted over 300 ships into that port. Sadly, after the sudden loss of his wife of 55 years last September Cyril has decided to move from his home in Sydney, to a retirement home in Brisbane near his son Ian and family. It is a reluctant move as he also has a daughter in Sydney. The final decision was due to the retirement residence in Brisbane being more suitable. Capt. Cocksedg, a member of the Merchant Navy Association, has kindly sent us photos from his vast collection. Hopefully, we will be able to share more with you in future editions.*

*Top: Capt Cocksedg. Middle: Iron Kembla fully loaded with Mt Kembla in the background.. Bottom: The dangerous job of a Marine Pilot*

## MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL SERVICE NORAH HEAD



Photos courtesy: Bob Harding

### 1<sup>ST</sup> December 2018

The Opening Address was delivered by Capt. Iain Steverson, as follows;

We gather at this beautiful tranquil setting, to remember with gratitude the Service and Sacrifices of Seafarers of the Merchant Navies during the two world wars. This year our emphasis is on WW1.

The Merchant Navy is as we in attendance appreciate unfortunately described as the 'Forgotten Service', in the eyes of the general public. Certainly not acknowledged formally at the National War Memorial, Canberra.

As it is the centenary year of the conclusion of the disaster that was The Great War of 1914-18, optimistically described at the time as the 'War to End all Wars'. What a dreadful waste of young lives from our fledgling Dominions. Such a futile effort, as are most wars. In my opinion I consider it was basically a Family feud between Queen Victoria's progeny, King George the Fifth and his German cousin the Kaiser which resulted in the death of at least 20 million, with 24 million maimed and mentally scarred for life. Horrific.

It is appropriate for us to reflect today, on the part that was played by the Merchant Navy in that war which Australia and New Zealand willingly supported with never a backward look initially, their King, the 'Mother Country', Great Britain, and the 'glorious British Empire on which the sun never sets'.

Australian ships both Mercantile and Naval of course, were at the immediate beck and call of the British Government and featured in that initial massive troop convoy. The first Expeditionary Force consisted of 38 British flagged Merchant ships, that departed so dramatically from the Western Australian port of Albany, at dawn on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914. This convoy including 10 New Zealand troop transports which had rendezvoused with the Australian troop transports in King George Sound. The convoy was escorted by only two Australian light cruisers **HMAS Melbourne** and **HMAS Sydney** plus the Japanese heavy cruiser **Ibuki**. The Royal Navy initially supplied the lead ship, the heavy cruiser **HMS Minotaur**, which was suddenly diverted to Africa the day before the convoy passed Cocos Island and the **SMS Emden**!



## MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL SERVICE NORAH HEAD

The convoy which the troops anticipated was to proceed to Britain was described at the time as, “the longest journey to war in the history of the world”. It comprised 19,779 Australians troops, about 10,000 New Zealanders together with their 7,843 horses. It was the precursor to what became the Anzac tradition. In the end the troops were landed in Egypt then of course Gallipoli. This first convoy narrowly missed destruction, as the German raider the light cruiser, **Emden** which was aware of the convoy was just 50 miles to east, having landed a shore party to destroy the Telegraph station on nearby West Island Cocos-Keeling Islands. The island telegraph station just managed to send an SOS that a ‘strange’ ship was approaching. Convoy escort **HMAS Sydney** was despatched to deal with this ‘strange’ ship. Fortunately, for the convoy the dangerous **Emden** was caught by surprise the **Sydney** out gunned her and Commander Muller finally beached her on North Keeling having been totally destroyed.

The carnage and horrendous loss of life that could have resulted if the German cruiser had managed to infiltrate the lightly protected convoy of unarmed Merchant troopships and engaged the convoy the Gallipoli misadventure may not have happened. **Emden** had previously sunk allied 26 merchant ships.

Subsequently a further 43 convoys of Merchant ships were despatched by the two ANZAC countries carrying reinforcements of men, equipment and supplies which did not cease with the Armistice. Merchant ships then spent the remainder of 1918 to 1920 repatriating the troops back to Australasia

Australian manned cargo ships and passenger ships that had not been commandeered by Britain continued to serve in various roles during the war including troop transport in the later convoys. Britain tried to commandeer the British ships in the coastal iron ore and coal trade in 1917. Billy Hughes stood on his dig and they were retained. The WW1 war effort was wholly reliant on merchant shipping for the total transport component. A similar scenario was repeated in WW2 in 1941-42 where the German U-Boats as they had done in 1917 again almost brought Great Britain to its knees, saved only by the supplies delivered by Merchant ships and their thankless crews in the battle of the Atlantic. In WW1 the Australian Merchant Navy significantly manned five unarmed Australian passenger ships, designated as His Majesty’s Hospital ships, each with a full Australian Medical staff of Doctors and Nurses. The years of secondment noted. They were Australasian United Steam Navigation Co’s **Kyarra** (1914-15), **Kanowna** (1915-19), McIlwraith McEachern’s **Karoola** (1915-19), and Adelaide Steamship Co’s **Wandilla** (1916-18) and **Warilda** (1916-18). Mid 1917 saw Germany’s in increased desperation, which resulted in their implementing indiscriminate submarine warfare, resulting in the sinking of increasingly large numbers of allied merchant shipping including eight clearly marked ‘red cross’ allied hospital ships. **Warilda** was one, torpedoed by a German submarine in the English Channel on the 2nd August while carrying 700 war wounded from Le

## MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL SERVICE NORAH HEAD

Havre to Southampton resulting in the loss of 123 lives. The New Zealand Government as their contribution to this ANZAC Hospital fleet employed the Union Steamship Company's **Marama** (1914-19) and **Maheno** (1915-19) which included in their manning numerous Australian based seafarers. **Maheno's** remains are still visible to this day on Queensland's Fraser Island where she ran aground in 1935, while under tow to Japan for scrap.

Those much maligned and ignored Australian Merchant seafarers in WW1 earned as much respect as their successors, the WW2 Merchant seafarer, virtually Nil, suffering discrimination and denial by both the Returned Services and Government. Many also suffered the indignity of the 'white feather' being thrust at them, due to their lack of uniform confirming certainly the 'Forgotten Service'. Finally, I would like to acknowledge an unsung group of seafarers that are now long gone, certainly forgotten who played such an important role in the war effort and whose efforts were hardly ever mentioned in the stories of wartime history. They were the members of the 'black gang' who worked down in the bowels of the Engine Room, which in those far off days when all Merchant ships were 'hand fired' coal burning steamers. These engineers, firemen /stokers and boiler attendants were the unsung heroes of the Merchant Service, continuously working down in the stoke holds in unbelievable conditions of heat, grime, coal dust, confined head room and with minimal safety. This specific group of seafarers could possibly compared, with old time under-ground coal miners, yet they were the reason that the war effort was able to be completed successfully. The difference between coal miners and the engine room 'black gang' was that the former managed to return to their homes, while the latter should their ship be torpedoed were often caught below with little chance of escape or survival, their only grave the sea.

The numbers of Merchant Seafarers that served in WW2 are now extremely thin on the ground and in this regard, I acknowledge the passing of my former ship mate during the year, Alan Renwick who attended this service last year and was a veteran of the American small ships. Those WW2 veterans still with us should be revered and acknowledged with grateful thanks. I again reiterate the importance of the Merchant Navy and its contribution to Australia which is albeit ignored by the uninformed and distracted general public and by disinterested politicians. This attitude would alter abruptly should the country run low or out of imported refined fuel products. We must not forget the efforts of those Merchant Seafarers who served. We ignore our rich Maritime History at our peril as exemplified by the dis-interest shown by individuals of the current Newcastle City Council, who see no specific need for a Maritime Museum.

Thank you. Iain Steverson

[Courtesy of Capt. Iain Steverson.](#)



## President's Report to Merchant Navy RSL sub Branch members.

### GREETINGS

I feel it is worth-while these days reflecting on the situation existing in our sub Branch today and comparing it with the situation which existed some ten years ago in February 2009 when I was first elected president

When my name was put forward at that service at Roseville ex services club as a nomination for the position of sub Branch president at the AGM, I recall I stood and informed those who attending, "I am very much involved with six other service organisations and, although I promised Gordon Solomon last year I would do whatever I could to assist him, and have been acting as assistant secretary, I would like to hear some other nominations."

There being no further nominations, I reluctantly accepted and was voted in as president. What happened in the couple of years following that meeting is history so all I want to say, as time went on, I did sometimes regret accepting the position. However, I realised that if I had not agreed to it the sub Branch would have closed that year. A couple of members had ideas about what they considered should happen to our sub Branch. Doug Lane had been secretary/treasurer for 26 years. He was ill and tired, mentally and physically. A devoted Merchant Navy WWII veteran he was shocked and disappointed at the death of his long-time friend Gordon Solomon, a few months prior. Doug had contacted me earlier and pleaded with me to do all I could to keep our sub Branch alive. He was aware that there was a degree of dissent, and supplied me with some names.

If it not been for the extremely generous action, firstly by Bob Harding, and secondly by Merrill Barker, (neither of them being merchant navy veterans) to accept nominations as treasurer and secretary, the sub Branch would have closed long ago.

Bob Harding, a former National Serviceman-soldier, whose father had been a WWII merchant navy veteran, while convalescing at home after an operation took it upon himself to carry out an examination of certain very old records from years ago. He told us they were very 'interesting'. I believe that the late Gordon Solomon OAM was an honest man so I feel that his ill health and his work as President of the Merchant Navy Association and as editor of his magazine 'Red Ensign' had, late in his life, prevented him from closely examining some of what had been happening. He was keen to retire but told me he was somewhat uneasy about who would take his place.

Doug Lane also confided to me he also was not happy about certain aspects, particularly of recruitment procedure and record keeping. Several years later I was happy when RSL National accepted my submission for Doug's award of Life Membership of the RSL. As an indication of how things were changing, I drove up to Tuncurry and, by prior arrangement at a local sub Branch meeting, presented

# MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

him with his new lapel badge and Life Membership certificate. Doug, at that time was confined to a wheelchair. Both he and his wife, Irene, were delighted with the award.

On that occasion, and at every subsequent occasion, I decided not make any claim for travel expenses. No present committee members of this sub Branch has claimed expenses for travel, meals or accommodation in October, at Canberra. This policy has always been cheerfully accepted by both Bob and Merrill. We are all volunteers. Initially, we all used our own computers for sub Branch records until Mr David Field, an affiliate sub Branch member, approved the donation of a laptop and printer from funds supplied by the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund for use by our Hon Secretary. Our Hon Treasurer, Bob Harding, still used his own computer for all our financial records

The financial scandals which have been revealed in NSW, relating to a former State President, Mr Don Rowe, and more recently National RSL at Canberra, do not involve us. I am completely satisfied that our present State President, Mr James brown, is doing every thing possible to invigorate the NSW RSL Branch and as such, could justly be deemed to be 'a breath of fresh air.'

Today, we are a small, vibrant, efficient sub Branch with both the secretary and the treasure each performing their duties as keen volunteers. As usual, the bulk of the work falls on the capable shoulders of our energetic secretary, Merrill Barker. We are fortunate to have both him and Bob looking after us. We can claim some credit as a sub Branch basically composed of World War Two members, where the president and the two vice presidents, Alan Read and Stan Shardlow, are WW2 MN veterans. I am not sure if many other sub Branches' can make that claim these days.

On behalf of the sub Branch, as president, I annually attend and lay wreaths at Newcastle, Norah Head, Rookwood, Mosman and Canberra, as well as several other services in Martin Place. I am usually accompanied by either Merrill or Bob. We are a good team and we get along well together.

Due to a torrent of sudden health problems I found it necessary to cancel our Annual General Meeting scheduled for 27th February at Chatswood RSL Club. I contacted State Branch office and, after supplying them with details, received approval for my action. We will now have our postponed AGM at 10.30 am on Wednesday 20th March at the same venue. Merrill will do all that is possible to inform our members of these arrangements. Bob is arranging morning tea, for all. I hope to be able to add some comments about the meeting in time for inclusion of this edition of 'MN News'.

On another, more cheerful matter, Merrill and I responded to an invitation from the President and Secretary of the Merrylands RSL sub Branch to attend a service there on 24th January. I have lived in Sydney for over eighty years but had never previously been to the suburb of Merrylands.



We had met these two gentlemen at a meeting at RSL State Branch HQ in late 2018. They had explained that their sub Branch planned to have a dedication service in a park close to the Merrylands RSL Club. It was to involve the dedication of a ship's anchor, formally from HMAS Kanimbla, which was to be installed at a small outdoor memorial.

Surprisingly, even though this was a former naval anchor and a senior RAN officer (Captain) was to be the main speaker, they considered representatives of the merchant navy should be invited to attend as it was to be a memorial for all 'seafarers'. Both Merrill and I were impressed by their generosity and friendly attitude.

A notation in the order of service allowed me to deliver a six minute story about the Merchant Navy during WW2. After the service we were invited back to the RSL club where we stayed for an hour or so having a light lunch with some of their members. We were much impressed by this magnificent, obviously well patronised, Club.

It turned out well as, at lunch time, we met a WW2 Merchant Navy veteran and his son. Merrill extended to him, and he accepted, an invitation to become an associate member of our sub Branch.





On the morning of Wednesday 20th February Merrill and Bob arrived at my home at Forestville, as we had earlier decided, to devote a full day to examine the many boxes of merchant navy records compiled by the late Doug Lane and which, following his death, had been stored in my garage. About a year earlier Merrill had brought them back from Doug and Irene's home at Tuncurry.

I had long been aware of the great work that Doug had done for this sub Branch over a great many years but Merrill and Bob were amazed at the meticulous detail and volume of records he kept. Sadly, much of the paper records are no longer relevant, but all documents of value were retained. They are to be scanned into our computer and remain available as sub Branch documents.

Our quarterly newsletter, 'MERCHANT NAVY NEWS', so professionally edited by Geoff Walls, is, I believe, a valuable source of information and interest to our members. Some years ago I introduced a small segment in the newsletter highlighting the wartime adventures of some of our members. I would appreciate it if a member who has not been mentioned could supply me with details of his service. Perhaps, date of birth, date and name of first ship, where it went and duration of sea service, initially during the war and, if applicable, his life after his sea service. I will, with permission, have it printed in the next available issue of MN News. Perhaps a relative would like to supply details about a veteran member who is no longer with us and who has since 'crossed the bar.'

The saga relating to the massive reorganisation of the League continues. A new, and more appropriate constitution is being prepared and, understandably, it has emerged that there are many members of the RSL who have a range of different ideas. The formation on this subject will be discussed much later in this coming year, possibly about September or October. We will submit a detailed report to our members about constitution decisions as soon as we are able to do so.

Our next service will be the annual Rookwood commemoration on Sunday 14th April, at 11am. We hope to see as many of our members, also family and friends, as possible. We appreciate that as the years roll on it is becoming difficult for some elderly members to take part.

Once again, the service is being professionally organised by Mr David Field, Chairman of the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund.

Very best wishes to all of you.

Don Kennedy, President



Dear sub Branch members.

We had our postponed AGM at the Chatswood RSL Club on Wednesday 20th March. It is obviously a popular venue, much better than the Roseville Club, as evidenced by the fourteen members attending.

Probably the most we have had for many years. All three members of the committee. Merrill, Bob and I presented our annual reports which seemed to please all those present. For the first time in my memory we provided morning tea at sub branch expense. Chatswood RSL Club has been very kind to us, providing a large conference room for our meeting, at no cost.

Merrill gave a report on membership figures and displayed a number of old photos showing merchant navy veterans in an Anzac Day march in 1980. Other interesting records previously held by the late Doug Lane were also on display. Vice President Alan Read gave a report on what had been happening in the discussions about new RSL constitution. Very interesting, much more to come later this year.

It was pleasing to be able to report that, largely to the efforts of Bob and Merrill, we are still holding membership figures as they have been for many years. All our meetings from now on will be held at Chatswood RSL Club. This Club is just adjacent to Chatswood railway station which is good for those who are not able to walk great distances.

Very best wishes, Don Kennedy, President.

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## **THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR**

**ALWYN GINN 13/06/18 WWII**

**Capt. JOHN BRIGGS 2/9/18**

**JAMES WHITHALL HUGHES 13/11/18 WWII US Army Small  
Ships**

**Capt. JOHN DAVID LOTT November 2018**

**Capt. CHARLES HULL 3/0/02/19**

**Capt. WILLIAM (Bill) THOMAS 22/02/19 WWII**

**THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN**

# COMING EVENTS

**MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH MEETING:** Chatswood RSL Club, on Wednesday 29th May 2019 at 1030hrs.

**ROOKWOOD ANNUAL MERCHANT NAVY SERVICE:** Sunday 14th April, 2019 - 1030 hours for 1100 hours.

**2/3 AHS CENTAUR ASSOCIATION SERVICE:** Friday 10th May 2019 Concord Hospital Chapel.. Commences 1030 hours

**U.S. ARMY SMALL SHIPS,** 77th Reunion at the Grace Hotel Sydney Saturday 18th MAY 2019 at 1030 hours

**NEWCASTLE ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE:** Saturday 1st June 2019, MN Memorial Foreshore Park commencing 1115 hours.

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE SEAFARER:** 25th June 2019

**MERCHANT NAVY DAY COMMEMORATION:** Tuesday 3rd September 2019, Mosman War Memorial at 1100 hours

**BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA Annual Service Cenotaph Martin Place Sydney,** Wednesday 4th September 2019 at 1030 hours

**WORLD MARITIME DAY:** Thursday 26th September 2019. (Watch this space for details of Pyrmont Bridge event)

**CANBERRA MN MEMORIAL DINNER:** Saturday 19th October 2019 at Garden City Hotel, Canberra

**CANBERRA ANNUAL MN SERVICE:** MN Memorial Kings Park Canberra, Sunday 20th October 2019 at 1100 hrs

## M.V. NOONGAH

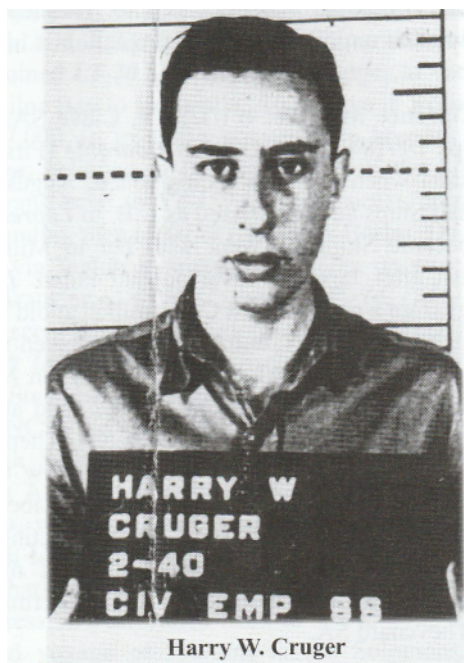
On August 25th 1969 MV Noongah left Newcastle with a cargo of steel for Townsville. She struck bad weather off Smokey Cape near Kempsey on the northern New South Wales coast. The vessel developed a list and sank with the loss of 21 members of the crew.

The Merchant Navy Association will combine with other organisations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this tragic loss of merchant seafarers. At this stage the commemoration will coincide with the **World Maritime Day** event to be held at Pyrmont Bridge - Sydney Maritime Museum, late September 2019.



# RECOGNISING OUR WWII VETERANS

## William Henry (Harry) Cruger



Born in Sydney, 15th December, 1926

I joined Merchant Navy at 14 ½ years of age, on 27th May, 1941 as Deck-Boy on SS Karuah, sailing between Sydney and Newcastle. During my first 12 months sea time I also joined the crew of Mulubinba and Moolo, sailing on the east coast.

On 19th May, 1942 I joined SS Ormiston as Ordinary Seaman. We sailed from Sydney 31st May, 1942 in Convoy with SS Katoomba and SS Canberra carrying Australian Troops to Townsville; the same afternoon Japanese submarines entered Sydney Harbour.

Between September 1942 and February 1943 I was on a ship called SS Ngatoro sailing between Sydney, Newcastle and Tasmanian Ports.

On 24th August, 1943 I joined U.S. Army Small

Ships Section at No. 10 Walsh Bay, Sydney.

I was transported by Troop Train to Townsville and joined MV Bloemfontein, sailing to Milne Bay. MV Bloemfontein was built 1934 as a passenger cargo liner for the Holland Africa Line, and served the U.S. Army throughout the war. She was part of a Convoy sailing for Manila from Hawaii, just ten days before the attack on Pearl Harbour. What became known as the Pensacola Convoy was diverted to Australia mid-way to the Philippines.

In Milne Bay I was assigned to SS Uki, carrying Army supplies to Goodenough Island, Woodlark & Kiriwina Islands. We visited Lae, Langemak Bay, Cape Cretin, Oro Bay and returned to Sydney, where I was discharged.

Stamped on my discharge papers, "Eligible for re-employment when 18 years of age."

Between 19th June 1944 and 21st June 1945 I served on MV Astoria, a Danish ship taken over by the British Ministry of War Transport. We carried wheat to Peru, South America before sailing to Chile to load a cargo of nitrates for Australia. On our way home we called into Easter Island with stores and a Veterinary Surgeon.

During July 1945 I was assigned to SS Corio, and was in Port Adelaide when Peace was Declared, 15th August 1945. I continued working at sea until September 1958.

I have been awarded both U.S. and Imperial Australian campaign medals in recognition of my service. I am entitled to wear the 1939 – 1945 Star, The Pacific Star, 1939 – 1945 British War Medal, 1939 – 1945 Australia Service Medal, U.S. Merchant Marine Victory Medal, U.S. Merchant Marine Pacific War Zone Bar and the WWII Honorable Service Lapel Pin. During 2009 I received recognition from the U.S. Army Transportation Corps Regimental Association and was inducted into the Ancient Order of St Christopher. During 2010 Small Ships Section was inducted into the U.S. Army Transportation Corps Hall of Fame. I am now also entitled to wear the U.S. Army HALL OF FAME Lapel Pin.

I was a member of Earlwood Ex-Servicemen's Club from the late 1970's until 1989.

During January 1990 I joined South West Rocks RSL sub-Branch.

During 2003 I became a founding member of the U.S. Army Small Ships Association, and during 2017 joined the Merchant Navy Association.

# RECOGNISING OUR WWII VETERANS

## William Henry (Harry) Cruger

### HARRY CRUGER -RECORD OF SERVICE

VESSEL		JOINED	DISCHARGED
KARUAH	DECK BOY	27/5/ 41	5/9/41
MULUMBINBA	DECK BOY	5/9/41	24/9/41
MOOLOO	DECK BOY	8/10/41	25/11/41
MOOLOO	DECK BOY	26/11/41	20/4/42
ORMISTON	ORD. SEAMAN	19/5/42	10/8/42
NGATORO	ORD. SEAMAN	5/9/42	5/2/43
NGATORO	ORD. SEAMAN	6/2/43	19/7/43
UKI	ABLE SEAMAN (2)	24/8/43	17/3/44
CARDROSS	ABLE SEAMAN (2)	19/4/44	11/5/44
ASTORIA	ORD. SEAMAN	19/6/44	12/12/44
ASTORIA	A.B. 23/11/44	13/12/44	21/6/45
CORIO	ABLE SEAMAN	10/7/45	18/9/45
KARUAH	ABLE SEAMAN	3/10/45	13/1/46
KOOLIGA	ABLE SEAMAN	24/1/46	12/4/46
ARKABA	ABLE SEAMAN	17/4/46	9/7/46
NGAKUTA	ABLE SEAMAN	16/8/46	24/10/46
BIDELIA	ABLE SEAMAN	6/11/46	27/12/46
MUNDALLA	ABLE SEAMAN	15/1/47	2/4/47
CARDROSS	ABLE SEAMAN	17/4/47	18/6/47
RIVER HUNTER	ABLE SEAMAN	9/7/47	22/6/48
DELUNGRA	ABLE SEAMAN	20/7/48	23/9/48
EUGOWRA	ABLE SEAMAN	7/10/48	8/12/48
BELTANA	ABLE SEAMAN	4/1/49	14/1/49
RONA	ABLE SEAMAN	24/1/49	12/4/49
RIVER MURRAY	ABLE SEAMAN	28/4/49	14/12/49
DELUNGRA	ABLE SEAMAN	20/2/50	22/8/50
RIVER NORMAN	ABLE SEAMAN	13/9/50	27/9/50
BINBURRA	ABLE SEAMAN	17/10/50	7/11/50
KAMONAN	ABLE SEAMAN	13/11/50	12/12/50
DUNTROON	ABLE SEAMAN	10/1/51	30/5/51
CITOS	ABLE SEAMAN	27/7/51	6/9/51
TAROONA	ABLE SEAMAN	25/9/51	19/12/51
DUNTROON	ABLE SEAMAN	7/2/52	19/9/58
SOUTH STEYNE	ABLE SEAMAN	15/11/59	5/2/61



# *Steamship Ruined on Bellambi Reef*

## *TIMELESS WOLLONGONG*

*Courtesy of Carol Herben OAM (0409 832 854 or email  
sycado6@bigpond.net.au)*



***Grounded:*** *The steam ship Munmorah was grounded on Bellambi Reef in May 1949, the last ship to be wrecked on the reef. Picture: From collection of WOLLONGONG CITY LIBRARY and ILLAWARRA HISTORICAL SOCIETY*

*The Wallarah Coal Company of Katherine Hill Bay, formed in 1888, used their colliers to transport coal, mainly from Newcastle to Sydney.*

*In 1934, Wallarah Coal Company ordered a new ship from Henry Robb's Shipyard, of Leith, Scotland. The screw steam collier SS Munmorah, weighing 1273 tons, was specially built for the Wallarah Coal Company. The launching of the ship took place at Robb's Shipyard in August 1934. Robb's Shipyard also built the Manly Ferry, South Steyne, in 1938 which is now a floating restuaruant permanently moored near Pyrmont Bridge in Darling Harbour.*

*The SS Munmorah departed London in mid October 1934 and proceeded non-stop to NSW arriving 10 weeks later on the 10th of December. During the non-stop voyage the crew lived on salted pork kept in brine filled casks, salt butter and preserved foods. By the time the ship reached Sydney the crew were desperate for a cigarette, as their tobacco supplies had been exhausted for weeks. On May 17, 1949, SS Munmorah set sail in ballast from Sydney with a crew of 17, bound for Bellambi Jetty, where they were to load 1450 tons of coal. About 7pm the vessel was nearing the jetty. The occulting light situated 54 feet above high water mark and positioned at the end of the jetty, was not working that evening. The light was used to guide ships alongside the jetty, preventing vessels from grounding on nearby Bellambi Reef. Captain Knutsen, master of the SS Munmorah, did not reduce the vessel's speed when approaching the jetty despite*

*the occulting light being out. For some 36 hours the crew remained onboard trying to refloat the Munmorah. They did not have a chance to shift the ship as she was stuck hard and fast on the reef. Within four days the ship had broken in two.*

*On May 30, an advertisement appeared in the Sydney newspaper offering either the sale of the wreck or tenders to strip the vessel.*

*After the loss of the SS Munmorah, the Wallarah Coal Company purchased an aging freighter, the SS Oorama, as a replacement vessel.*

*It is rather difficult to fathom the call of the sea to sailors, especially after being shipwrecked.*

*One able seaman on the SS Munmorah was 57 year old John Kaewats, who had been subjected to three shipwrecks in 40 years. The first time was on May 24, 1909 when he worked on the Estonian ship Prince John, which was sliced in two by a German ship in the North Sea.*

*The second incident was aboard the Wallarah Coal Company's vessel, Tuggerah. The master of the Tuggerah did not have the load trimmed and he left the hatch coverings off leaving Bulli Jetty. While proceeding up the coast the vessel was swamped by large waves, and consequently sank off Wattamolla Beach, killing six of the crew. Exactly 30 years to the day, John Kaewats was onboard the SS Munmorah when she ran aground at Bellambi. The old salt stayed with the Wallarah Coal Company, continuing to serve on the company's vessels.*

*The Marine Court determined that SS Munmorah master Captain Knutsen committed an error of judgement when the jetty light could not be sighted while trying to bring the ship ashore.*

*For three years the Munmorah was a landmark at Bellambi. National servicemen used it as a target. By August 1952, the stern section had disappeared while the bridge was foundering before the bow section dropped to a horizontal position because of the motion of the sea.*

*SS Munmorah was the last ship to be wrecked on Bellambi Reef. Other ships wrecked on the reef were the Queen of Nations, Llewellyn, Little Pet, Norman, Aldinga, Saxonia, Resolute, and Wallsend. [By Carol Herben](#)*

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## **Sailors clinging to their disintegrating ship, battling overwhelming seas, clutching at floating debris,**

The NSW coast and waterways are littered with thousands of shipwrecks. Their timbers, iron plating, anchors and cargoes have become fragile records of a heroic maritime history. They are the last remnants of a time when industry, commerce, and families were directly or indirectly reliant on transport by sea.

Source: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/maritime/shipwrecksbellambi.pdf>



## M.V. WALLARAH LAST OF THE 60 MILERS FROM 1986 TO 2002

By the late Ian Coan (1955 - 2017)



In Newcastle

The *M.V. Wallarah*: Length of 97.9m, Beam 19.9m, Draught 7.9m, Tonnage 6,666t dwt, call sign A3BJ4 and IMO No. 8512073, with a speed of 11 to 12 knots, Home port of Newcastle, NSW and a crew of 15 all up. Not included in the manning scale was one shore duty officer when berthed at Port Waratah Coal Services wharf in Newcastle overnight for ship-keeping duties and also on hand to call crew if there were any changes to sailing times.



Built in Ube, Japan in 1986 for Coal & Allied, and Howard Smiths were the agents. Later in the mid 1990's she changed owner to Coal Operations Australia Ltd. The ship was a self discharging bulk carrier, Australian owned and crewed.

## M.V. WALLARAH LAST OF THE 60 MILERS

In 1995 & 96 Margaret and I had the chance to go on a handful of day trip on the *Wallarrah* over a period of time as guests of the Bosun, Wayne with permission from the captain. We went from Newcastle to Catherine Hill Bay and back. What a top day out, a sea voyage with breakfast and lunch thrown in. May I point out that we were also friends with Robin the captain and Danny the mate. We took our son Brennan on one trip in 1996 and he even got a chance to have a drive of the ship at sea, closely supervised by Danny the mate. When Brennan went on the wheel Margaret got into the life boat, just in case. Brennan still talks about that voyage to this day. For that matter I had one or two drives myself, just to keep my hand in.



Sea passage from PWCS Newcastle to Catherine Hill Bay was about 25 to 30 nautical miles south of Newcastle, two hours wharf to wharf, and loading time was approximately two and a half hours. Catherine Hill Bay jetty and coal loader is an open sea berth, (non-safe port). The *Wallarrah* always berthed clear of the jetty by heavy onboard synthetic shore lines anchored to the seabed: forward line directly ahead, breast at right angles to the jetty, aft directly astern and at right angles to the jetty the breast lines pass between the pilings.



The master was the only person on the bridge to bring the ship alongside both in Catherine Hill Bay and PWCS berth, he had no pilot as he was exempt. There was a mud pilot (AB Coxswain) on the wheel using hand steering when entering the Port of Newcastle only. Average loading at Catherine Hill Bay was 5,000 tonnes of coal, the swell determining the load as well as tide. Departure times were normally aligned with a rising tide in Catherine Hill Bay to maximise load.



Two crews swung on and off every three weeks. In 1998 the ship commenced trading from single voyage per day to double voyages utilizing three crews, 12 hours on, 12 hours off.

Working day - time of sailings in the morning appropriate to a rising tide at Catherine Hill Bay, but mostly 0430 to 0500, crew aboard one hour before to slot in between incoming and outgoing Marine traffic. In the early 1990's the ship did make one or two trips inter-state and to Sydney, TAS & VIC with coal and wheat.

With high swells along the NSW coast the sailing time was put back to 0800 from time to time, then a run down the coast to visually sight the jetty at the Bay, with the decision to berth left entirely to the Captain. But sometimes the *Wallarrah* could not sail due to inclement weather outside the port. Never once in 16 years did the ship break down.

Berthing *Wallarrah* brought out the best in her masters who made it look so easy when it was a feat of their ship handling skills.

There has never been a ship like the *Wallarrah* before or to this day, affectionately known locally as the Wally or (WHAT A RORT) as it was one of the most highly sort after and one of the best jobs on the coast bar none. The crew got to go home every night and went on leave every three weeks for three weeks, excellent accommodation, fresh produce on board every day and a top Chief cook (Chef).



The Galley slide and Crews mess room

Sadly the for all those concerned the *Wallarrah* was sold off in 2002 to overseas interests, to the Intercontinental Shipping Management Co, re-painted and re-named *Ikuna*, registered in Tonga and a new home port Nuku Alofa. This was sad time for Australian shipping. The ship did trade again on the Australian coast with Australian cargos onboard, but with foreign cheap labour crews (nothing new about that).



Ikuna entering  
Newcastle

The *Ikuna*, ex *Wallarrah* was on sold and broken up in Alang India in 2011. A sad ending for a wonderful and unique ship.



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