

MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

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

Edition 19
Spring 2019



TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA

MV Noongah



50 years ago

On 25 August 1969, the Australian Coastal ship MV Noongah foundered off Smokey Cape, New South Wales with a cargo of steel bound for Townsville in Queensland. Of the 26 crew members, 21 of them were lost.

IN MEMORY OF

<i>Master: Leo Botsman</i>	<i>Bosun: John Fleming</i>	<i>Crew Attendant: Nick Maragos</i>
<i>First Mate: Archibald Mitchell</i>	<i>Able Seaman: Keith LeFevre</i>	<i>Greaser: Kenneth McIntyre</i>
<i>Second Mate: James McCormack</i>	<i>Able Seaman: George Jenkins</i>	<i>Greaser: Charles Donnelly</i>
<i>Third Mate: Alfred Hopkins</i>	<i>Able Seaman: Patrick Kilgariff</i>	<i>Chief Steward: Eric Hynes</i>
<i>Chief Engineer: Paul Hutton</i>	<i>Able Seaman: Stanley Davis</i>	<i>Chief Cook: Thomas Ford</i>
<i>Fourth Engineer: Gerald Abbott</i>	<i>Able Seaman: Ralph Chappell</i>	<i>Second Cook: Hector MacDonald</i>

THE TRAGIC LOSS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LINE MOTOR SHIP NOONGAH

Captain Iain Steverson FNI

Two small general cargo ships were ordered in 1952 from the Scottish shipyard of James Lamont & Co. Ltd., of Port Glasgow on the River Clyde by the Australian Shipping Board (ASB), predecessor of the Australian National Line. They were named **Nilpena** and **Noongah**, identical sisters, single deck, single screw motor ships with a raised quarter deck, engine aft design typical of British coasters of the time. Their length was 243 feet overall, beam 37 feet, loaded draft 15 feet, with tonnages gross 1,464, deadweight capacity 1,673 tons. The ships had two holds, with No1 in a well, aft of the raised forecastle and No.2 on the raised quarter deck forward of the navigation/accommodation. The two holds were fitted with MacGregor steel hatch covers which may possibly of had a bearing in the eventual tragic loss of **Noongah**. Each hold had two sets of union purchase 5 ton derricks each attached to a fore mast, the raised winch platform/ stump mast between the two holds and a goal post arrangement in front of the navigation bridge. Accommodation for the complement which initially comprised 30 persons was situated aft with two wooden lifeboats on either side fitted with Welin' wind out' davits.

Noongah's main engine was built by British Polar Engines Ltd., of Glasgow, a 6 cylinder, 2 stroke single acting Polar oil engine which generated horsepower of 1,000 bhp, giving a speed of 9.5 knots. Navigation equipment was minimal, with just a magnetic compass, an echo sounder, and associated radio and direction- finding equipment. Radar was not fitted when I sailed in her in 1963. Port of Registry was Melbourne and classification was with Lloyds. She was a neat little ship with a nicely raked stem, cruiser stern and topped with a small funnel.

The ship was certainly no ocean grey hound and from personal experience in a force nine 'east coast low' gale the **Noongah** became quite difficult to handle, just maintaining steerage way in what was a similar area off the NSW east coast to where she was subsequently lost seven years later.

Noongah was an Aboriginal word for the Kurrajong tree, launching taking place in December 1954 and finally delivered to her new owners in April 1955. The intended

THE TRAGIC LOSS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LINE MOTOR SHIP NOONGAH

trade for the sisters was to carry timber and general dry cargo between mainland ports and Tasmania. They fitted nicely trading as handy little units for what was now the ANL Traffic Department carrying various cargoes amongst which early in her career was bagged wheat from South Australian ports to Tasmania. This was before the introduction in 1958 of the first of the two similar Australian built 'half-sisters', **North Esk** capable of handling wheat in bulk. By the early 1960's **Noongah** was trading regularly directly between Brisbane and Hobart direct carrying general cargo such as Golden circle tinned fruit, building material etc south and Cadbury chocolates and apples north! This little ship was ideally suited to handle this type of light volume cargo plus the odd top up with potatoes from Devonport. An unlikely voyage at Christmas 1961 saw **Noongah** make an emergency trip from main southern ports to Darwin when another ANL ship **Wangara**, grounded at the entrance to Port Phillip. In the middle 1960's **Noongah** was regularly engaged in the BHP steel trade from Port Kembla/Newcastle to North Queensland ports.

In 1965 **Noongah** was stripped of her cargo handling gear in order to enter the Bass Strait Searoad Service carrying containerised cargo, timber packs and additional paper reels from Burnie in order to supplement the faster ships engaged in the Searoad Service.

With additional modern tonnage in 1967 becoming available **Noongah** was refitted with her derricks and returned to the East Coast steel trade to North Queensland ports. On a north bound voyage having loaded at Newcastle with 1,472 tons of mixed steel products she sailed fully loaded at noon on the 23 August 1969 with a freeboard of just 4 feet 10 inches. The previous month she had undertaken repairs in Sydney to No.1 hold tank top while 1200 rivets were also replaced. The voyage north was routine until in the area of Port Macquarie the following afternoon the weather deteriorated to the extent that the ship was subjected to a full-blown force 10 gale. The wind was blowing from 45 degrees on the starboard bow, with wave heights peaking at 10 metres, with associated waves the length of which were estimated to be 130m between crests. By 2000 hours the ship had been reduced to barely 3 knots and rolling heavily. A starboard list had been noted increasing during the 8-12 watch and then in the middle watch enormous amount of water were observed across the fore deck well in the way of the lower placed No.1 hatch secured with steel hatch covers. At 0345 **Noongah** finally lost steerage way and at 0352 the first radio message was dispatched indicating a starboard list of 15 degrees. Finally, at 0437 a SOS radio message was sent advising the ship which was near Smoky Cape was being abandoned. She finally sank three minutes later sinking by the head. The two Welin wind out davits were unable to be operated for the wooden lifeboats to be launched so the only available lifesaving equipment were the two RFD life rafts, a 10 person and a six person plus personal life jackets. Of the crew of 26 only five survived the maelstrom that night. The search that

THE TRAGIC LOSS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LINE MOTOR SHIP NOONGAH

followed was the largest undertaken in Australia's peace time maritime history and involved eight RAN ships and seven Merchant ships together with RAN and RAAF aircraft. Greaser Kenneth McIntyre was posthumously awarded the Royal Humane Society of NSW 's Bronze Medal 'for bravery in attempting to save the lives of crew members of the **Noongah**'.

In June 1971 her sister **Nilpena** was sold overseas and in 1986 finally meeting a similar fate in heavy seas in the Bay of Bengal. Having developed a list in heavy weather and once again lifeboats were unable to be launched which resulted in just a sole survivor who spent five days drifting in a life raft before being rescued. The British pairs other Australian built 'half- sister', ANL's former **South Esk** was lost in February 1980 on passage from Hong Kong to Manila initially reporting a 20 degree list in heavy weather, crew preparing to abandon ship, no further messages and was lost with all hands.

I sailed on another similar small quarter deck ex Union Company of New Zealand collier which later sank with the loss of all hands in a typhoon in the South China Sea. Her sister ship sank off the North Cape of New Zealand and divers discovered her steel hatch lids had been displaced from the sunken hull.

Did the enormous amount of water battering the steel hatch lids in the forward well deck cause these steel hatch lids to be dislodged resulting in a sudden ingress of water into the holds thus causing an unmanageable list?

Resulting from my experience in these underpowered small motor ships I changed to a different shipping company which had large powerful steam turbine ships!

Captain Iain Steverson FNI

Former BHP Marine Superintendent

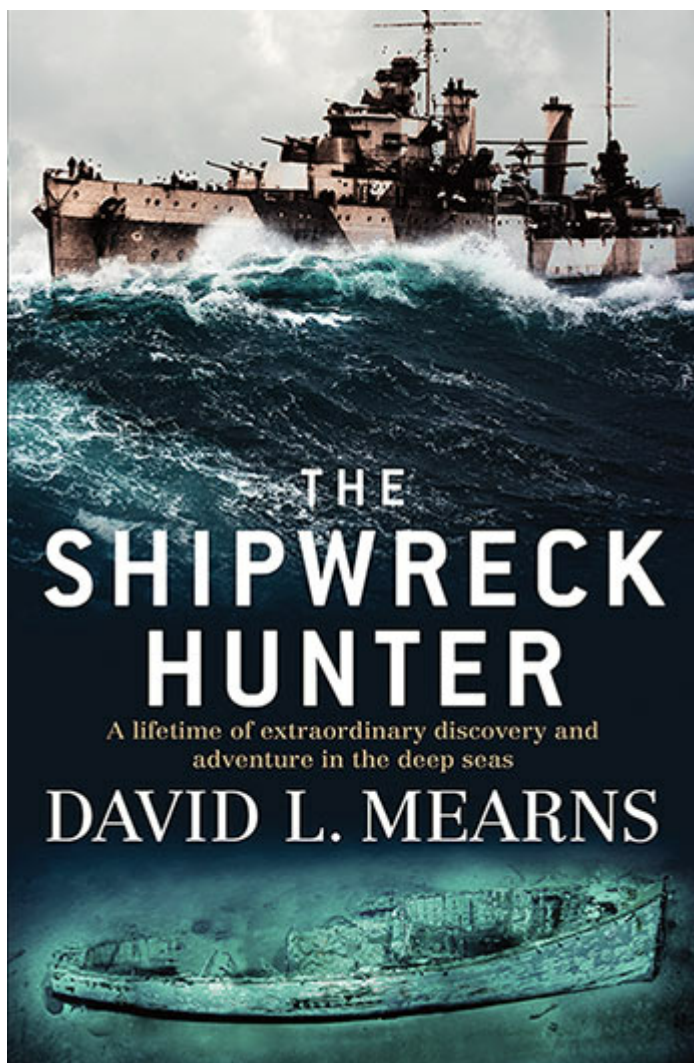
World Maritime Day 2019

World Maritime Day is the day workers can reflect on the contribution maritime workers make to world trade and pay respect to those who sacrificed their lives for this country and their industry.

**The wreath laying ceremony will have special significance this year as we remember those lost in the *NOONGAH*
Join us on Tuesday the 24th of September.**

**Please assemble at the city side of the
Pyrmont Walk Bridge at 12 noon.**

BOOK REVIEW - by Alan Read: "THE SHIPWRECK HUNTER" by David L. Mearns.



This most interesting and detailed account of the recent history of deep ocean exploration and the extraordinary advances made in the last few decades are included in this highly recommended publication.

The historic discovery of the "Titanic" in 1985 by a team led by Robert D. Ballard at a depth of about 3,800 metres (2079 fathoms) was generally believed to be the long awaited breakthrough towards deep ocean wreck location.

However, David Mearns relates that pioneering research and development had been completed by the US Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in the 1960s following the sinking of the US nuclear submarine "Thresher" on 10th April 1963 with the loss of 129 crew at a depth of 2,560 metres (1400 fthms) . Urgent Top Secret research followed this tragedy and ultimately the "Thresher" was located and critical evidence removed from the wreck. The

equipment types and methodology utilised eventually became generally available and were updated and used by R.D. Ballard in his search for the "Titanic" and the "Bismarck."

It is now a fact that NRL has located and filmed wrecks at 5,010 meters (2740 fthms) and 5030 metres (2751.4 fthms).

David Mearns became known in British shipping circles when he joined with relatives and friends of the crew members of the bulk carrier "Derbyshire" which was lost, cyclone, with all 44 hands, on the 9th September 1980. David was determined not only to find the wreck but also to find the true cause of the sinking which he eventually did with aid of photos and film. It took 20 years to establish beyond doubt that the sinking was due to structural failing and not to crew negligence.

It is not widely known that between 1975 and 1990, 279 bulk carriers were lost and an estimate exceeding 750 merchant seamen died.

The tragic loss of HMS "Hood" with 1,415 lives lost (24/05/1941) and the subsequent sinking of the "Bismarck" (27/05/1941) with 2,131 lives lost, are both covered in great detail . Bob Ballard had already located the "Bismarck" and David Mearns went on to locate HMS "Hood" and his high-resolution sonar images and Remote Operated Vehicles (ROV's) filming provided hitherto unknown details of the extent of the explosions which blew the ship apart. Only 3 crew members survived.

The finding of the German raider "Kormoran" and HMAS "Sydney" (sunk 19th November 1941) and later on, the hospital ship, AHS "Centaur", (sunk 14th May 1943)

were outstanding accomplishments and are described in great detail.

The author describes how the planning for a search starts after obtaining the “trigger point” which is the most accurate latitude and longitude available from which to establish the likely position of the target. The position of the German raider” Kormoran “was the first reliable key to establishing its position and then that of HMAS “Sydney.”

Following many months of interviewing a number of sources in Australia, England and Germany the “Kormoran”’s position was selected as the most likely. Following only 64 hours of active searching the “Kormoran “was found, a remarkable feat.

Researching every possible piece of reliable information and with some brilliant estimations of currents, wind etc., an estimated DR position for HMS “Sydney” was calculated between 10 and 15 nautical miles, on a course of approximately 150 Degrees (T) from the “Kormoran”’s final position and the search grid was planned and commenced.

On the 16th March 2008 HMAS”Sydney” was found in 2,468 metres(1350fthms)

The author goes on to describe, in great detail, the search for the Australian Hospital Ship “Centaur,” sunk 14/05/1943) with 268 lives lost and 64 survivors.

This despicable act received widespread publicity and condemnation and yet the likely Japanese submarine (I-177) commander was never tried for his war crime.

The “trigger position” was believed to be 070 degrees (T), 24 miles from Pt.Lookout ; essential for the start of the search ,was again hard to establish. The planning made more difficult as the wreck was found to be resting in a canyon ,at a depth of 2059 metres (1126 fthms) and the 2-4 knot East Australian Current added to the problems. On the 14th December 2009 the search commenced and the wreck discovered on the 20th December.

David Mearns was meticulous at all times in recognising the war graves aspects and sanctity of wrecks where lives had been lost. Appropriate memorial plaques were placed on wrecks and the relatives of deceased crew members were always respected and kept informed whenever possible.

Other famous ships mentioned in this book are the SS “Athenia’ , the Scottish passenger ship torpedoed in the North Atlantic a few hours after WW2 was declared on 3rd September 1939.

The United States Cruiser “Indianapolis,” sunk 30th July 1945 with tragic consequences and 880 lives lost.

The “Esmeralda” Vasco Da Gama’s Second Armada to India, sunk on 30th April 1503. The location of this wreck ,in the Red Sea, is once again a most interesting story. The MV “ Lucona” . The little known story of an Austrian crook who chartered and heavily insured a coaster and cargo and contrived its destruction. 13 years later the crook was tried and found guilty as a result of the photo-graphic evidence provided by David Mearns.

Side Scan Sonar equipment is towed by the survey vessel and creates an image of the ocean floor. Objects located cast shadows which the highly skilled operators can identify. The author, from an early age, was involved in all the technical aspects and development of scanning and filming equipment and Is a world leader in its use.

ROV’s are Remote Operated Vehicles with filming and photographic equipment.

This is a most interesting publication which will no doubt become a classic historical and reference edition.

Alan Read - May 2019

Ironical end for Bungaree

Navy's minelayer, HMAS Bungaree, laid more than 10,000 mines during WWII, SGT Dave Morley reports.



HMAS Bungaree - Royal Australian Navy navy.gov.au

We've all heard the saying 'what goes around comes around', but it couldn't be truer than in the case of the Navy's only minelayer HMAS *Bungaree*.

In an ironical twist of fate *Bungaree*, renamed *Eastern Mariner*, and operating as a Panamanian registered cargo ship, sank after striking a mine in the Saigon River in South Vietnam on May 26, 1966.

A mine laid by *Bungaree* off Far North Queensland during WWII was also responsible for sinking the Bathurst class corvette HMAS *Warrnambool* in September 1947, with the loss of four lives.

Bungaree was built at Caledon Shipbuilding Yard in Dundee, Scotland, and launched in 1937, as a single screw cargo steamer for the Adelaide Steamship Co.

She was named after an Aboriginal guide, interpreter and community leader who became the first indigenous Australian to circumnavigate Australia.

Bungaree accompanied Matthew Flinders in HMAS *Investigator* during Flinders' cartographic exploration of the Australian coastline from 1801 – 1803.

The vessel *Bungaree* was requisitioned for war service in October 1940 and immediately began conversion at Garden Island in Sydney.

She laid her first minefield off Port Moresby in August 1941 and, as Australia's only minelayer, laid more than 10,000 mines in defensive minefields in Australian and New Zealand waters during WWII.

Ironical end for Bungaree

At the ship's speed of 10 knots, a full deck of 250 mine units took about 45 minutes to lay.

Bungaree was present in Sydney Harbour during the Japanese midget submarine attack on 31 May, 1942.

As the need for defensive minefields lessened with Allied advances throughout the Pacific, *Bungaree* was re-tasked as a survey ship from January 1944 and a stores ship from August 1944.

On Christmas Day 1945, *Bungaree* was about 100km out of Sydney Heads carrying food and other urgently needed stores to Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands when she broke down.

She sent out distress calls and was towed back to Sydney by a Bathurst class corvette.

Bungaree was decommissioned in August 1946 and was returned to her owners in November 1947.

The mines she laid in Australian waters were swept by the RAN between 1945 and 1948.

She was sold in 1957 and renamed *Dampier*, sold again in 1960 and renamed *Eastern Mariner*.

After striking the mine in the Saigon River, she was later salvaged by the Japanese, renamed *Kitagawa Maru* No. 15, and finally scrapped in Hong Kong in 1968. [Source: www.defence.gov.au/news/NAVY_NEWS](http://www.defence.gov.au/news/NAVY_NEWS)



The Eastern Mariner after hitting a mine in the Saigon River



Merchant Navy Day Memorial Service



*Merchant Navy Memorial Sculpture:
Australian War Memorial, Canberra*

Date: Tuesday 3 September 2019

Time: 11.00AM

Place: Mosman War Memorial, Myahgah Road, Mosman adjacent to the Allan Border Oval behind the Council Chambers at Spit Junction.

Wet Weather Venue (if required): Mosman Masonic Centre, 44 Spit Road, Mosman.

This Remembrance Service is dedicated to the service and sacrifice of Australian merchant seamen who manned ships in all parts of the world during the First and Second World Wars. The support these men provided was vital to the success of the war effort. Merchant ships carried essential supplies and troops, but were vulnerable to enemy attack because they were generally slow, poorly armed and often loaded with dangerous cargoes.

Due to the lack of adequate records, we cannot know the full number of merchant seamen who died serving the allied cause. It is widely suspected that there may have been at least one Australian on many foreign flagged vessels. However, the Australian War Memorial has listed the names of 520 Australian mariners who had died during World War 2. On the Australian coastline alone, 30 ships were sunk and a number more were damaged.

All are welcome to lay a wreath/tribute following the official wreath laying. Please notify Merrill Barker so the name can be added to the list, **no later than 26 August.**

RSVP Address: Merchant Navy RSL sub-Branch, PO Box 6159, Narrabeena, NSW, 2099.

Email: Mr. Merrill Barker, Hon. Secretary, Merchant Navy RSL sub-Branch, at merchant.navy.rsl@speednet.com.au **Mobile:** 0433 934 705.

PRESIDENTS'S REPORT TO RSL SUB BRANCH MEMBERS.

Greetings to all our members, wherever you are.

This edition of Merchant Navy News would normally be produced by our dedicated editor, Geoff Walls, in mid -September. However, at our request, Geoff has kindly agreed to bring the publication date forward so that we can include details of our Merchant Navy Day service which we will hold at the Mosman War Memorial, Spit Junction, at 11am on Tuesday, 3rd September.

Invitations to this service will have been sent out prior to the distribution of this issue of 'MN News.'

Your committee is, as usual, working well coping with the significant changes which are being implemented by NSW RSL following the upheaval caused by the former State President, Don Rowe and the former RSL State Council. We now have a completely new 'Board' at State Branch which is doing its' job as a charity in accordance with the essential requirements of the NSW Government.

On Friday 10th of May. Merrill, Bob Harding and I attended the 'Centaur' annual service in the Chapel at Concord Hospital. I always make a point of attending and laying a wreath at this very important service because there was not just a merchant navy crew on the ship when it was torpedoed at about 4am on 14th May 1943 with great loss of life, but of the twelve Australian Army female nurses who were on board at that time only one, Sister Savage survived the sinking. Possibly, this was the worst war crime ever committed by the Japanese Imperial Navy during World War Two. (maybe Banka Island was worse, but not much).

Most of you will be aware that the former RSL President, Don Rowe, was dismissed from his position several years ago due to allegations of massive misuse of RSL funds. His Life membership of the RSL was also cancelled. He appeared in a Sydney Court a few weeks ago on charges relating to the misuse of our funds. He pleaded 'not guilty', claiming he was suffering from Post -Traumatic Stress Disorder known as 'PTSD'. Mr Rowe was an Army veteran from the Vietnam war. I saw him frequently at services in Martin Place over a great many years during his tenure as state president. At no time did I discern any sign of illness during those years. He seemed very happy in his job.

It is my opinion that we were fortunate that a retired ADF soldier, Captain James Brown, nominated and was elected at State Congress a two years ago as our president, in place of Mr Rowe. I was pleased to have met Mr Brown a couple of times and thus formed a favourable impression of him. As you may know, the position of NSW State President is an unpaid job so, after some two years working extremely hard for us, travelling all over the state to a great many RSL sub Branches. Mr Brown recently found it necessary to vacate the position of NSW State President. He explained that he needed to obtain paid employment. The whole organisation of NSW RSL is now revised and is complying with all that is required of it as a registered charity. There is a suggestion that Mr James Brown may be an applicant for the salaried position of CEO at RSL NSW.

Our Sub Branch Secretary, Merrill Barker, Vice President Alan Read and I attended an RSL training session here in the city on Tuesday 25th June. This is one of the new essential requirements of NSW State Branch that sub branch committee members must, from now on, attend at least one of these training sessions to ensure they know and understand exactly WHAT they can do, what they CANNOT do, and MUST do in order to carry out their volunteer duties correctly. Each of us was impressed with the format and information gained from one senior state branch employee and two legally qualified lecturers.

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

On Saturday 18th May I attended a commemoration service and luncheon held annually by the US Army Small Ships Association at the Grace Hotel in York Street Sydney. As an association member I always find this function to be very well organised by the Association Secretary, Mr Dan O'Brien, whose late father was a seaman with the US Army Small Ships in New Guinea during the war. There was an impressive attendance of over 100 people including staff from the American Consulate here in Sydney. As usual, Sister Mary Leahy OAM and other sub Branch members, Bob McMahon, and his wife Finola were there as was Merchant Navy Association President, Geoff Walls.

For the last twenty or so years I have attended, and sometimes participated in, a service held at the Defence of Sydney Memorial at North Head each year. This year, on Friday 31st May, the service, originally arranged and conducted by the then local Federal Member, The Hon Mr Tony Abbott, was organised by the local State Member, Mr. James Griffin. It commemorates the invasion by Japanese midget submarines into Sydney Harbour in May 1942 and the consequent death of some 27 British and Australian sailors. As he has done previously, Merrill accompanied me to this service which is always very well attended by senior service members, diplomats from several countries including (at my suggestion some years ago) the Japanese Consul, and about 150 local school children. Mr Abbott was there but, as he is no longer the local Warringah Federal Member he chose not to take part. The new Federal Member for Warringah, Zali Steggall, who lives in Mosman, did not attend. Perhaps this was due to the recent result of the Federal election so she may not have yet been invited.

There are two extremely important forthcoming services for our MN sub Branch. The Mosman one is presently being planned by our secretary, Merrill Barker. As we have done for the last couple of years, we are arranging and holding the long-standing Merchant Navy Day service at the local cenotaph in a park at Mosman, in Sydney, at 11am on Tuesday 3rd September. (Merchant Navy Day). Members may recall that, last year, we held the service in the local Masonic hall, which, being nearby, was kindly made available to us due to the heavy rain. We were delighted that about ninety persons attended. A truly great result thanks to our secretary and others. This year, should there be any prospect of rain on that day we will again call on the Masons for assistance.

The second annual service, arranged over many past years by Mr David Field, Chairman of The Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund, is to be held at the National Merchant Navy memorial in Kings Park, Canberra commencing at 11am on Sunday 20th October. This particular (30th) service is a most significant one because of the work currently being carried out on the Memorial.

An invitation has been issued to His Excellency the Governor General, The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC as guest of honour and to deliver the annual address. He will also be asked to unveil massive alterations and improvements to the memorial and the surrounding area. Sub Branch members, family members and friends who have attended this service in prior years will be familiar with the original design of the Canberra memorial, having six large blank concrete panels or 'blades', three on each side of the centre blade. This was how the memorial was designed and constructed.

For some time Mr Field and the MNWMF committee, in consultation with this sub Branch and other mercantile bodies, has discussed the prospect of extending the memorial by having two additional identical concrete blades (panels) installed on each side, making a total of five blades on each side of the main centre blade. On these additional blades will be installed, in bronze letters, the names of those Australian merchant navy veterans who

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

the main centre blade. On these additional blades will be installed, in bronze letters, the names of those Australian merchant navy veterans who are known to have lost their lives due to enemy action during World Wars One and Two. Also, the names of those Australian ships damaged or sunk by enemy action in our local coastal waters during World War Two.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) concedes that the exact number and identity of Australian merchant navy veterans lost during both wars is unknown. As we all know, there were probably hundreds of Australian seamen on board British, American, Norwegian and other foreign flagged ships which were sunk in the Atlantic and other oceans. As a result many of those who perished on those foreign flagged ships in all oceans are not known. All that can be done now at our National Memorial is to record the names that are known to DVA.

The cost of these extremely significant improvements to our Memorial are in the order of \$200,000.00. In order to proceed with this wonderful venture the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund has launched a National Fund-Raising Appeal. Our State RSL Branch rules prohibit this sub Branch from allocating member's funds for the appeal however, individual members of our sub Branch are free to do so. It has been made clear that even small amounts will be most appreciated.

Donations may be made to 'The Secretary, Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund Ltd, PO Box 3058 Rosemeadow NSW 2560 or by EFT to Account Name MNWMF Project Development Fund BSB 032 197 Account No: 477684.' Reference: Your name. Please note: If paying by EFT please forward an email with your name, address, Phone & Organisation (if applicable) to secretary@mnwmf.com.au. A receipt will be forwarded for all donations received.

On behalf of your committee I urge all members, if able to do so, to be generous and make a financial contribution to this most appropriate and memorable project. Should you know of persons who had relatives or friends who paid the supreme sacrifice at sea during wartime you could advise them of the need for this fund-raising appeal. They do not have to be connected with any RSL or MN Association. We are hoping that significant donations will come from the business world.

Each year many of those who attend the Canberra service choose to travel to Canberra on the Saturday, the day prior to the service, and to stay overnight at the Garden City Hotel. It has become something of a tradition to hold a dinner on the Saturday evening at the hotel. This year, as happened last year, your merchant navy RSL sub Branch will handling the motel booking arrangements and, if applicable, the dinner cost for those who wish us to do so.

Sub Branch Secretary Merrill Barker will be sending out information and invitations to a list of people who we feel may wish to attend. Naturally, prior bookings are essential so Merrill will provide negotiated accommodation and dinner prices well in advance of that weekend. He will be asking those who wish to attend and those who also wish to attend the dinner, to make payment, in advance to our special nominated bank account. Attendance at the hotel and to the service on the following day is open to everyone, especially to those who feel some interest in the Merchant Navy. Some people choose to travel to Canberra on the Sunday morning just to attend the service.

Attendance at either or both of these services by our sub Branch members obviously can be difficult or even impossible, especially by those veterans of WW Two or those who reside well away from Sydney or Canberra. Your committee recognises this and fully

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH

understands the situation. Family or friends of veterans are always welcome to join us, on your behalf, at every service or meeting.

Mr David Field emphasises that we must all make every reasonable effort to assist a merchant navy veteran who is keen to attend services in Sydney or Canberra but who lacks transport. On behalf of your committee I wish you well and look forward to the possibility of welcoming you at one or both of these annual services or at our meetings. Our quarterly meetings are now held at the Chatswood RSL Club which is located adjacent to the Chatswood railway station. The next meeting at Chatswood will be on Wednesday 28th August at 10.30am. Very best wishes.

Don Kennedy. President

THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

DONALD KEVIN NEWLING September 2018

Capt. JOHN DAVID LOTT 16/11/18

Capt. NEIL AITON 7/4/19

Capt. BRIAN REGINALD DRUCE 12/4/19

Capt. BASIL WALKER 1/5/19

THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN

COMING EVENTS

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB-BRANCH MEETING: Chatswood RSL Club, on Wednesday 28th August 2019 at 1030hrs.

BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA: Cenotaph Martin Place Sydney, Wednesday 4th September 2019 at 1100 hours

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

MERCHANT NAVY ASSOCIATION MEETING: Cabra-Vale Diggers Club, Saturday 16th November 2019 at 1030 hours

H.M.S. TRITON: RV TRITON: ACV 90 TRITON

By Ian Coan 1955 - 2017



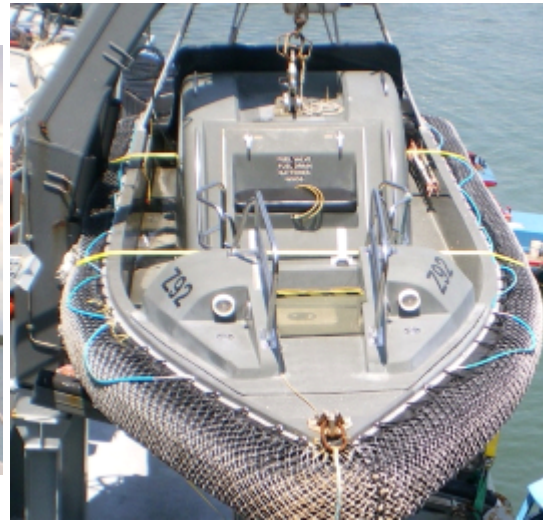
LONDON IN 2000 OFF THE H.M.S. BELFAST

The HMS TRITON was built in the UK in 2000 at a cost of £13million pounds. She was a tri-hulled technology demonstrator surface combat vessel for the Royal Navy. Tonnage 2,236 gross tons, length 97m, beam 22.45m, draught 3m, speed 20 + knots, call sign 9HA4272. She was also used as a Hydrographic survey ship and as a research vessel.



BUNKERING AT ANCHOR OFF CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Triton was sold to Gardline Marine Services in 2005 and in 2006 the ship was contracted to the Australian Customs Boarder protection marine unit with her new call sigh VJAU7. She had a civilian crew of 14 all up and 30 customs Boarder protection officers. She was fitted with 2 x 50 Calibre heavy machine guns, an armoury, a secure holding area with cctv and extra accommodation to hold up to 100 transportees for a short time (refugees). She also had a hospital onboard built into a 40ft container located on the after end of the ship and a quarantine isolation area. And carried 2 x 7.3 metre high-speed rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIB's).



INFLATABLE AWAY BOATS



ANCHORED OFF DARWIN IN 2011 WITH CUSTOMS BOAT CORIO BAY AND THE PILOT BOAT

Her new engines were fitted in 2006. They were MTU 16V M40B with an output of 2,086 kw each. The vessel was registered and based out of Darwin NT and patrolled waters off Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands, intercepting refugee boats before they hit the Australian mainland.



COMMON MESS ROOM



GALLEY

As the ship ran 24/7 there were two cooks onboard and I am told they were excellent. The ship also had good crew and customs accommodation for an ex-navy ship.



CABIN HEADS and SHOWER



CUSTOMS CABINS

H.M.S. TRITON: RV TRITON: ACV 90 TRITON

The Triton's contract ended in 2015 and was not renewed, nor was she replaced. All the extra customs gear was taken off the ship in Darwin then the civilian crew took the ship to Port Moresby, PNG where they were paid off on the 11/11/2015 and then repatriated back home to the land of OZ.



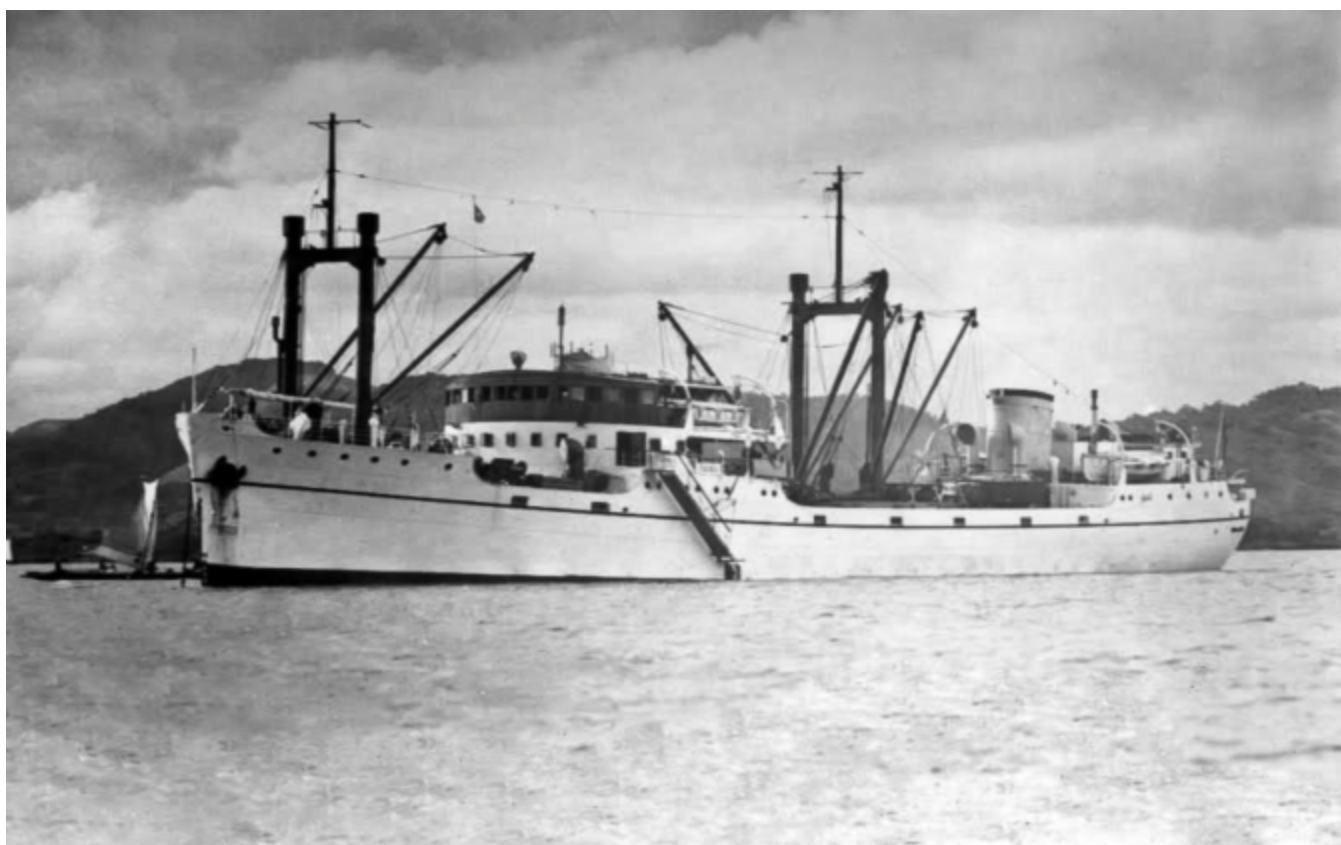
In PNG 11/2015



The BRIDGE

HORROR OF A CRUEL SEA CAN BREAK THE STRONGEST OF MEN

TORPEDO ATTACK SURVIVORS SPENT TWO MONTHS ADrift ON THE INDIAN OCEAN



As searchers combed the Indian Ocean for wreckage of flight MH370 they were venturing in waters where over 70 years ago another rescue drama was played out.

In 1944 the merchant navy cargo ship Tulagi was on a voyage from Darwin to Columbo in Sri Lanka when it was torpedoed by a German submarine. The survivors of that attack, spent nearly two months drifting across the Indian Ocean, experiencing some of the worst the ocean had to dig up.

The Tulagi was built in 1939 by the Hong Kong Whampoa Dock Co, at one time one of the largest dockyards in Asia. Registered in London but owned by Australian shipping firm Burns Philp & Company, it was a twin screw ship of 2281 tons (2244 tonnes) about 77m long by about 13m.

With a mixed Indian, Malay, Chinese and Australian crew, when it began operation the ship plied the Pacific between Sydney, the Pacific Islands and the West Coast of America, before it was partnered with MV Montoro sailing from Sydney to Darwin via Port Moresby.

In August 1939, its engines broke down on the way into Sydney and the ship made news as the first one to be hit by a union ban on repairing or docking ships built outside Australia or imported to Australia.

Even in the early years of the war the ship had some narrow escapes. Buzzed by a German surveillance plane in waters notorious for German raiders in 1940, the ship escaped an attack.

In early 1942, as part of convoy supplying Sparrow Force on Timor, she was spared the worst thrown at them by Japanese aircraft on February 16. But the Tulagi was moored in

HORROR OF A CRUEL SEA CAN BREAK THE STRONGEST OF MEN

Darwin on February 19 and was damaged in the Japanese onslaught.

The ship only needed minor repairs and was soon back at sea supplying troops in the South Pacific. But because Tulagi was registered in Britain, in February 1944 the British Department of Defence took over running the ship. After some alterations the Tulagi was loaded with a cargo of flour and mail and set sail from Darwin for Colombo in March 1944.

Only Indian crewmen survived drifting in the Indian Ocean for 134 days before they washed ashore at Sumatra where they were captured by the Japanese.

The unescorted Tulagi proved easy pickings for the U-boat. Two torpedoes hit the starboard side after midnight on March 28.

Chief engineer John Ward later said he was thrown from his bunk by a banging on the side of the ship. "No sooner was I on my feet than an orange flash from the explosion lit up the whole ocean".

"I knew then that we had been torpedoed"

Of the 54 people aboard only 15 made it to the life rafts. The ship's master Leonard "Dusty" Miller went down with the vessel.

Under the determined command of Ward and others, including second officer Edwin Board the survivors lashed together four rafts and desperately clung on, hoping for some rescue or to be taken by currents toward land.

On March 30 a ship was sighted but, lacking navigational equipment and surrounded by an inhospitable ocean teeming with sharks, their options were limited.

They supplemented the small amount of provisions on the rafts with those scavenged from the damaged rafts, calculating they had enough to last them about 27 days.

Fierce storms threatened, but the men held on.

By the beginning of April, they were mostly naked, badly sun burnt and their provisions were running low. They collected rainwater and harvested turtles and fish from the ocean whenever they could.

Eventually only two rafts remained lashed together but even that became too difficult. In May the party was split in two, with seven men on one raft under Ward and eight on the other under Board. They drifted apart and none of the men on Board's raft were ever seen again.

On May 25 the men finally came ashore at the island of Bijou tier in the Seychelles, where islanders clothed and fed them until they could be taken to Australia.

Acknowledgements to Keith Rigby who is making a documentary on the sinking of the Tulagi and would like to hear from families of those lost on the second raft.
keith.r@tpg.com.au

Troy.lennon@news.com Source: The Telegraph March 28, 2014



CONTACT DETAILS

MERCHANT NAVY ASSOCIATION

President/Treasurer: Geoff Walls
PO Box 4181
SHELLHARBOUR
NSW 2529
Phone: 0242956527
Email: geoff.walls@bigpond.com

Vice President: Vacant

Secretary:
Elizabeth Sandeman-Gay
All correspondence to:
PO BOX 4181
SHELLHARBOUR

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Geoff Walls
PO Box 4181
SHELLHARBOUR
NSW 2529
Phone: 0242956527
Email: geoff.walls@bigpond.com

MERCHANT NAVY RSL SUB- BRANCH

President:
Don Kennedy
Unit 4 11-13 Bernie Ave
FORESTVILLE
NSW 2087
Phone: 02 94516707
Email: donandwynne@bigpond.com

Vice Presidents:
Stan Shardlow
Alan Read

Secretary:
Merrill Barker
PO Box 6159
NARRAWEENA
NSW 2099
Phone: 02 99447328
Email: merchant.navy.rsl@speednet.com.au

Treasurer:
Bob Harding
PO Box 470
CROWS NEST
NSW 1585