

# THE VOICE

October 2010 Edition

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## The Silent Service

Those readers who skim *The Voice* before reading the contents may have noticed a nautical theme in this edition. Is it Navy Week, you may ask? In Cairns (3-10 October). Also, nationally and internationally, Merchant Navy Day fell on the 3rd September.

Contrary to popular myth, Britain was saved from defeat in WWII less by the heroics of the RAAF and more by the painstaking efforts of the Royal Navy and merchant vessels of Britain and allied nations who kept the vital shipping lanes open and Britain from starving.

Escorted by Allied warships, merchant mariners also manned the convoys through the icy Arctic Ocean to the U.S.S.R., the dangerous supply runs to Malta and other places in the Mediterranean, as well as the south Pacific and Indian Oceans – in fact, almost everywhere fuel, food, troops, supplies and other commodities were needed.

Merchant ships and warship escorts made victory in the Second World War possible – at a cost. Merchant mariners suffered particularly heavy losses off the east coast of America in the first 6 months of 1942 – some 397 civilian ships lost. German U-boats alone sank nearly 14.7 million tons of allied shipping. This amounted to 2,828 ships (around 70% of the total allied tonnage lost). Great Britain alone suffered the loss of 11.7 million tons, which is 54% of the total Merchant Navy fleet at the outbreak of WWII. Overall, some 5,000 merchant ships never reached their destination and 45,000 seamen died (6.5% of all Merchant Navy personnel died while on service in WWII, a higher percentage than any other Service).

Unlike the forces they could deploy against Great Britain and the United States, neither Germany nor Japan managed to bring substantial naval or air power against shipping ranging the Australian coasts – which isn't to say they didn't try and often succeed. Of the 76 merchant ships lost in Australian waters, 29 were Australian.

Often tedious, always dangerous, and far from the glamour service, being in the Merchant Navy was also not very remunerative. Merchant seamen didn't receive leave, medical or pension benefits. They "signed on" to a ship voyage-by-voyage, their employment lasting until return to home port, this possibly being a year or so later. All remuneration ceased when the seaman's ship was sunk.

Following many years of lobbying to bring about official recognition of the sacrifices made by merchant seaman in two world wars and since, Merchant Navy Day became an official Day of Remembrance on 3 September 2000.

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### Allied Associations

Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemaker Veterans' Association Inc.



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## President's Report

As we head towards summer, there has been quite a deal of activity keeping both the Executive and Committee of our Association extremely busy. The annual invitation from the Melbourne Racing Club (August 14th) is always a pleasure to accept; good company with other ex-service organizations present makes for a wonderful afternoon. The Memorial Ceremony and the racing make it a full and interesting day.

St. Georges Uniting Church held their annual memorial Service "Healing the Wounds of War" on August 22nd. Commemorating the 65th Anniversary of 14/32 Battalion's *Battle of Bacon Hill*, the 60th Anniversary of the start of the Korean War, and the service by the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers in East Timor, Iraq, the Solomon Islands and Afghanistan. As usual this ceremony was well attended and was followed by a light luncheon in the Army Depot of the 2nd/10th Field Regiment Artillery where the 14th Battalion AIF Descendants Association hold their Meetings.

On a sad note, the Association lost a Life Member: the Reverend Burne Brooker, on 5th September 2010. Born 22nd July 1920, Burne was ordained in 1948, and served in Japan and Korea. He had a long and distinguished career and will be sadly missed. An Association stalwart.

On Tuesday, 14th September, the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association held their Memorial Service in the Remembrance Gardens at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. A number of veteran groups were present and a wreath was laid on behalf of our Association.

Our Patron, Maj. Gen. Jim Hughes, Vice President, Tom Parkinson, and I, have held talks with the organization hosting the proposed visit by the Korean Group, the "Little Angels" in November. This world renowned group put on a very colourful display of music, songs and dancing, and hopefully all Korea veterans have received their invitation via the Korean Embassy.

Looking forward to meeting up with members who are attending the Reunion in Canberra on October 23-23-24. From all reports it is looking very good.

## Little Known Naval Disasters

Many people believe that the sinking of the British ship *Titanic* on 15 April 1912, with the loss of 1,523 men, women and children, was the world's greatest maritime disaster. Others may, perhaps, think that the British passenger liner *Lusitania*, which sank on 7 May 1915, after being hit by a German submarine torpedo, taking 1,198 lives, was just as bad. But these disasters are dwarfed by the sinkings of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, the *General Steuben* and the *Goya*, three German ships, crowded with evacuated refugees and wounded soldiers, that were struck by Soviet submarines during the final months of the Second World War.

The first of these German ships to go down was the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, a 25,000 ton converted luxury liner that had been serving as a hospital ship. When it left the Baltic harbour of Gdynia (Gotenhafen) on 30 January 1945, it was jammed with nearly 5,000 refugees, mostly women and children, and 1600 military servicemen. At shortly after nine in the evening, it was struck by three torpedoes from Soviet submarine 5-13. Convoy vessels were able to rescue only about 900 from the sub-freezing Baltic waters. At least 5,400 perished.

Eleven days later, shortly after midnight on 10 February, the *General Steuben* sank with a loss of 3,500 lives, making this the third worst maritime disaster in history. The same Soviet submarine that had attacked the *Gustloff* and in almost the same location, sank the *Steuben* with two torpedoes. Crammed with as many as 5,000 wounded soldiers and refugees, the converted passenger liner sank in just seven minutes.

The sinking of the *Goya* on 16 April 1945, just three weeks before the end of the war in Europe, is acknowledged as almost certainly the greatest maritime disaster, in terms of lives lost, of all time. The converted 5230 ton transport ship had set out from Hela near Danzig (Gdansk) with its human cargo of some 7000 refugees and wounded soldiers. Just a few minutes before midnight, the Soviet submarine L-3 fired two torpedoes at the *Goya*, which found their marks amidships and stern. Almost immediately the ship broke in half, her masts crashing down upon the passengers crowding the decks. Before anyone could escape from the holds, the vessel sank in just four minutes, resulting in the loss of nearly 7,000 lives. There were only 183 survivors.

The sinkings of these three ships, with a combined loss of more than 17,000 lives remain the greatest maritime catastrophes of all time. Moreover, the deliberate and unnecessary killing of thousands of innocent civilian refugees and helpless wounded men is unquestionably one of the great atrocities of World War II.

Even more tragic is the case of the *Cap Arcona*, a 27,650 ton converted German passenger ship, packed with evacuated concentration camp inmates. On 3 May 1945, just a week before the end of the war, it was sunk by fire from a British fighter-bomber as it was moored in Lübeck harbour. Some 5,000 persons, nearly all of them inmates, lost their lives. Only about 500 could be rescued.

A similar fate befell the *Thielbek*, a German ship, likewise packed with 2,800 inmates, who were being evacuated from the Neuengamme concentration camp. Succumbing to intense fire from British war planes, it sank on 3 May 1945, with the loss of all on board.

Taken from the *RANCA Vic. Newsletter* Aug-Sept 2006  
Original Source: *The Journal of Historical Review*, Mar-April 1998

# Out & About

## South Korea Re-Visit, 22nd - 27th June 2010



Major General Jim Hughes and John Duson [left], John Munro and Max Gant (ex-navy) [right] at the Kapyong Memorial with students who won the Anzac Memorial Scholarship, a program established by the Premier of NSW in which students submit essays, etc., to qualify them to join a group that is sent to one of Australia's major battlefields.



[l-r] John Duson, John Munro, Maj. Gen. Jim Hughes and South Korean officer at the DMZ.



HRH, the Duke of Gloucester [left] with John Duson [centre] and a naval assistant to the Australian Embassy at a reception at the British Embassy in Seoul.



[l-r] Gant, Munro, Hughes and Duson



At the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Pusan, South Korea.



The official reception for veterans at the Lotte Hotel in Seoul.

## Korean Full Moon Festival, 18th Sept.



The Korean 'Full Moon' Festival was held at the AquaLink Centre in Box Hill on the 18th September. Like last time, the weather threatened rain for most of the day and, like last time, it mostly held off. The event is basically a get together for the Korean community of Melbourne (and the odd Korean War veteran or two). Several hundred attended throughout the day long celebration of all things Korean, with the picnic area dominated by picnickers and children (most in costume thanks to the presence of a dress up tent), and the indoor sports centre given over to volleyball competitions for the energetic older set. Oh, and you could also go swimming in the indoor pool if you so wanted, and given that it is a heated pool, many did.

\* \* \*

Money: A good thing to have. It frees you from doing things you dislike. Since I dislike doing nearly everything, money is handy – Groucho Marx



# Sleepy and the Bouncer

by Jeff Towart



*This is the third of three pieces Jeff Towart has submitted to The Voice, although unlike the last two published this year, not to me. I actually discovered this story at the bottom of a box of material I 'inherited' from my predecessor. I don't think it has been published already, but apologies if it has. The reason for doing so now will soon become clear.*

*Sadly, Jeff didn't get to see his Kapyong piece in the last edition of The Voice. He died two weeks before publication of complications of four years battling prostate cancer. He was 86. Condolences to wife Janet, daughter Jessica, and the rest of the family.*

*Born in Mossgiel, outback NSW, he attempted to enlist in the Army in 1942 and found himself in the Citizen Military Force instead (see story below). Service in the AIF from 2 Oct. 1942 to Oct. 1945 was followed by a stint in the Regular Army Special Reserve from 17 August 1950 to 12 January 1953 and the regular Army from 13 Jan. 1953 to his retirement on 8 Sept. 1978. He was appointed as a Warrant Officer Class One in the Australian Permanent Military Forces on 1st March 1967 and retired as Inspector of Supplies for Victoria one week before his 55th birthday.*

When World War Two started in 1939, I was two years short of recruiting age and having two brothers plus two brother-in-laws serving (one killed in action and the other taken prisoner) I impatiently waited to join them in uniform. Thinking back, my chief concern was that it could be over before I was old enough to join.

When the long awaited day finally arrived, another local lad and I presented ourselves to the local police station that doubled as a recruiting office. Here we had eye and hearing tests and were measured for height and weight then told we would be notified by mail. Sure enough, two weeks later letters of instruction arrived along with a rail warrant for us to proceed to the central railway station in Sydney where we would be met by an army representative. We were also to bring a tooth brush and a cut lunch. As the trip took over 24 hours We did wonder at what point we were meant to consume it.

We made our home for the next five days at the Sydney Show grounds in a large tin building that had been a pig pavilion. Here we were issued with a palliasse (a hessian sack to be filled with straw) and a pair of red army boots plus a set of fatigues, before moving to Cowra, NSW, for a months training and posted to a unit.

As a naïve country kid I thought there was only one army and was thus surprised and disappointed to be sent to a Militia unit. Although I had enlisted in the AIF (Australian Imperial Force), you needed to be nineteen. I was now forced to mark time in the Militia until my next birthday. Then my regimental number changed from N to NX and I was posted to the 6 Division AIF in north Queensland. About twenty other nineteen-year-olds and myself now went by train from Singleton to Brisbane then to the exhibition grounds to await the next draft north in four days time. The camp must have been crowded, as we were granted day leave.

Our main worry was money: the lack of it. With pay of six shillings a day you needed to spend carefully. Most things were in short supply and although hotels were open, very few had beer and those that did had it on for one hour each afternoon. You could walk around the city and look at the sights for only so long. On the afternoon of our second day, three of us were strolling along Albert Street when we noticed a queue of men lined up along a high tin fence. Our first thought was it might be someone selling sly grog but it turned out to be only a house of ill-repute that didn't open for several hours. Taking into account the fragile state of our finances, we intended to spend our last few shillings on a beer, if we could find a pub serving.

That night we got to talking about that queue of men and came up with what seemed a great idea. Why not go down early in the afternoon take up a spot in the line, wait several hours until it lengthened, then sell your spot for whatever you could get. Especially to those American sailors who seemed to have plenty of money. The next day we tested our idea and were delighted when each collected one pound. As the next day was the last of our leave we decided to go for broke and ask for two pounds each.

The entrance to the place was a two foot square trap door in the fence. A large bouncer assisted those entering by calling out "next" and, with a none to gentle tug on whatever he could grasp, pulled the next customer through. Our first two spots in the queue were sold quickly but the third held by a mate called 'Sleepy' Ridley was a worry. He was now close to the door and still hadn't left the line. The trap door opened a big hand appeared and 'Sleepy' disappeared.

As he had no money we worried what would happen to him. Our period of anxiety was cut short when the trap door opened and out sailed Sleepy to land on all fours amidst raucous laughter and rude remarks from those still waiting in line. Grabbing our mate, we three nineteen-year-olds set off with four pounds in pocket to find a pub serving beer. 'Sleepy' explained that once inside he was confronted by a large female who looked like an over sized and very agitated RSM with her hand out requesting the sum of thirty bob. His attempted explanation was cut short by an order to put him out. The big bouncer grabbed him by the collar and seat of the pants, lifting him like a sack of spuds, and hurled him through the trap door.

The next day we boarded a troop train for the 1700 kilometre trip north to the Atherton Tablelands to begin jungle training in readiness for New Guinea. Our great adventure into the unknown was about to begin.

# How old is the Navy?

## A brief history of the origin of Australia's Navy

Many Australians mistakenly believe that 10 July 1911, the day King George V granted the title *Royal Australian Navy*, marks the birth of naval forces in Australia. The actual birthday of the Navy is 1 March 1901.

At Federation on 1 January 1901 the Governor-General became Commander-in-Chief of Australia's defence force, and on 1 March 1901 the states transferred control of their naval and military forces to the Federal Government. By the following year the two arms were officially titled Commonwealth Naval Forces (CNF) and Commonwealth Military Forces (CMF).

The ships inherited from the state navies were tired, old and inadequate even for training. There was little hope for early improvement, given the Commonwealth Naval Forces budgetary allocation in 1901-02 of just £67,000, compared to the Commonwealth Military Forces allocation of £638,000.

Yet a dilapidated Australian Navy was not a major national concern if the Royal Navy could be relied upon to provide maritime protection. Successive British naval commanders provided this reassurance, and the Commonwealth's subsidy towards maintaining Royal Navy vessels in Australian waters reinforced the idea that issues of naval policy were best left to the British Admiralty. Watching the growth of foreign naval power in the Pacific, local naval authorities were less confident. They feared the withdrawal of British naval forces during a war, leaving Australia open to attack by sea. With communications cut, industrial paralysis and economic devastation could follow. Land forces alone could not protect Australia's sea-based trade.

The idea of a capable navy under the Commonwealth's control gradually gathered support. From 1904, the Director of Naval Forces, Captain Creswell, embarked on a program designed to breathe new life into the Commonwealth Naval Forces. He re-commissioned several of the gunboats and torpedo boats and renewed regular training exercises to improve combat readiness. The greater visibility and renewed activity of the Commonwealth Naval Forces proved the quality of Australian naval personnel and excited public interest, but its ancient vessels required replacement.

Fortunately, Creswell found an ally in Prime Minister Alfred Deakin who also preferred active cooperation to subsidies. In December 1907, Deakin announced that the Commonwealth Naval Forces would be expanded to include a flotilla of submarine and destroyers, to take full responsibility for coastal defence. However, by the time the first two destroyers arrived in local waters, Australian naval policy had made an even greater advance.

Hard pressed to maintain its global naval supremacy, the Royal Navy sought colonial contributions towards imperial naval defence. At the 1909 Imperial Conference, the Admiralty suggested that the Commonwealth Naval Forces expand to a self-contained 'fleet unit' based on a battle cruiser and several light cruisers. The combined package represented an ideal force structure: small enough to be managed by Australia in times of peace, but capable of effective wartime action with the Royal Navy. Federal Cabinet gave provisional endorsement in September 1909 and ordered new ships. Just as important, the Australian Naval Defence Act 1910, provided the clear legislative authority for a navy that would no longer be limited to Australian territorial waters.

Since 1904, Commonwealth Naval Forces warships had been designated His Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS), but this had never received the King's sanction. Australian ministers made known their desire to have the prefix 'Royal' attached to the Australian Navy's title, and on 10 July 1911 King George duly approved the request.

The Permanent Commonwealth Naval Forces officially became the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), and the Citizen Naval Forces, the Royal Australian Naval Reserve (RANR). The Royal Navy's White Ensign replaced the Australian Blue Ensign and the Australian Commonwealth flag took the place of the Union flag.

The Australian Navy did not just happen in 1911. Ten years of hard work turned a collection of obsolescent vessels into a true fighting service and marked Australia's first major step towards nationhood. Arising from a deeper recognition that the defence of Australia's national interests could no longer be consigned to others, the decision to acquire a sea-going navy represented an assumption of national obligation of momentous proportion.

*This is an expurgated version of the article first published in Semaphore, Volume I Issue 2, December 2002 and reprinted in Sea Talk, Winter 2003,*

## S.O.S.

SOS, the universally adopted distress signal, is generally believed to stand for 'Save Our Souls'. This would imply that the sailors' bodies were lost already! Others have seen in the call an abbreviation of 'Save Our Ship'. Neither interpretation is correct. The choice of the letters has no connection with any verbal message. They were selected because SOS in Morse code – three dots, three dashes, three dots was most easy to transmit and to be recognized. No special training was needed to make or understand the emergency call.

Source: *Mistakes, Misnomers and Misconceptions* by Rudolph Brasch, Angus & Robertson 1993

# A Korean Four Leaf Clover

by Michael Muschamp

*The four leaf clover is a universally accepted symbol of good luck, especially if found accidentally. Former sailor and KVAA member, Michael Muschamp, certainly must have had one sitting firmly in his pocket whilst on service in Korea. Here he recounts how he survived a quartet of potentially fatal incidents, one for each leaf of his metaphorically clover.*

## The First Leaf

In 1950, the Royal Navy trained junior officers from pretty well all Commonwealth countries, as well as a few from such 'friendly' nations as Egypt (pre-Nasser) and Iran.

After a year's training as cadets we (Australians, NZ'ers, Indians, Pakistanis, Burmese as well as about a hundred RN types), were posted to 'The Fleet'. In those days, Britain did have quite a fleet, a couple of battleships, sundry aircraft carriers and a dozen cruisers. There were plenty of other smaller craft, destroyers, frigates and submarines amongst the number but, on promotion to the exalted rank of midshipmen, ("the lowest form of animal life aboard") we were dispatched to either a battleship, a carrier or a cruiser

With two other Kiwi midshipmen, three RN and a couple of Indians, having chosen the Far East Station as it was closest to home, we were appointed to the Colony Class ship, *HMS Jamaica*. With the main armament of nine 6" guns, eight 4" 'dual-purpose' guns and an assortment of anti-aircraft weapons as well as 21' torpedoes, the ship was classified a 'light cruiser', a 'heavy' one being a vessel with 8" main armament.

Leaving Hong Kong in mid-June, we were on our way northward to 'fly the flag' on a visit to Japan. A day out of our first port of call, Nagasaki, the Korean War broke out and we were immediately attached to the US Seventh Fleet.

Early on the morning of the first Sunday in July, we encountered what transpired to be the whole of the North Korean navy, or at least the seagoing portion thereof.

A brilliant summer morning, the sea glistening, the land to our port side grey and unwelcoming, we were off the east coast, just north of the 38th parallel, the demarcation line between North and South Korea set in stone by the post-WWII disarmament conferences. Was this the 'Land of the Morning Calm'?

With our ship sailed an American light cruiser, the *USS Juneau*, and a British frigate, *HMS Black Swan*. Sighting half-a-dozen small craft, all wearing the North Korean ensign, all three ships opened fire.

As they say, 'a brisk action followed'. The enemy, identified as E-Boats (fast motor torpedo boats), only fired small-calibre guns at us despite the fact that we were sitting ducks for a close-quarter torpedo attack.

It was all over in less than an hour.

Four of the E-Boats were sunk (three by our guns), one ran aground and one high-tailed it seawards. *Black Swan* was ordered by the Admiral in *Juneau* to chase, a somewhat futile gesture as, 'downhill with wind astern', the frigate's top speed was about 18 knots while the MTB could easily manage twice that. Obviously, the worthy Admiral had not consulted his 'Jane's Fighting Ships'!

Survivors were fished out of the water and interrogated by our RoK (Republic of Korea) liaison officer.

"Ask them why they didn't fire their torpedoes," he was told.

"They say that the Russians were going to teach them how to fire them next week."

Blimey Charlie! as the Poms would say. Had they been able to use their torpedoes, it might well have been a very different story. We were only a few hundred meters off the very unwelcoming cliffs in a broadish bay.

What was a UN naval 'triumph' might well have been a disaster, with ships sunk and plenty of casualties.

## The Second Leaf

A month or so later, we were again off the east coast, bombarding the railway line which ran along the cliff face. Unfortunately, a shore battery 'got our range' and the *Jamaica* was hit several times.

The main damage was caused by a hit on the mainmast, with shrapnel raining down on the guns' crews beneath. Several were killed and ten or so wounded and, from my action station on the gun direction platform, directly abaft the bridge, I looked aft to see, to my horror, a headless corpse. Not a pleasant sight for anyone, let alone an eighteen-year-old.

I quietly mused, "If that shell had hit the foremast instead of the mainmast, that headless body could well have been mine".

All those killed, save one, were soldiers from the Middlesex Regiment. They had been part of a draft of about thirty who had taken passage in the *Jamaica* en route for some 'R & R' in Japan.

When hostilities started, the Captain had asked if any of the army personnel would be willing to spend two weeks on board, rather than visiting the fleshpots of Tokyo. To a man they volunteered. This was an enormous bonus as the *Jamaica* was at 'peacetime complement' and without the 'brown jobs' we could only man half our main armament and 4" guns. The casualties were all on the after-gun deck, manning the anti-aircraft weapons. As

*(continues on Page 8)*

if that weren't bad enough, when the regiment was sent, en masse, to Korea in September, the first casualties they suffered there were as a result of 'friendly fire', our valiant American allies mistaking one hill for another a few miles away.

### **The Third Leaf**

Three months later, the North Korean army had pushed the UN forces back to the 'Pusan Perimeter', an area of about 80km by 80km in the south-east corner of South Korea. Things were not exactly looking rosy for it seemed highly likely that the Communist north would achieve its primary aim, that of an ice-free port on the Korean peninsula.

To the rescue came none other than General Douglas ("I shall return") MacArthur. In a master-stroke, he led an invasion force of some 80,000 troops well behind the enemy lines at the west coast port of Inchon.

With total mastery of the seas, a powerful naval force, which included the battleship USS Missouri, several US heavy cruisers and two RN cruisers, *Jamaica* and *Kenya*, as well as a score of destroyers, bombarded the port for two days before the troops landed. Only fairly light resistance was met and Inchon, the port of and gateway to the capital, Seoul, was secured within a few days.

At dawn on the second morning after the landings, the ship's company of *Jamaica* were at "Repel Aircraft Stations" (where all but the main armament guns are manned), when two propeller-driven aircraft appeared over the fleet, which was at anchor a few hundred meters from the shore.

Now, while the NK army was very substantial, nothing had been seen of any air arm and it seemed that these planes were, perhaps, from the RN aircraft carrier *HMS Triumph* (the two US carriers at sea being off the west coast and equipped with Phantom jets). We were soon disabused of that guess.

One plane dropped a bomb close to the US cruiser *Rochester*, causing no damage. Our American cousins were obviously having a Sunday morning lie-in, for they studiously ignored the attack. This aircraft then turned and strafed the *Jamaica*, causing some damage and several casualties. As it passed overhead, without any apparent sound, it exploded, having been hit by our anti-aircraft guns on the port side.

I was at my Action Station which, as it was on the starboard side, received only a few bits of shrapnel. Several of these, struck the gun-sight which I controlled, and one, a 20mm shell, passed between my legs. I did, in fact, sustain a 'wound' – a tiny shard of glass on my forehead, but thankfully nothing worthy of the name of a 'real wound'.

The second aircraft, having seen the fate of its mate, decided that discretion was definitely the better part of valour and sped away without firing its guns, echoing the non-action of the US Navy.

I had a small piece of anonymous fame when the London Sunday Express, which had a journalist aboard *Jamaica*, reported that 'a midshipman had a narrow escape when the gunsight he was working was severely damaged'.

### **The Forth Leaf**

Almost exactly a year later, by this time promoted to the dizzy rank of Acting Sub Lieutenant, I was serving in the frigate *HMS Amethyst*, a ship which had, two years earlier, attracted world-wide fame when she escaped from capture by the Chinese communists as they made their way south in their overthrow of the forces of the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek. She had made her way, without anything like adequate charts, some 200 miles down the Yangtze, under almost constant fire from the shore, finally breaking out of the river and into the sea south of Shanghai.

The Captain thereupon sent the memorable signal, "Have rejoined the fleet. God save the King."

Several other RN ships had come under fire and one, the heavy cruiser, LONDON, was badly damaged. Her place on the Far East Station was taken, towards the end of 1949, by the *Jamaica*.

Stirring stuff, indeed

In parenthesis it is worth mentioning that the *Jamaica* had been transferred from the America and West Indies Station. By the time the vessel finally reached England, in March 1951, she had spent almost three years away from her home port and the same applied to most of her officers and ratings.

This time *Amethyst* was not 'up the Yangtze' but in the Han River estuary, on the west coast of Korea, a few miles north of the 38th parallel, conducting a survey of a large tract of virtually enclosed water.

This, even in peacetime, would have been quite a hazardous operation, for the tide rose and fell some 10 meters and the current often exceeded six knots.

In wartime (o.k. "peace action"), it was another matter altogether for, while friendly forces controlled the southern shore, Very Unfriendly Folk were encamped on the northern one.

*Amethyst*, because of her comparative size, was at anchor, out of range of the unfriendly fire, while a small RoK gunboat, with the frigate's navigating officer, a couple of ratings and the Acting Sub Lieutenant (me)

*(continues on Page 10)*



## “A Bloody Marvellous Show”

I'm not sure if it is being upbeat to the extreme or one of the most blatant bits of spin in WWII, but here is a *Daily Mirror* piece entitled *Bloody Marvellous* which appeared on the 1st June 1940, dealing with the final stage of the calamitous May campaign in France.

*For days past thousands upon thousands of our brave men of the B.E.F. have been pouring through a port somewhere in England, battle-worn but, thank God, safe and cheerful in spite of weariness. We may have that already at least half of that gallant force has been withdrawn from the trap planned for them by Nazi ruthlessness... Praise in words is a poor thing for this huge and heroic effort. But praise we must offer for all engaged, and for the brilliant leadership in the field... Praise, then, for him and them! "A bloody marvellous show," says a high officer.*

Yes, folks, the collapse of France and the tumultuous evacuation of the British Army in May was indeed a bloody marvellous show – for the Germans, which was presumably the nationality of the unnamed ‘high officer’ quoted above. Here is a somewhat more realistic account from *Signal*, a German wartime picture magazine:

*Altogether more than 1.2 million prisoners have fallen into German hands, besides limitless amounts of war material... France's and Britain's finest troops are annihilated. England is now separated from France and exposed to a direct German attack. On June 4 this battle of annihilation came to an end with the fall of Dunkirk.*

Source: *Life on the Home Front*, Reader's Digest (Australia) Pty. Ltd., 2000

### The Korea Veterans Association

Victor Dey OAM (President) and The Committee  
request the pleasure of your company at the annual KVA Inc.

## Christmas Luncheon

Venue:	Batmans Hill on Collins 623 Collins Street, Melbourne
Date:	Wednesday 1st December 2010
Time:	1130 hours for 1230 hours
Bill of Fare:	Traditional Christmas Dinner
Meal Cost:	\$25 per person
Drinks:	Own Cost at Hotel Prices
Award Presentation:	Certificates of Service 10, 15, 20 & 25 Year Pins
Entertainment:	<i>The Swing Masters</i>
RSVP:	25 November 2010

**Book early as there are only 170 places**

-----  
Please detach and return to Gerry Steacy, 1 Kent Court, Werribee, Victoria 3030

**RSVP: 25 November 2010**

Please return your acceptance and payment by this date. We are committed to confirm guest numbers and pay the caterer seven days prior to the function.

Please confirm attendance for \_\_\_ people.

Names of those attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find my cheque / money order for \_\_\_ people @ \$25.00 per person: \$\_\_\_\_.00

Please make cheques / money orders payable to: **Korea Veterans Association of Australia Inc.**

slowly made its way to a point about four kilometres from *Amethyst*.

Aboard the gunboat was a small motor-boat, which would carry the 'Sub' and a leading seaman, to a point about 800 meters from the shore, the whole performance being recorded by a cameraman from the British forces film unit on board the gunboat. His remit was to produce a film for consumption on American TV in the hope that the Great US Public might be persuaded that nations other than their own and South Korea were in the 'great struggle against Carm-you-nism'.

My job was to take 'horizontal sextant angles' (no GPS then). The leading hand would record them and they would be analysed by the navigator, who had been doing the same highly technical piece of work aboard the gunboat.

The motor-boat was about to be launched when the Unfriendlies started to shell the gunboat, their first shots falling well short. Then a large splash close to the ship suggested that they were getting the range.

Standing in the 'eyes of the ship' (as far forward as he could without actually falling overboard), the cameraman thought, "the next shot will hit the bridge. What a pic that'll make."

The next shot, fortunately a small calibre one, hit the bollard alongside the cameraman. He broke the world record for the 15 meters, while the gunboat got under way in a hurry.

I watched this performance from the comparative safety of the 'disengaged side', thanking my stars as we quickly got out of range. Sad to say, that same cameraman was later captured by the Chinese and imprisoned under the vilest of conditions for more than two years.

Next day, in the safer surrounds of the lee of the southern shore, I was in the small motor-boat, doing my horizontal sextant act, when we were 'buzzed' by a low-flying extremely fast jet aircraft.

I was almost certain it was not a MIG-9 from the Chinese or North Koreans, but, taking no chances, I slid over the side of the motor-boat and into the (very shallow) water.

"Not to worry, sir," quoth the leading hand, as we clambered back aboard, "it was a Yank."

About a month later, the Captain of the *Amethyst*, Commander Peter Fanshawe, sent for me. He was a somewhat austere man and, many years later, I discovered why he was not exactly a 'Cheerful Charlie Chester'.

He had been shot down as a naval flyer in 1941 and sent to the infamous Stalag Luft Nord. There he was one of the chief planners of what became known as 'The Great Escape', though he himself did not escape.

"Oh, Sub.," he said with a quiet grin, "You know that aircraft that buzzed you in the Han River?"

"Yes, sir, of course."

"Well, I've just heard that it was indeed, a US Navy Phantom. You were bloody lucky. The clot of a pilot had mistaken the White Ensign you were flying for the North Korean flag. The only reason you weren't shot up was that he had expended all his ammunition."

A sideline to all this occurred a couple of months later.

With another Kiwi, I had applied for permission to 'find my own way back' to the UK, where we were due to spend two years on technical courses. Courtesy of the Royal Canadian Air Force, we flew via Shemya in the Aleutians and Anchorage, Alaska to Tacoma in Washington State.

From there, we thumbed and bussed our way down the west coast to Los Angeles and one day, standing on the famed corner of Hollywood and Vine, a very pretty girl came up to me and said,

"Gee, can I have your autograph?"

Fame at last, I thought. That film must have hit the TV screens in California.

She examined my signature.

"What's this? Ain't you Richard Widmark?"

## **Lumbering, Not Lithe**

Merchant vessels, which in WWII, came in all sizes and shapes, all had one thing in common – they lumbered, slow and steady, with the emphasis on slow. Unescorted by warships they were easy targets; escorted by warships, they were still targets, only not quite so vulnerable. The best that could be said was that the accompanying warship might avenge their sinking if they fell victim to a submarine. After the war, Lord Louis Mountbatten wrote this of merchant shipping: *Those of us who have escorted convoys in either of the great wars can never forget the days and especially the nights spent in company with those slow-moving squadron of iron tramps – the wisps of smoke from their funnels, the phosphorescent wakes, the metallic clang of iron doors at the end of the night watches which told us that the Merchant Service firemen were coming up after four hours in the heated engine rooms, or boiler rooms, where they had run the gauntlet of torpedo or mine for perhaps half the years of the war. I remember so often thinking that those in the engine rooms, if they were torpedoed, would probably be drowned before they reached the engine room steps... And all too often, they were.*

## HMAS Goorangai Loss

*This year sees the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the HMAS Goorangai, an auxiliary minesweeper which went down with all hands on 20th November 1940, the first Australian navy ship lost in WWII.*

Following the mining of the ships *Cambridge* and *City of Rayville* in Bass Strait in early November in 1940, the Royal Australian Navy ordered several minesweepers to the area and within a fortnight, more than 40 mines were found and destroyed.

On November 20th, the Auxiliary Minesweeper *HMAS Goorangai* under the command of Lieutenant Commander G.N. Boyle and a complement of five officers and nineteen men, steamed to Queenscliff from Williamstown to take on vegetables. In inclement weather after sunset and “a darkened ship”, she headed towards Portsea.

At 2037 (8.37pm) when midway between Queenscliff and the quarantine station, *HMAS Duntroon* outbound to Sydney, struck her forward of the funnel on the port side; cutting *Goorangai* in two. With both vessels almost totally blacked out and wartime security preventing *Duntroon* from heaving to, or switching on searchlights to look for survivors, the crew of *Goorangai* had little chance.

However, the *Duntroon* quickly lowered lifeboats, fired rockets and gave three blasts on the siren to warn Queenscliff of the disaster before proceeding. The alarm bell was rung at Queenscliff and the lifeboat launched, but a valuable half hour was lost when the lifeboat was stuck on a sandbank. The crew were forced to wait for the rising tide to carry it clear. The minesweeper stuck hard and fast on the seabed in about eight fathoms with only the tops of her masts above the water. Despite an extensive search only seven bodies were recovered before the wreck was demolished by explosives on Jan. 21st 1941.

The *Goorangai* was one of the 56 Australian-built *Bathurst Class* corvettes which served during WWII. With an overall length of 186 feet, a breadth of 31 feet and a maximum speed of 15.5 knots, they weren't big ships in terms of size. Lightly armed they were used in unglamorous tasks such as convoy escorting, minesweeping, anti-submarine patrolling, and rescuing survivors from merchant ships. During the Japanese 1941-1942 Pacific onslaught, they also evacuated troops and civilians from areas about to be overrun. In fact, *HMAS Ballarat*, the second last corvette to leave Singapore, rescued survivors from the British ship, *Derrymore*. One survivor, John Grey Gorton, later served as Prime Minister of Australia.

Source: Commemorative Booklet produced by the Naval Commemoration Committee of Victoria in association with the Royal Australian Navy Corvettes Association of Victoria.

## A Vote of Thanks

In October of 1945 the British House of Commons passed a resolution that read: *That the thanks of this House be accorded to the Officers and Men of the Merchant Navy for the steadfastness with which they maintained our stocks of food and materials; for their services in transporting men, munitions and fuel to all the battles, over all the seas; and for the gallantry with which, though a civilian service, they met and fought the constant attacks of the enemy. That this House doth acknowledge the Merchant Navy with humble gratitude and the sacrifice of all those who have given their lives, that others today may live as free men, and its heartfelt sympathy with their relatives in their proud sorrow. We shall never forget them.*”

## Did You Know...

Around 4,000 Australian merchant seamen served on the 800 ships participating in the Normandy invasion.

\* \* \*

Despite the fact that torpedoes were regularly carried by battleships from the late nineteenth century right through the Second World War, *H.M.S. Rodney* is the only battleship known to have actually succeeded in hitting an enemy battleship with one, when she planted a single 24” fish into the German *Bismarck* on 28 May 1941.

\* \* \*

The first battleship ever sunk in action was the Russian *Oslibia* (12,683 tons with four 10-inch/45 & eleven 6-inch/45 guns), which succumbed to the pounding of the Japanese Imperial Navy at 15:30 hours on 26 May 1905 at the Battle of Tsu-Shima Strait.

\* \* \*

The last battleship to see service in the British Royal Navy was *HMS Vanguard*. Completed just as WWII ended, she was sent to the breaker's yard in 1953.

## Creative Communiques...

Between September of 1942 and October of 1944, creative communiques emanating from the headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur reported that Allied troops in the Southwest Pacific Area had inflicted upwards of 200,000 casualties on the Japanese at a loss of only 122 men killed, 522 wounded, and 2 missing, for a remarkable 306.3 Japanese casualties for each Allied one. Douglas MacArthur wasn't the only one prone to fantasy thinking. The most-sunk warship in history was the U.S. submarine *Tang*. The Japanese claimed to have sunk it 25 times before a torpedo finally did the job for them. The record for surface ships was the U.S. carrier *Enterprise*, which survived the war intact, but which the Japanese claimed sunk six times.

## Notices

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IN CONCERT

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CLOCKTOWER CENTRE, MOONEE PONDS  
Bookings: 9243 9191 or  
www.clocktowercentre.com.au

WEDNESDAY 10 NOVEMBER AT 2PM  
FRANKSTON ARTS CENTRE  
Bookings: 9784 1060 or  
www.artscentre.frankston.vic.gov.au

ADULTS: \$50 CONCESSION \$30

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### Hadrian John Williams

John Bennett, our South Australia delegate, is looking for anyone who served with Hadrian John Williams (SN 6/609, C Coy, 3RAR 12 March 1952 - 29 October 1953). He is in ill health and his daughter is hoping to find someone who was with him in Korea. For further details or if you can help, give John a call on (08) 85567288.

### Rising Spirit of Anzac Exhibition

When: 19 November 2010 to 30 January 2011

Where: Shrine of Remembrance

Western Visitor Centre

Birdwood Ave, South Yarra, VIC

Tel: 03 9654 8415

Email: [reception@shrine.org.au](mailto:reception@shrine.org.au)

Web: [www.shrine.org.au](http://www.shrine.org.au)

Created by social documentary photographer, Sharyn Meade, this exhibition records the personal stories of Australian veterans, in words and images, through successive generations and includes a good selection on the Korea War with contributions from Vic Dey and Maj. Gen. Jim Hughes. Sharyn's inspiration is the enduring ANZAC tradition of sacrifice and the personal qualities in ordinary Australian men and women.

### Change of Meeting Date

Please note that due to the last Wednesday in January 2011 being Australia Day, the KVAA Inc. January Committee/General meeting will be held on the 19th at 10.30 a.m. at the Stella Maris.

### Ray Simpson Book Project - Help Needed

Ray Simpson, VC, DCM, was one of Australia's most highly decorated soldiers. Better known as "Simmo" or "Chudda" Simpson, he served in Korea with 3 RAR from 1951-53; 2 RAR in Malaya from 1955-57 and the SAS Company from 1957 to 1964. In 1962 he was a member of the initial training team (Aust. Army Training Team Vietnam [AATTV], the "Team") in South Vietnam and later served with 1 Commando Company. He was awarded the DCM in 1964 then the VC in 1969 for his gallant actions when serving in the AATTV.

A long overdue book on his life story is being compiled by Mick Malone and Peter Lutley. Both were career soldiers: Mick, ex SASR and later RSM 1 Commando Regiment, and Pete, ex 7 RAR and SASR.

They are especially interested in his time with 3 RAR in Korea. Can anyone confirm if he was at Maryang San in A Company 3 RAR? Does anyone know about the British Centurion tank incident when it was hit by a mortar down the open hatch and Simmo's involvement in the aftermath? Did anyone go on patrol with Simmo? On one occasion, instead of taking leave, he wangled himself in with the US Marines at the Hook, Can anyone tell them about this?

They wish to interview, chat or correspond with anyone who served or associated with Simmo who can confirm these stories or add something to the story of his life. They are also after insights into his private life, including his Japanese wife, Shoko, whom he met and married in Tokyo when on leave from Korea, and with whom he lived in Malaya (1955-57) and in Perth (1957-64). Obviously any documentation and especially photos with Simmo in it are much sought after. (All photos will be copied and returned).

If you can help in any way, contact Mick or Peter on the numbers below.

Mick Malone: Home: 08 92953911

Mobile: 0417964530

Email: [info@imprimaturbooks.com.au](mailto:info@imprimaturbooks.com.au)

Peter Lutley: Home: 08 93858037

Mobile: 0416307734

Email: [querrabin@hotmail.com](mailto:querrabin@hotmail.com)

**Being in a ship is like being in jail, with the chance of being drowned - (attributed to) Samuel Johnson.**

## Navy Funnies

A new Ensign was assigned to a submarine, a boyhood dream come true. He was trying to impress a knot of sailors with his expertise on trim control and surfacing, all learnt in 'Sub School'.

One of them cut him off quickly and said, "Listen, 'sir', it's real simple. Add the number of times we dive to the number of times we surface. Divide that number by two. If the result doesn't come out even, don't open the hatch."

\* \* \*

The sailor rushed up to his executive officer in great excitement. He stammered and stuttered. His exec lost patience with him and shouted, "Sing it out, sailor, sing it out!"

The sailor drew a deep breath and sang:  
"Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
And ne'er brought to mind?  
The Admiral's fallen overboard -  
He's half a mile behind."

\* \* \*

An officer on an aircraft carrier was cutting through the crew's quarters of his ship one day and happened upon a sailor reading a magazine with his feet up on the small table in front of him.

"Sailor! Do you put your feet up on the furniture at home?", the officer demanded.

"No, sir, but we don't land airplanes on the roof either."

\* \* \*

A business man was interviewing applicants for the position of divisional manager. He devised a simple test to select the most suitable person for the job. He asked each applicant the question, "What is two and two?"

The first interviewee was a journalist. His answer was "Twenty-two."

The second applicant was an engineer. He pulled out a slide rule and showed the answer to be between 3.999 and 4.001.

The next person was a lawyer. He stated that in the case of *Jenkins v Commissioner of Stamp Duties (Qld)*, two and two was proven to be four.

The last applicant was a former navy purser. The business man asked him, "How much is two and two?"

The purser got up from his chair, went over to the door and closed it then came back and sat down. He leaned across the desk and said in a low voice, "How much do you want it to be?"

He got the job.

\* \* \*

The Department of the Navy just announced that the Marine Corps could no longer perform burials at sea for those who have departed this earthly life. It seems that too many sailor have drowned trying to dig a grave.

## Any Port In a Storm

During night operations off the coast of Sicily in July 1943, a patrol of American motor torpedo boats encountered a squadron of American destroyers on a similar mission. The destroyers, having been warned of the presence in the area of Italian and German MTB's, promptly engaged the torpedo boats, inflicting considerable, though fortunately largely superficial, damage. Unable to contact the attacking destroyers and unable to outrun them in the open sea, the MTB's made for the shallower waters close inshore off Cape Rosocolmo. As it happened, there was an Italian coast defense battery at the Cape, which had been warned that friendly MTB's might be operating in the vicinity. As the American torpedo boats approached, the Italians thought they were friendly craft being pursued by the enemy and promptly opened an accurate, heavy fire on the destroyers. After a few minutes, the tin cans drew off, having been straddled several times, while the torpedo boats made their way westwards hugging the coast to safety, and the Italians chalked up a victory over the USN!

Source: *Strategy & Tactics* magazine No. 89

## A Girl in Every Port

Wages in the Royal Navy in the early nineteenth century were pretty low. An Ordinary Seaman received a shilling a day and an Able Seaman but "tuppence" more. This less-than-princely wage was subject to various deductions and was normally paid in the form of lump sums at the end of a ship's commission. On such a salary the possibilities of supporting a wife would appear to have been slender indeed. Consider then the reaction of a ship's officer of *HMAS Asia* in 1836, when Seaman George Bolt approached him whilst the ship was lying at The Nore. "Might me wife come aboard, sir?"

"And which might she be?" replied the officer, looking over the crowd on the dock. Bolt indicated a particular woman.

"That is not your wife!" cried the officer.

"Yes, sir, I am lawfully married to the woman," came the reply.

"But that is not the woman you had aboard in Sheerness."

"No, sir," replied the tar. "This is my Portsmouth one."

"How many have you got?"

"Five, sir. One in Plymouth, one at Portsmouth, one in Sheerness and two in Cork!"

Source: *Strategy & Tactics* magazine No. 94

**A man who is not afraid of the sea will soon be drowned - J. M. Synge (The Arran islands)**

## Women and Children First

The sailors' code of "women and children first" originated with the wreck of a British troopship, the *Birkenhead*, on February 26, 1852. The 1900 tonne *Birkenhead*, one of the world's first ironclads, sailed for South Africa from Cork, in Ireland, in January 1852, carrying 476 soldiers for fighting marauding Xhosa tribesmen. Also on board were 20 women and children, Following what was probably a navigational error, the ship foundered on a rocky promontory near Cape Agulhas, Africa's southernmost point. Of the eight lifeboats, only three proved seaworthy and these were boarded by the civilians. With the ship fast breaking up, the master, Captain Robert Salmond, ordered the assembled redcoats: "Save yourselves. All those who can swim, jump overboard and make for the boats."

But the soldiers' commander, Lieut. Colonel Alexander Seton, quickly countermanded the instruction. He saw only too clearly that the lifeboats would be swamped in the scramble for safety. "Stand fast, I beg you", he shouted to his platoons. "Do not rush the boats carrying the women and children."

Seton drew his sword, ready to cut down the first man who disobeyed, but the threat was unnecessary. The soldiers remained steady, in strict order, even while the ship broke in two and the funnel and mainmast crashed to the deck. Of those on board, 455 lost their lives, including Seton and Salmond, in the tragedy.

Source: *Book of Facts*, Reader's Digest (Aust.) Pty. Ltd., 1994

## Eternal Father

(A Prayer for Sailors)

Eternal Father, strong to save  
Whose arm has bound the restless wave  
who bid'st the mighty ocean deep  
its own appointed limits keep  
Oh hear us when we cry to thee  
For those in peril on the sea  
O Christ, whose voice the waters heard  
And hushed their raging at Thy word  
who walkedst on the foaming deep  
And calm amidst the storm didst keep  
oh hear us when we cry to thee  
For those in peril on the sea  
O Trinity of love and power  
Our brethren shield in danger's hour  
From rock and tempest, fire and foe  
Protect them whereso'er they go  
Thus evermore shall rise to thee  
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea

## Poem

by Ron Wylie,  
Australian Merchant Seaman  
Date unknown

They need no dirge, for time and tide,  
fills all things, with tribute unto them.  
The warmth of a summer sun,  
the calm of a quiet sea,  
the comforting arm of night,  
the generous soul of nature,  
and the power of a seabird's flight.  
Blow golden trumpets blow,  
mournfully for all the golden youth,  
and shattered dreams that lie,  
where God has lain his quiet dead,  
for all the world to see,  
upon some alien ocean bed.

## Subscription Increase

As reported in the December 2009 issue of *The Voice*, subscription fees will rise in January 2011 from \$20 to \$25 for members, and from \$10 to \$15 for associates. This is the first increase in years and was brought about by rising postage and production costs. The Renewal Form will appear in the December issue of *The Voice*.

## Farewells

**Francis (Tony) Brennan**,  
3400706, 3RAR, on 14th  
September.

**Burne Brooker, (Rev.)**  
SX700069, RAA Chaplains  
Department, on 5th Sept.

**Henry Thomas de Jersey**,  
6400001, 3RAR, in mid-Aug.

**Stanley Johns**, 3400189,  
3RAR, on 23rd August.

**Wesley V. Richards**, 6871,  
3RAR, on 28th Sept.

**Eric D. Rose**, 23922,  
R.A.O.C., on 4th Sept.

**Graham Rutledge**,  
R37560, HMAS Anzac, in  
early August.

**William Sharpe**, 5400020,  
3RAR, on 30th August.

**Jeff Towart**, 2/7278,  
3RAR, on 31st July.  
(see Page 5 for details)

**Richard Peek**, V. Admiral,  
KBE, CB, DSc, RAN  
(retired) in mid Sept.  
During the Korean War,  
Commander 1st Frigate  
Squadron and HMAS  
Shoalhaven in 1951, and  
later the HMAS Bataan  
and Tobruk.

**Thomas (Dick) Whitton**,  
18068, 3RAR, on 28 Sept.

## The Ode

They shall grow not old,  
As we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them,  
Nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun,  
and in the morning  
We will remember them.  
LEST WE FORGET

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