

Quarterly Newsletter

# ⚓ The Australian Association for Maritime History

Publisher of *The Great Circle*

Special: Eightieth edition for octogenarians

## Message from the AAMH President

Greetings to all members of AAMH. Wonderful news about *The Great Circle*. Members should have recently received Vol. 20 No. 2 as well as the new look Vol. 22 No. 1. Congratulations to Professor Ken McPherson on his first edition. This means that for the first time in more than three years AAMH is up-to-date with the publishing of our flagship journal. If for any reason you don't have all of your recent copies of *The Great Circle* please contact the Secretary Terry Arnott and we will forward the missing copies to you. Contact :Terry Arnott, AAMH Secretary, c/o Heritage SA, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide, SA, 5001 or [tarnott@deh.sa.gov.au](mailto:tarnott@deh.sa.gov.au)

All AAMH members in South Australia should write 29 November 2000 into their diaries as that will be the date that Professor Lewis (Skip) Fisher will be giving the annual **Vaughan Evans Memorial Lecture**. It will be at 7pm at St Mark's College, 46 Pennington Terrace, North Adelaide. The title is *Oceanic history – a comparison of the Pacific and the Atlantic*. It will be preceded by drinks and nibbles from 5.30pm. Professor Fischer is Professor of Maritime History at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He is editor-in-chief of *The International Journal of Maritime History*, editor of *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*, and series editor of *Research in Maritime History*. A specialist on nineteenth century merchant shipping, he is the author of more than 200 books, articles and chapters on maritime topics. For AAMH members in NSW Professor Fischer will also be giving a paper at the joint AAMH/EHSANZ (Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand) conference in Wollongong during the first week in December.

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Australian Association for Maritime History will be held at 3pm on Wednesday 22 November at the Heritage SA offices on the 8th Floor of Chesser House, 91-97 Grenfell Street, Adelaide. Nominations can be put for all Executive Committee positions: President, Secretary, Treasurer, *Newsletter* Editor, *Great Circle* Editor and State representatives. For information on these matters contact the current President. Copies of the AAMH Constitution are also available on request.

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## Global Mariner goes down

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) ship *Global Mariner* is reported to have sunk after being involved in a collision on 2 August in Venezuela. It was carrying a cargo of steel and struck an anchored ship as it was leaving port. *Global Mariner* was on a tour of the world exposing the malpractices of shipping companies sailing "ships of shame" under flags of convenience. *Global Mariner* visited several Australian ports last year. The ITF is a grouping of around 530 transport sector unions from about 130 countries. It represents over 5 million workers.



## Ship lovers' delight

Wooden boat builders might drool at the thought of having one of these in their backyard for restoration. The converted minesweeper shown in the photo is reportedly the largest private "yacht" in the southern hemisphere. Weighing in at 377 tonnes the 41.5 metre vessel was built in the US in 1954. Eventually it found its way into the ownership of colourful Prince Jah, the eighth Nizam of Hyderabad who, owing a agricultural property in Western

Australia at Kalbarri, brought it to WA and renamed it *Kalbarri*. In the heydays of the America's Cup races at Fremantle it was a familiar sight at a customised pen of the Fremantle Sailing Club, but it rarely moved over several years. Some controversy took place at the time because there was an Indian crew living on board, ostensibly doing restoration work inside. Reportedly Prince Ja spent between two and three million dollars on refurbishment. He also ran up an unpaid bill of \$90,000 for slipway repairs, which brought about a change in ownership seven years ago.



Having a spruce up at Freo - 2000

Photo: P. Weaver

Renamed *Pax*, the vessel is now owned by Australian Mr Jay Harman who says he is converting the boat to

an ocean research vessel. Harman was once financier for the so called "Orange People," the religious sect associated with the late Bhagwan Shree Ranjeesh in the mid 1980s. Harman filed for personal bankruptcy in 1990. Now he works on business interests in the US and periodically returns to Fremantle to work on *Pax*. Apparently the wooden minesweeper had two companions of the same design, one fell into the ownership of the late Jacques Cousteau (guess that vessel's name) and the other to the late John Wayne.

## Swanning about in Scandinavia - a member's report

During a recent trip to Scandinavia I was fortunate enough to visit a number of maritime museums and related organisations that AAMH members may find worth visiting either personally, or virtually through internet websites.

**The Royal Danish Naval Museum** (Orlogsmuseet) is housed in the hospital wing of the Sokvaesthuset (built 1780) alongside the Christianshavns canal in central Copenhagen and is highly recommended even for those who might normally have little interest in Naval museums. Restoration of the 200-year-old building and the current exhibitions were funded by a Danish philanthropic Foundation and opened in 1989.

A central feature of the displays is a wonderful collection of 17th and 18th century models of Royal Danish Naval vessels, shore facilities, equipment and dockyards. One of the highlights is a marvellous 1:36 scale cut-away model of the 1752 ship-of-the-line *Dronning Juliane Maria* showing the internal arrangements and the 3 upper decks. Another highlight were the models of the two principal Danish Naval dockyards in Copenhagen at Holmen and Nyholm. Sensors illuminate the relevant part of the model and initiate a commentary. There are also a series of excellent drawings, paintings and models of stern decorations and figureheads as well as the more common nautical instruments, maritime art, weapons and uniforms.

One of the exhibition cases is devoted to the excavation of the ship of the line *Danneborg* that sank in 1710 at the battle of Koge in the south of Denmark, during one of the numerous wars between Denmark and Sweden. Between 1985 and the present day the RDN Museum and amateur divers have excavated the site. Unfortunately the site is in poor condition as a result of damage caused when the vessel exploded and sank. As well, salvage of many of the bronze guns by diving bell took place shortly after the vessel sank and the partial demolition of the hull structure was initiated in 1873 by the salvage company Suitzer. The Royal Danish Naval Museum is open year-round daily except Monday but has restricted opening hours (12 to 4 pm). The website can be found at <http://www.kulturnet.dk/homes/orlm/>

The **Danish Maritime Museum** is located in the spectacular Kronborg Castle in Helsingor (Elsinore) a two-hour train ride from Copenhagen. This spectacular ancient castle was the setting for Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and is certainly worth seeing. This museum contains a fairly standard selection of maritime artefacts, paintings, figureheads and ship models and is only for the really dedicated maritime museum visitor. Fortunately it has some good English labels and a very good collection of ship portraits with excellent interpretation. As a museum it really needs a major revamp but appears to lack the funding to do so. The website is a very generic one and, like the museum, is not highly recommended unless you are visiting the Kronborg Castle anyway. This museum is open year-round, everyday except Monday (from 1 Oct to 30 April) and has restricted opening hours during the winter. The website is <http://www.kulturnet.dk/homes/hsmk/>

Located at Roskilde (an hour by train from Copenhagen) the **Viking Ship Museum** (opened in 1969) displays the five 11th century Viking ships excavated at Skuldelev near Roskilde between 1957 and 1962. Each of the vessels is quite different which makes their display as a group extremely interesting. Skuldelev 1 was an ocean-going trading vessel (16.5 m overall) built in Western Norway of deal, oak and lime. Skuldelev 2 (14 m overall) was built of oak probably in Roskilde. What was originally thought to be two different vessels turned out to be a single longship (Skuldelev 2-4) of approximately 30 m in length built of oak in Dublin, Ireland. A second smaller (17.5 m overall) warship (Skuldelev 5) was built in Roskilde of oak, ash and deal. Finally Skuldelev 6 was a small (12 m overall) cargo boat built in the Baltic area of deal and birch that may have been used in the herring fishing industry. In addition to the ships themselves which are pretty spectacular, there are displays on the Vikings, displays for children and a program of changing exhibitions.

Interpretation is good throughout with signage and labels in English, German and French as well as Danish. The Museum is also the home of the National Museum's archaeological workshop for waterlogged-wood and has an on-going conservation program of timbers from the Viking ships and other archaeological sites. Since 1982 the museum has established an active program of building replica Viking ships and other more recent period Scandinavian wooden boats. During the summer months it is possible to sail on board one of the replicas. There is a great bookshop with lots of hard-to-get specialist books. This is a very impressive museum and is highly recommended. It is open year-round everyday but has restricted opening hours and a reduced entrance fee during the winter (from 1 Oct to 30 April). Website: <http://www.vikinger.dk/english/roskilde.html>



The Viking ship museum at Roskilde

Another **Viking Ship Museum**, a branch of the University Museum of Cultural Heritage, is located at Bygdoy, a suburb of Oslo, Norway and like its namesake in Roskilde is highly recommended. The museum displays the remains from the Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune ship burials. The cruciform-shaped building was built during the 1920s and has an austere white-painted interior and vaulted ceilings. The Gokstad ship (excavated in 1880) and the Oseberg ship (excavated in 1904) are particularly impressive. **Mark Staniforth**, Adelaide.

### **Tassie next summer - perfect for wooden boats**

The Australian Wooden Boat Festival will run over three days 10,11,12 February in Hobart next year. The organisers have a website at [www.awoodboatfest.com](http://www.awoodboatfest.com) with all the details. Alternatively phone them on +61 3 6231 6407 or fax on +61 3 6231 6408.

### **Vaughan Evans Library for maritime researchers**

The Vaughan Evans Library at the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) in Sydney was established from the bequested collection of the late Vaughan Evans (1924-1993). Mr Evans was a founder of the Australian Association for Maritime History and its longest serving newsletter editor. The ANMM's quarterly magazine *Signals* in its June-Aug 2000 issue carried a tribute to Mr Evans and useful description of the library's collection and services. In the burgeoning collection are at least 147 transcripts of original diaries with detailed abstracts of each available, plus good runs of various shipping registers and microfilm copies of old Australian newspapers and shipping specialties. Along with these are oral histories, navy lists and *Lloyd's Captains' Register*, plus innumerable other researchers' delights. There are plans to have the library catalogue on the ANMM website, which is good news. Currently the holdings can be reviewed in most public libraries via the national bibliographic data-base *Kinetica*. The library is accessible by appointment Mon-Fri 10am to 4pm (No weekends or public hols.) The librarian is Frances Prentice; ph 02 9298 3734.

### **SA to sink HMAS *Hobart***

The Minister for Defence, John Moore announced mid-June that the guided missile destroyer HMAS *Hobart*, has been gifted to the SA government for use as a dive hulk. Mr Moore said in a press release that this is the first gift of this type to SA and it was expected to boost to the local tourism industry. *Hobart* is a Charles F. Adams class destroyer which saw 35 years' service in the RAN since commissioning on the 18 December 1965. It completed three tours of duty with US forces during the Vietnam War, coming under fire while serving as a unit of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet. Currently, weapons and fittings are being removed in Sydney for use on other ships. A clean-up of on-board pollutants is also taking place. The ship will be scuttled off Fleurieu Peninsula, south-east of Adelaide. The former destroyer-escort *Swan*, gifted to the Western Australia in 1997 has been dived on by an estimated 14,000 Australian and overseas divers, generating a reported \$5.2 million in earnings.

### **Outdated navy aircraft retired**

June 24 saw the decommissioning of two HS748 fixed-wing turbo-prop aircraft from the RAN's base at HMAS Albatross NSW. Mooted as the last fixed wing aircraft in the navy they had been in service since 1973. The aircraft were used for support in other navy activities and navigation training, interspersed with the carrying of freight and passengers. Reportedly they clocked up a combined total of about 24,000 hours airtime with 851 then 723 Squadrons, which averages out at 8.5 hours per week over the 27 years. Following decommissioning the aircraft were placed in the care of the RAAF at East Sale, Vic. The navy is pushing for replacements but as to when or if this will happen is uncertain (A.23/6/2000:28).

## Memories of an Early Australian shipbuilder - and poor Mrs Cheslin

Last year a family picnic was held in the grounds of the 1817 church at Ebenezer on the Cattai Creek NSW to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the arrival in the colony of Captain John Grono, settler, shipbuilder, farmer, sealer and whaler.

Captain Grono, Elizabeth his wife, and two daughters came as passengers on board the *Buffalo*, arriving in NSW in May 1799. As a capitalist Grono took up land along the Hawkesbury River where he and Elizabeth were to be neighbours and close friends of Governor Bligh and his family.<sup>1</sup>

The good Captain's seafaring talents were soon put to use for the benefit of the local (and his own) economy as he embarked on a career as shipbuilder, whaler and sealer. His whaling and sealing exploits were undertaken in the boats he had built, vessels such as the *Governor Bligh* and the *Elizabeth*.<sup>2</sup>

Whaling and sealing took Grono and his crew far into southern waters and the catch was immense, with thousands of seal skins being the harvest. He also captured other mammals. On one trip he found two mariners marooned on a deserted island. Convinced they were escaped convicts, and despite their protests, he returned them to the mainland in chains. Finding then that they were indeed respectable citizens and not convicts after all, he was overcome with remorse, so one supposes, as he gave them employment on his property and married one of them, Alexander Books, to his daughter.<sup>3</sup>

Back from seafaring Grono and his son William built and launched a new punt in 1828. It replaced the old one used for crossing the Hawkesbury from Pitt Town to Wilberforce. In 1829 they launched another vessel, *Bennalong*, which, at 272 tons was larger than any other ship built on the Hawkesbury by 100 tons. It was two years in the making. A few months after the launching "it was renamed the *Australian* since all materials were of local origin."<sup>4</sup>

It is due to William Grono that the methods and materials for this local shipbuilding industry are known. Covering the years 1865-1867 he meticulously recorded in a diary every particular of the construction of his vessel the *Esther Maria*.<sup>5</sup> Formal education in the Hawkesbury River towns when William was a child may have been unavailable, or little considered, or laxly provided, because the diary entries are written phonetically.

Ship building took its place beside William's farming duties and among important local events. On October 1, 1865, for example, he records "This day very hot. We went up sawyers [indecipherable] and got two peces to make forward timbres and Mr McPhee came and christened Mrs Taverty's little boy Ernest." On the 2nd November "we were fitin a frame in the wesel. Corn has got a rise to 4/6 and likely to go higher."

Along the Hawkesbury life must have resembled that in pre-industrial England. William employed two carpenters, Bob and Tom, who obviously observed in rural English fashion Saint Monday. When paid on Friday they would inevitably be absent from work on Monday, and according to William the reason was because "they were Away in Windsor, or Pittown or at Morisey's, drinkin."

Nevertheless they worked hard when not away "drinkin" and alongside William and various family members they finished the *Esther Maria*. When the day came to send her down the slipway the event would have resembled the launching of the *Bennalong*. That, according to the *Sydney Gazette*, took place "amidst an assemblage of all the rank, youth and beauty of the surrounding districts." A real barbeque seems to have been planned for *Esther Maria*'s great occasion. On the day before, William wrote, "Alex and Bob went to Windsor to get things for the lanch. They got a shepe and they payed A Gine for it." Meanwhile at the slipway, "John and William [Grono] were digin under the wesel."

Launching day dawned very hot. William wrote: "We were digin Away under Neath the Wesel and at 1 o'clock we lanchd." He added, "Mrs Cheslin Was comm to see her Lanchd and she droped down ded in Mr Halles padocke." The story must have passed into folklore, for oral history sources repeat the story, describing Mrs Cheslin as an extremely obese lady who had a fatal heart attack when squeezing under the fence.<sup>6</sup> William does not say whether or not the appalling calamity put paid to the festivities. The *Esther Maria* went on to spend her working life plying up and down the east coast as a cargo ship.

Thankfully there were no fatalities in any of the paddocks at the Grono family reunion last year. The achievements of John Grono and other colonists who were related to him, many of them convicts, were most pleasantly celebrated on that occasion and deservedly so. **Patricia Brown** - Crawley, WA

Sources: 1. Lorna Brine, research notes; 2. Forster, Ian. (1994). *Two Hawkesbury Pioneers: The Story of Daniel Smallwood and Edward Weaver*, Ian Forster. p.151; 3. Grono archive, Mitchell Library; 4. Forster p.147. 5. Mitchell Library ms 3369; 6. Edith Brown - grand daughter of J. Grono.

## Update on der *Greifswald*

As usual I was delighted to receive my copy of the *Newsletter*. It is always full of interesting, and often stimulating, snippets of information and I try to read it soon after it arrives. The June issue which arrived this morning did not disappoint me and I am happy to respond to the query by Dr Brown about the *Greifswald*. The following quote from the Australian Official War History summarises its wartime experience:

*Carina*. Formerly the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamer *Greifswald* of Bremen, captured at Fremantle on the 6th of August, 1914. After being employed by the Navy Department as a cargo carrier (first known as the *C10* and later as the

*Carina*), she was in April, 1918, transferred to the Commonwealth Government Line.

Early in 1915 she left Australia for Italy and the United Kingdom with a cargo consisting mainly of wool and concentrates. German authorities in neutral ports were always on the watch for any vessels which had been captured from Germany, and it was known that, if the opportunity arose, efforts would be made to seize them, or else to prevent them from obtaining supplies or using docks. Upon the *Carina* reaching Genoa before Italy had entered the war, the local marine superintendent of the Norddeutscher Lloyd Company recognised her at once, and boarded the ship to seek information as to where she had come from and her destination. His efforts at interference were, however, fruitless.

Reaching London on the 11th of May, she transshipped her Liverpool cargo into the *Calulu* and proceeded to Middlesbrough for 6,705 tons of rails for the Australian transcontinental railway. Upon arrival in Australia she loaded wheat for the neutral Port of Barcelona, but the Admiralty, believing that attempts would again be made to interfere with her, diverted her to Le Havre, which she reached on the 23rd of April. In the following month she discharged at Cherbourg 1,400 tons of wheat and flour which she had transshipped from the Wiltshire in London, and, this done, she next sailed for Australia on the 24th of June, taking a cargo of coal from Cardiff (where she suffered a slight collision) to Port Said. While proceeding through the Strait of Gibraltar she struck a submerged object about seven miles west of Tarifa Point and began to leak badly. This accident necessitated her spending nearly three weeks in Gibraltar while repairs were effected, and it was mid-September before she reached Australia. After arrival, she was for some time engaged in the coastal trade (*Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol. IX, The Royal Australian Navy, pp.514-5).

Post-war the ship was employed by the Commonwealth Line, which was owned by the Australian Government. The ship was sold in 1926 for £25,330 which was £4,170 less than her book value of £29, 500. I would just like to add that Norddeutscher Lloyd service to Australia was both a cargo and passenger service. Like many lines of those days the steamers carried some passengers but also considerable cargo and it would not be correct to describe the *Greifswald* as a passenger steamer. **Stan Evans** - Mt Waverly, Victoria.

## Captain Leslie Howall - Merchant Navy

Not too many people alive today can say their dad was alive through the time American Civil War but sprightly ninety four year old retired Merchant Navy Captain Leslie Frank Howall can. Sprightliness must run in the family genes because his dad was born in 1837.

Les was born in Sussex in March 1912. His older brothers went to sea in WW1., one with the Royal Marines, and the other, Arthur Howell who was serving as a "bunting tosser" (PO Signals) on HMAS *Sydney 1* when it sank the *Emden*. Les said his brother souvenired a telescope from one of the *Emden* officers and this was proudly shown to all the family after the war. Arthur had lost half an ear in the conflict, but Les said formality imposed by his mother forbade him to broach the subject with his brother.

Les went to sea in 1929 as a cadet on New Zealand Shipping Line's *Devon*. As was the way in those times, on his first day he was informed that he was "the lowest form of life" on the ship and told to get aft. Later, in about 1931 he was on NZL's *Northumberland* anchored Napier (NZ) and a huge earthquake wiped out the adjacent town. His cadetship led him to his Second Mate's Certificate which enabled him to get a position as fourth officer with the British India Steam Navigation Company (BI). Through time he acquired his Mate's and Master's Certificates, but command was not to come his way until after the war.

Les served on Shell oil tankers though WW2 and considered them "nasty old things" for their propensity to rapidly succumb under concerted attack. He reminds us that one in four allied merchant seamen perished during the war. Les attributes his survival in the Battle of the Atlantic to being on a MAC ship, a Merchant Aircraft Carrier *Acavus* which was an oil tanker converted with a landing platform for Fairy Swordfish aircraft to protected the convoys. Other MAC ships were *Empire*, *MacMahon*, *Rapana* and *Adula*. He says the deck conversion sacrificed about 800 tons of oil but was well worthwhile. All the ships he was on mainly carried refined fuels. In 1941 he was in Curacao in the Dutch West Indies on *Diplodon* waiting to go to the Arctic when Pearl Harbour was bombed. They were immediately diverted with a load of "white spirit" to the Pacific via Panama, which Les thought was very nice because of the lack of German submarines in that region. They met up with a task force headed for the Coral Sea and in later trips took petrol to Sydney and New Zealand. Back in the European theatre he particularly recalled taking a load of "tank petrol" on *Diplodon* to Bari, an area considered "behind the lines" in Italy, to meet the rapidly advancing Eighth Army from the south. Les spent three years on this ship without leave. While these things were happening his first wife was killed during a German air raid on London.

Following WW2 Les remained in the Merchant Navy and started to spend more time operating from Australia. He took his first command on another tanker *Diloma*, and also had a couple of short relief commands on other vessels. Les rounded Cape Horn twice in his career, on *Devon* and on *Diloma*. He served as executive officer on the 1950 maiden



Captain Les Howell in 2000  
Photo: P. Weaver



voyage of Shell's *Velutina*, the world's first supertanker of more than 28,000 d.w.t. With Shell, amongst several senior positions, he became Marine Superintendent of the Eastern Fleet overseeing about 40 tankers. He spent the latter years of his working life as a Singapore advisor in association with Petronis, the national oil company of Malaysia. Retirement eventually came at 73 and now at 94 he lives with his second wife Bernice, just around the corner from Anchorage Way in Clarkson, a suburb north of Perth. There are six adult children sharing the Howells' senior years.

During his retirement Les has become interested in historical cartography, particularly relating to the interpretation of a *Terra Australis* map, *Quinta Pars Orbis* in the Vatican Archives and separately, the voyages of the 15th century Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho. A man with a flair for calligraphy, Les delights in creating his own illuminated maps based upon these subjects. He is a long-time member of the AAMH.

**Paul Weaver** - Palmyra, WA.



Chief Officer Les Howell on maiden voyage of *Velutina* in 1950  
(Centre, second from left.) Photo: Shell Oil

## Vivian Bullwinkel dies

Nursing Sister Vivian Statham (nee Bullwinkel) died on 3 July, a few days after a leg operation in a Perth hospital. Readers will recall she was the sole survivor of the WW2 *Vyner Brooke* massacre of Australian nurses carried out by Japanese soldiers from Radji beach on Banka Island, Sumatra. In spite of gunshot wounds Sister Bullwinkel survived with the assistance of an allied soldier and local villagers, and was later interned as a POW in prison camps on Bangka Island, Palembang and Lubuklinggau. Following the war she was a witness at the Tokyo war crime trials. A woman of compassion, she continued with humanitarian work, including the evacuation of Vietnamese children in the 1970s. She was a recipient of the order of Australia, an MBE and the Florence Nightingale Medal. She was accorded a State Funeral on Monday 10 June, with a packed attendance of mourners at St George's Cathedral, Perth.



At the Tokyo trials

## Defence Review 2000 - a 15 year plan

A Community Consultation Team has been moving around Australia during July and August consulting the Australian community about defence priorities. They will report their findings to the Government in a white paper, optimistically expected at the end of September 2000. The panel members comprised Andrew Peacock (leader), David MacGibbon (deputy leader), Stephen Loosely and Maj. Gen. (ret.) Adrian Clunies-Ross.

The last defence review was conducted in the mid 1980's, and the last Defence white paper in 1994. The 2000 effort is to contribute towards defence projections covering the next 15 years.

The community consultation process is seen as a means of testing community attitudes. The main recommendations for the white paper will still come from within the Department of Defence. The website is at <http://whitepaper.defence.gov.au/> As with all internet sites, Maritime historians with an interest in such things are recommended to download the various documents on offer before they melt.

## Conference news

The Royal Services Institute is running an exotic list of the western world's male military leaders as speakers at a triennial seminar, *Seeking Affordable Defence in the 21st Century*, to be held in Canberra 16-17 November 2000. \$250 will get you the door to hear first-hand what is on their wish-list. The contact is RSI national secretary Mr Leo Mahony. Ph: 0111 61 2 6266 2866 Email: [rusiaust@dao.defence.gov.au](mailto:rusiaust@dao.defence.gov.au)

The Society for Nautical Research is calling for papers for a conference *British Ships in China Seas* to be held at Liverpool UK., 18-22 September 2002. Papers may cover any historical period, and be on any shipping related subject which links to the conference title. The conference will be run in association with the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool. Contact is Capt. Roger H. Parry. Fax +44 151 709 5928. Email: [rogerhparry@compuserve.com](mailto:rogerhparry@compuserve.com)

The International Economic History Association is having its 13th congress in Buenos Aires, 22-26 July 2002. It is billed as being of interest to maritime historians. The Website is located at <http://www.eh.net/XIIICongress>

## Great Circle - great look. great feel

By now AAMH members should have received their “new look” copy of our flagship journal *The Great Circle*. Vol. 22 No 1 was mailed out mid-July. A fresh new look and feel for the new century from our new editor Professor Ken McPherson at Curtin University of Technology, WA. The next issue of *The Great Circle* appears in December.

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## Bun fight at Freo

For many months there has been an big row going on between the Fremantle City Council and the Fremantle Port Authority over plans by the latter to demolish two sets of wheat silos. The Council led by its Mayor wants to keep the structures and convert them to offices, accommodation and other community uses. It is said they were built to last a thousand years. Similar structures overseas have undergone such revitalisation with spectacular success. Steel beams are easily installed for flooring, and cutting apertures for windows and doorways is simplicity itself with modern diamond saw technology. On the other hand the Port Authority wants to demolish them and use the space they stand on for storing shipping containers. The Council has had a lot of support from the community and heritage organisations, but after a series of court battle it looks like the container lovers have won. The smaller cluster at the centre of the photograph had a secret communications station on top of it during WW2. In recent years the SAS have used the structure for climbing exercises. They are now going to spend \$4 million dollars on a new climbing facility at nearby Swanbourne SAS Camp, overlooking the nudist beach.

Demolition has begun on these and larger, more recent cylindrical structures which are to the right and not visible. From the time it is taking, the contractors appear to having a tough time of it. The silos do seem to have been built to last.



Fremantle grain silos built in 1943 - doomed

Photo: P. Weaver

## Fiji - an overview

If nothing else since May 19 the most recent Fiji-coup organiser George Speight has caused a closer look at what should be a Pacific island paradise.

Fiji comprises 332 islands of which approximately 110 are inhabited, some seasonally. The three largest islands are Viti Levu (10,429 sq.km), Vanua Levu, (5,556 sq. km) and Rotuma (47 sq.km) The total population in 1999 was an estimated 812,918 persons. The makeup approximately comprising, native Fijian 51%; Indian 44%; Europeans, other Pacific Islanders, overseas Chinese and others 5%. 66% of the population live a rural lifestyle. Fiji has 203 km of inland waterways of which 122 km are navigable by motorised craft and 200-metric-ton barges. The naval division of the armed forces consist of four Israeli-built fast inshore patrol craft and five assorted naval vessels. Naval personnel in 1997 numbered 275. The Fiji Coat of Arms shown right has the images of two bare-footed warriors on either side of a shield and the motto *Rerevaka na Kalou ka Doka na Tui* which translates to, “*Fear God and honour the Queen.*” The heraldic shield has a British lion holding a cocoa pod. Sugarcane, a coconut palm and bunch of bananas are also represented on the shield, as is a missionary-inspired dove of peace, which was the main feature of the Chief Cakobau Government's flag before secession in 1874. A traditional Fijian sailing craft signifies the ongoing important maritime status of the nation.

The first islanders are believed to have arrived about 3,600 years ago. Polynesian legend has it that they were led by Chief Lutunasobasoba and made their landfall on Viti Lavu just north of the present Nadi (Nan-dee) airport, at Vuda (Vunda) Point.

The archeological picture is not so clear because there have been many waves of different seafaring people over this time. The first voyagers may have been Melanesian, either from Vanuatu or the Solomon



Islands. “Lapita” peoples also left their mark well prior to Polynesians, and shards of their distinctive pottery are found on many islands in the region.

On the island of Vatulele there are also galleries of prehistoric petroglyphs thought to predate Polynesians.

The language spoken today by native Fijians belongs to a widely scattered language group known as Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian, which spans west to Madagascar, east to Easter Island (Rapanui), and north to Hawaii.

Abel Tasman is credited with being the first European to sail amongst the islands of Fiji in 1643 but he apparently avoided going ashore because he had a perception that the inhabitants possessed an ethnocentric view of the world and a predilection for taste-testing foreign visitors.

In 1774 Captain Cook was also in the region but also chose not to seek a landing. Three years later in Tonga he confirmed with some Fijians there that their countrymen were indeed ferocious warriors who preferred domination to subjection when it came to intercultural affairs. Cook wrote a descriptive warning to Captain Bligh who was then on *Resolution*. “Feejee and Tongataboo engage in war against each other; and the inhabitants of the latter are often so much afraid of his enemy that they bend the body forward and cover the face with the hands, to express the sense of their own inferiority to the Feejee men...” In Fiji waters in 1789

after the *Bounty* mutiny, Bligh probably remembered the warning as he and his party narrowly escaped when their longboat was chased by two war canoes. However, in 1792 he returned to Fiji better equipped on HMS *Providence*.

In 1800 the Fijians had no defence against cholera which arrived on board the American Schooner *Argo* when it ran aground on Bukatatanoa Reef, near Lakeba. The Fijian sandalwood trade had its beginnings at about this time and a variety of ships and entrepreneurs began arriving to exploit what they could. In addition the islanders were developing a taste for firearms which were traded by foreigners for beche-de-mer. This trade encouraged intensification of inter-tribal wars. Island harmony could hardly have been helped in 1804 with the arrival of 24 escaped convicts from NSW who took up residence on Rewa and Bau.

In 1840 the United States Exploring Expedition under Commander Charles Wilkes spent several months charting the Fijian island group. Islander domestic politics continued to be violent. For example the 1843 Siege of Suva, started from a dispute over a pig and resulted in the deaths of more than 400 people. Reportedly after an initial attack from Rewa islanders, the people of Suva had gone there and presented *na i soro*, a peace initiative. The Rewans accepted the offer, but a lesser chieftain Kovelevu broke the armistice when he clubbed a Suva woman down before her husband. The following year in 1844 Catholic missionaries established themselves at Lakeba, but overall the Methodists proved to be more successful throughout the Islands.

In 1845 an 11 year war started amongst the islanders when the Roko Tui Dreketi, Banuve, was invited aboard Cakobau's canoe, *Ra Marama* to formally accept Cakobau's offer of peace, but Cakobau split his head with a battle axe as soon as he came on board.

1855 was marked by the Battle of Kaba, as Cakobau, who hailed from the tiny island of Bau, aided by King George of Tonga, swept through the Kaba promontory killing 200 defenders and capturing a further 200, whom Cakobau eventually pardoned in a religious gesture. Bau is a tiny island off the southeast coast of Viti Levu.

Not so fortunate was Ratu Mara captured later at Levuka and taken to Bau where he was hanged. Before the hanging he was approached by a village elder to pronounce the birth of a son, whom he named Madrai-wiwi (sour bread) saying his life had turned sour because Ratu Mara was to die. The child Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi was to become the father of Ratu Sir Joseva Lalabalavu Vanaaliali Sukuna, whom is considered the father of modern Fiji.

In 1864 blackbirders arrived in the islands bringing New Hebrides and Solomon Island labourers to work cotton plantations.

A confederacy of native kingdoms was mooted in 1865 and Fiji's first constitution was drawn up and signed by seven independent chiefs of Fiji, representing the states of Bau, Lakeba, Rewa, Bua, Cakaudrove, Macuata and Naduri, each to form part of the General Assembly. Cakobau was elected president for two years in a row, and when Ma'afu sought the seat in the third year, the Fijian chiefs refused to be governed by a Tongan and withdrew causing the confederacy to collapse. Two years later in 1867 Ma'afu created the "Confederation of North and East Fiji" (Na Tovata ko Natokalau kei Viti), consisting of Lau, Cakaudrove and Bua. Ma'afu managed to assume chairmanship later, as Tui Lau.

In 1869 *The Fiji Times* began publication from an office in Levuka

The Levuka Charter was ratified in 1870 by Seru Cakobau, giving the settlers the authority to establish and police municipal regulations. However, the Charter was vetoed by the Governor of New South Wales.

Setting his own agenda, Cakobou auctioned the villagers of Lovoni as slaves in early 1871. Then in June of that year he

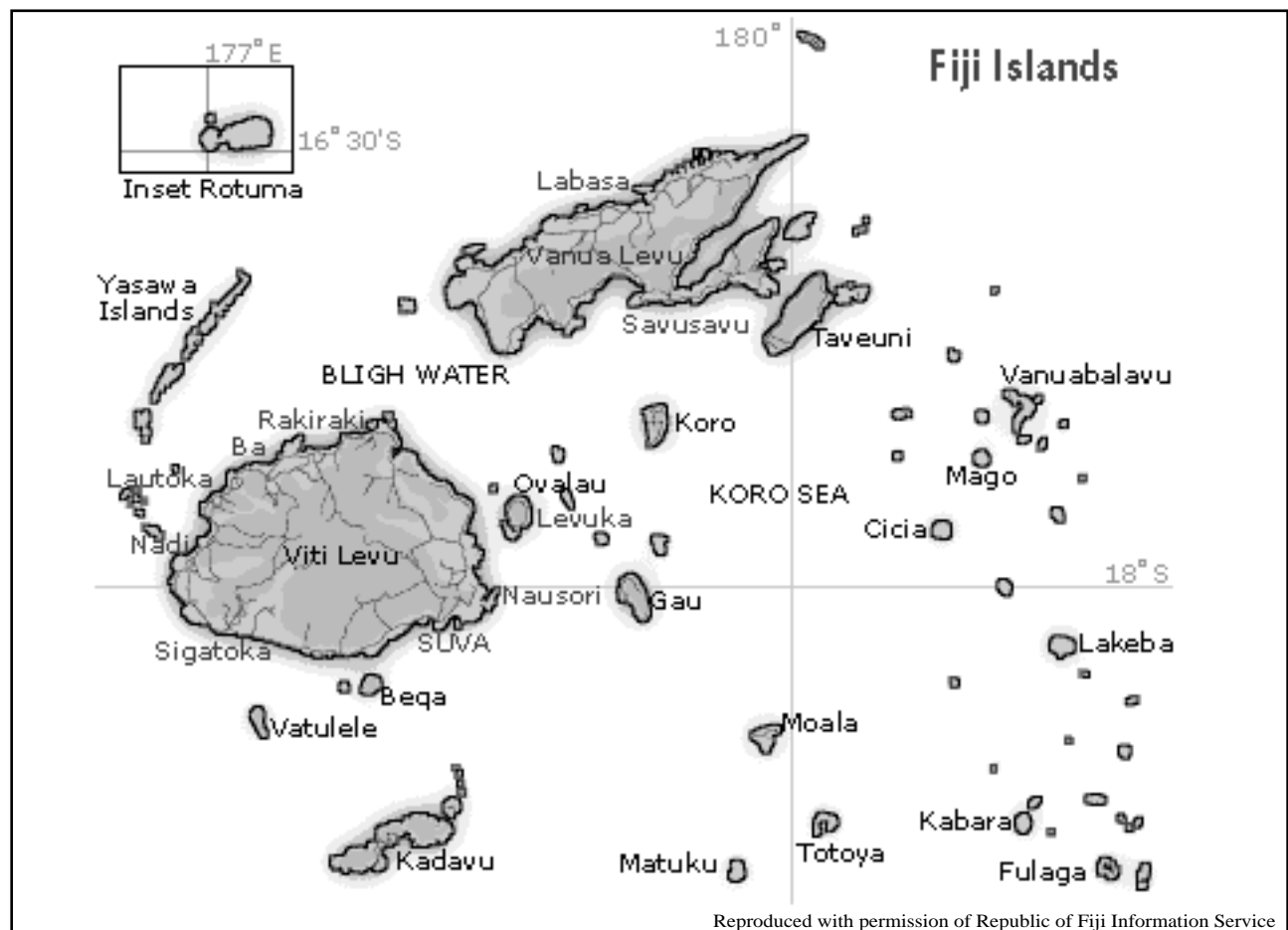


Collection: P. Weaver

19th Century Fijians



announced the formation of a government, complete with Ministers. Ma'afu who had earlier created his own confederation arrived in Levuka a month later and swore allegiance to Cakobau, in turn receiving an annual salary of 800 pounds, the title of Lieutenant Governor of Lau and ownership of Moala, Matuku and Totoya (Yasayasa Moala). The first sitting of the House of Representatives took place on August 1, 1871 and reportedly was predominantly a white affair, however they managed to establish a postal service, currency, bank regulations and a land commission. In 1872 the Ku Klux Klan was formed to oppose the Cakobau government but Britain intervened and sent HMS *Cossack* in under Captain Douglas in support of Cakobau. However fighting between various tribal groups from Bulu, Nasau, Nanukunuku, Savanunu, Nasautabu, Cubu, Magodro, Nubutautau, Qaliyalatina and Naloto continued to the extent that Cakobau dissolved the Assembly



In September 1874 there was a resolution to give Fiji to Queen Victoria, an act completed by the first Great Council of Chiefs on October 10. Ratu Cakobau and his two sons visited Australia in 1875, where it is believed they contracted measles. On their return an epidemic swept through the islands killing an estimated 40,000 people. Fiji's first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon arrived from Australia on 28th October 1876 and issued a proclamation pardoning all hill tribes, bringing to an end all the wars in Viti Levu. The following year approval was given Fiji's capital to move from Levuka to Suva.

May 14, 1879 marked the arrival of the ship *Leonidas* in Levuka, carrying the first group of indentured labourers from Calcutta. Another 87 shiploads of Indians in various vessels were to follow over the next five years. These people became economically important to Fiji, particularly in relation to sugar and cattle farming.

As a member of the British Empire, in 1902 Fiji became linked to the rest of the world by the Trans-Pacific telegraph cable between America, New Zealand and Australia. In 1915 a Fijian detachment sailed to Europe on RMS *Makura* to participate in the Great War.

During the early 1920s Indians were increasingly dissatisfied with the official discrimination against them and lobbied for radical change. In 1929 they acquired the right to have elected representation in the Legislative Council.

The second world war saw recruitment of a force of 6,500 but after the war the intercultural squabbling began again, with the introduction of a residential permit system in 1947 intended to restrict immigration. Even so the political scenario remained with a colonial hangover. Fijian membership of the Legislative Council was at the prerogative of the Great Council of Chiefs and it was not until 1963 that all Fijian residents acquired franchise. This had come about as a result of a 14 Dec 1960 UN resolution condemning colonial domination as a repression of Human Rights. 1963 also saw the entry of an Indian political party as a real challenge to the status quo. The same year the Great Council of Chiefs met in Wakaya and drafted what became known as the Wakaya letter, what was to become the basic negotiating document

of Fijians in the 1960s., asserting the principles of Fijian paramountcy. In 1968 Fiji's first Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara received the instruments of Independence from HRH Prince of Wales, Prince Charles.

Ethnocentric attitudes towards Indians continued to simmer and on May 14 1987 Lt. Col. Rabuka staged a coup. A second coup took place in September which saw Fiji become a republic and cut all ties with the British Monarchy.

A new racist constitution was promulgated in 1990 giving native Fijians 37 seats, Indians 27, General voters 5 and Rotuman Islanders 1 in the Senate. The 70 seat House of Representatives was similarly stacked: 37 seats for native Fijians, 27 for Indians, and 6 for independents and others. In 1994 Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara became President and Commander in Chief.

Another constitution in 1998 made multi-party government mandatory. May 1999 marked the first time that Fiji elections were not racially prescribed. With it came a restacked parliamentary arrangement: A 32 seat Senate with 14 appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs, nine appointed by the Prime Minister, eight appointed by the leader of the opposition, and one appointed by the council of Rotuma. With the 71 seat House of Representatives 23 were reserved for native Fijians, 19 reserved for Indians, three reserved for other ethnic groups, one reserved for the Rotuman Islanders, and 25 open seats. The result of this election saw an Indian Mahendra Chaudhry elected as Prime Minister, and ultimately prompted the racially motivated coup by George Speight and his followers on 17 May.

**Paul R. Weaver**, Palmyra.

Suggested school project internet Sources: *CIA World Factbook* <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fj.html> - Republic of Fiji Information Service <http://www.fiji.gov.fj> - *Rob Kay's Fiji Guide* <http://www.fijiguide.com>

## **INTERFET CD ROM fundraiser - a must, must have**

A CD ROM featuring more than 1000 searchable images and an hour of video about the INTERFET peace expedition to East Timor has been produced to raise funds for Salesian Missions in Los Palos and Laga to help underprivileged children of East Timor. The Mac and PC compatible disk which is embossed with the flags of all the member nations of INTERFET contains an introduction by General Cosgrove. It is available for \$10 including GST, postage and handling from Australian Defence Credit Union, HMAS Stirling, Warships Mail, Western Australia. 6958. In your editor's "humble" view the performance and content of this CD is outstanding. A perfect gift for anyone.



## **Enviro boat-fest in Canberra**

A competition on Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin for Australia's most environmentally sensitive boat saw a commercially manufactured canoe with a custom-built electric outboard motor take the prize from about 40 contenders. The publicity blurb sent to the editor did not say why it was more environmentally friendly than wooden rowing boats. Present on the day was Jesse Martin, billed as the youngest yacht-person to complete a solo circumnavigation of the planet.

## **Maritime missile missal**

AAMH members would have seen many reports in the media late July 2000 about controversial plans by the USA to establish a missile range on yet another suitable piece of real estate in the NW of Western Australia. The WA Premier Mr Court was openly hostile to the proposal and said the State Government had not been consulted, and nor was he able to obtain information when the news broke. However the Leader of the Federal Opposition and PM hopeful, Kim "Bomber" Beasley jumped right in with both feet and said he had no problems. The following day, shadow-defence spokesman Laurie Brereton countered this and said the Labor Party did not approve of the plan. Neither were foreign powers particularly impressed, and China in particular viewed the news as having the potential to reinstate the nuclear arms race. The missiles involved are promoted as being surface to ship, but reportedly will be ballistic in operation. That is to say they will make a brief entry into space before dropping onto a target. As an example, the V2's used by Germany against Britain in WW2 were ballistic missiles and were later used to provide the backbone of the US rocketry program after the war.

Defence against a reentering ballistic missile is notoriously difficult. The lesson from the spectacular failure of the US Patriot system against Iraqi Scuds directed at Israel during the Gulf War has apparently not been lost on the Americans. Of course they have plenty of test ranges elsewhere in the world, but there is no doubt the range site in NW Australia has been selected because it allows for further gauging of the effectiveness of Australian designed Jindalee over-the-horizon radar facilities. The RAN which has had some involvement with the American planners



Watch out for these missiles 10

of the NW site has indicated in the media it would actually prefer a missile range on the eastern seaboard with an emphasis on low altitude delivery systems. Reportedly, tenders have already closed in the US for phase one of the NW project.

Like it or not, ballistic missiles may eventually become the ship and sub-killers of choice. If so it raises an inevitable question about the worth of Australia maintaining a large-ship/sub inventory. In the face of such vulnerability, should defence efforts start to be channelled elsewhere than to unreliable complex systems such as the Collins submarines?

The matter was unintentionally highlighted when the intrepid navy PR people arranged for an Australian *Sixty Minutes* team to go to sea on one of the Collins boats to witness a rapid test-firing of three torpedoes for a programme telecast on 31 July. With the cameras running, the computer clocks counted down to zero; then.....silence - apart from a frustrated expletive over the sub's intercom system. Akin to 2001's, "I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that." the computer system had hiccupped and cancelled the triple launching at the last instant. Aside from being yet another PR disaster the failure also served to highlight the main message that another billion, (it just rolls off the tongue doesn't it) or perhaps two billion dollars will be needed to fix the technical problems in the fleet. For those who don't have one, a billion looks like 1000,000,000 - and by any reckoning it can purchase a lot of defence alternatives.

The RAN has quite a lot of experience with airborne guided-missiles, although not of the ballistic type. Entry into guided-missile age was publicly announced in early 1959 and quickly brought home to the navy what would be ongoing difficulties of assessing the best system for maximum tactical capability under the shadow of a limited defence budget. For an overview of the navy's guided missile history, readers are directed to a January 2000 working paper (2) by Peter Jones and James Goldrick, "Struggling for a solution: The RAN and the acquisition of a surface to air missile capability," published by the Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Centre C/- HMAS Creswell, Jervis Bay 2540. Captain Goldrick is director of the Centre, and also a long-time member of the AAMH.

## Goodwill visits with a difference

A sailor from the aircraft carrier USS *Nimitz* is facing charges of murdering five Detroit women and the attempted murder of four others. He has allegedly confessed to the murder of at least eleven other women in the past at overseas and US ports. When did *Nimitz* last visit your region? (WA 17/8/2000:28)

## 1964 Navy disaster drags out

In late July a former HMAS *Melbourne* sailor living near Perth received a reported \$399,000 out-of-court settlement as compensation for post-traumatic stress following the February 10, 1964 collision with HMAS *Voyager*. He had been exposed to grisly duties in the immediate aftermath. Later, he and other crew members were allegedly ordered to go ashore and get drunk, and not to discuss matters with anyone, including family. The man claimed that as a result he suffered withdrawal from his family, a destroyed navy career, tobacco and alcohol reliance, long-term sleep-disruption and marital problems. The recent settlement was viewed as significant because the government had refused to extend a 1995 mediation scheme for *Voyager* survivors to cover *Melbourne* crew. More than 150 *Voyager* men received an average of \$350,000 each. The discrimination against *Melbourne* personnel was described as a national disgrace by the representing lawyer, who in the past has also represented more than 40 *Voyager* crew. He said that the government was planning to contest each future *Melbourne* claim rather than establish a new mediation scheme (WA 4/8/2000:3).

## SA shiplovers revolting

Passions were aroused in South Australia early July when The Adelaide Advertiser led with a page one screamer "OUR HISTORY LEFT TO ROT" The focus of all this emotion was the hull of the "world's oldest surviving clipper" *City of Adelaide* which is high and dry on a slipway at Irvine, on the Firth of Clyde, 50 km south of Glasgow. The teak and iron ship was built in 1864 and made 23 trips to South Australia over 22 years. It saw service with the RN from 1923 through WW2 as HMS *Carrick* and was said to still have been kept in immaculate condition. It was converted to become a Glasgow naval club which was pretty tough call and eventually it sank at its mooring in 1991. (Onto a bed of "dead



*City of Adelaide* heading for Adelaide with a load of British boat-people.

marines? (bottles)’’)

Reportedly the Scottish Maritime Museum started restoration in 1992, but after \$2.5 million dollars it has run out of effort and money. The canny Scots say they have tried to flog it off, but there have been no buyers. Now they say it might have to be dismantled for scrap. Predictably that made the Crow-eaters sit up, and reach for their wallets pens.

Leading the predictably popular push to bring the vessel to SA for restoration is Adelaide maritime historian Professor Rod Wells. He said the ship could be transported on the floating dockship *Condock V* which brought the *Batavia* replica to Sydney, and this would cost about \$500,000. This seems a pretty good idea because *Condock* will have to make an empty trip to Oz to collect the Dutch display next February.

The *City of Adelaide* brought thousands of people to SA and so there is a fairly big support base for the restoration, which include descendants of one of its 19th century skippers, David Bruce, shown right.

The good beables of Adelaide will never get another opportunity like this, and if they pass it up, they may never be forgiven by future generations. Of course transporting the hull from Scotland is one matter, setting up a dedicated non-profit foundation, decent worksheds, good quality equipment and a supply of petty cash and imagination is another. The Scots managed to raise £25 from public subscription which would hardly buy a second-hand haggis. Do the South Australians have what it takes? Mind you it may be too late, in spite of all the the Australian enthusiasm, a subsequent article appeared in *The Australian* (14/8/200:4) saying that Ms Emily Cook a curator in the Scottish Maritime Museum had applied to the Ayreshire Council for a demolition order, with a decision due August 23. The article was accompanied by a photo of the weed-supporting teak-deck of the clipper overlooking grim riverside slums. If nothing else, maybe the Crow-eaters should try to acquire the teak and some select other parts of the ship for a future museum-display project of some kind. What's the bet they have already thought of it.

Do something



## Behar massacre - a review of a little-known wartime atrocity

It is fair to say that the result of WW2 would have been very different had it not been for the efforts of merchant seamen who sailed all manner of vessels in highly dangerous situations, and suffered appalling losses for their troubles.

On 9 March 1944 while en-route to the UK from Newcastle via Melbourne, Fremantle and Bombay with a cargo of zinc, the brand new Hain Steamship Company's 7,840 ton vessel TSMV *Behar* under Captain Maurice Symonds (51) was overtaken in the Indian Ocean west southwest of the Cocos group about 1,200 miles from the Australian coast, and sunk by the Japanese heavy cruiser HIJMS *Tone*, under Captain 'Harus' (Haruo) Mayazumi. A radio distress signal "RRRR..." was received by another ship MV *Rookley* which eventually reported it on arrival at Fremantle 17 March.

Three on board *Behar* were killed during the action, RN personnel AB Robinson and Gunner Pyecroft, plus an unnamed, presumably Indian ship's fireman. The other crew, some seriously injured, and passengers who all tumbled into four lifeboats were picked up,



TSMV *Behar*

P&O Archives

stripped and initially, tightly secured with marline on the deck of *Tone*. Their arms reportedly forced back and upwards with a choking loop around the throat. Later the prisoners were held below decks, a sweltering ordeal which lasted for six days during which they were regularly bashed. *Tone* rendezvoused at Batavia with two other cruisers of the South West Area Fleet *Aoba* and *Chikumba*. All three ships were battle-hardened from events at Pearl Harbour, the Java Sea and Midway.

The Captain of *Tone* sought instructions from Vice-Admiral Naomosa Sakonju who was in charge of the squadron, and was told to "dispose" of the prisoners, a command previously given through two radio signals soon after their capture. The story goes that Mayazumi, a Christian, had made a humble personal plea to spare the prisoners, and unlike Sakonju, this had spared him from the noose at the subsequent Hong Kong war-crime trials. It is arguable that he deserved any compassion because the prisoners had suffered appalling treatment under his command, and when he returned to his ship, he ordered what has become known as the *Behar* Massacre. Interestingly his second-in-command Commander Mii, also a Christian, had absolutely refused to participate in the atrocity, but was not punished by the Japanese navy.

European officers and twenty English speaking seamen and seven passengers were segregated for eventual landing at Tanjong Priok, and internment at Batavia. *Tone* put to sea and during the hours of darkness on 18 March seventy-two remaining Indian crew of *Behar*, mainly Laskars from Goa, were brought to their knees with crude physical assaults and decapitated. The murders were delegated by Captain Mayazumi to a Lieutenant Ishihara. Accomplices were a Lieutenant

Tani and Sub-Lieutenants Tanaka and Otsuka. There were others. Commander Mii gave evidence at the trial that Tanaka and Otsuka boasted about their acts afterwards. Another court witness was merchant Captain P.J. Green of the China Steam Navigation Co., who had been one of the passengers on *Bihar*. He and two other men taken from *Bihar*, Symonds and Walker had been enslaved in the coal mines in Japan. Four of the English-speaking Indian prisoners who were landed in Indonesia later died there during internment. Amongst the other captured Europeans were two women, an RAF Flight Sergeant and three NZ navy officers.

After the *Behar* massacre, in late 1944 Vice-Admiral Sakonju, still on *Aoba*, gained some recognition for himself at Leyte. There USS *Bream* put a torpedo into his ship on 23 October, but he managed to transfer to another vessel.



Japanese heavy cruiser *Tone*

From a plastic-model box by Fujimi

There is another aspect to the *Behar* incident perhaps worthy of contemplation. When the ship was in Melbourne it received substantial attention from the Melbourne Press, and probably in turn, Japanese intelligence. Voyaging across the Great Australian Bight with its strategic cargo, it had a setback of 10 hours due to trouble with its paravanes, but it rounded Cape Leeuwin on 4 March to call briefly at Fremantle and take on a navy gun-crew. The three Japanese cruisers had been conducting parallel 60 mile wide sweeps of the normal Fremantle-Aden trade route SW of Cocos as if in expectation, and were on the verge of abandoning their efforts when *Tone* made the intercept. Captain Mayazumi should and could have taken the vessel as a prize as per orders, but sank it instead, ostensibly because it was too far out of the way, which it wasn't.

*Behar* was the second ship of that name sunk during the war. The first struck a mine in Milford Haven in 1940. The warship *Tone* was eventually broken up in Japan, and there are several photographs of this process which can be seen online in the Australian War Memorial's website catalogue. The ship is to a degree still revered by fans of Japanese militarism.

A book, *Behar Massacre*, by D. Sibley was published in England in 1997, but has proved particularly elusive. Lord Russell's *Knights of the Bushido* (1958) has a description on pp. 227-232. He says Admiral Sakonju was hung after the war and Captain Mayazumi was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. Herman Gill's official history, *RAN 1942-1945* also has a brief but slightly confused mention on pages 288-91 and says both men were imprisoned. Bernard Edwards (1991) devotes a chapter in *Blood and Bushido: Japanese Atrocities at Sea*. pp 137-151. The Australian Archives in Melbourne have two small files MP1587/1 161I and MP1577/1 465F relating to the loss of *Behar* which they kindly copied and send to me. James MacKay's 1996 book *Betrayal in High Places* provides a sobering account of the brutal mistreatment of the Europeans based upon a diary account by one of the New Zealanders, the late James Godwin (RNZAF). Godwin became fluent in Japanese during his internment and after the war became an official war crime investigator in Tokyo. He became disillusioned with Allied political interference which allowed many war criminals to escape prosecution, and the associated deliberate destruction of pertinent records. The P&O Archive photograph of *Behar* is in O'Donoghue, K.J. and Appleyard H.S. (1986). *Hain of St Ives*, published by The World Ship Society.

Thanks to Wes Olson, Lindsay Peet, Bill McPherson, Capt. McCarthy, Capt Leighton and AAMH member Capt Herb Bolles for various leads. Herb has also written a short descriptive letter about the incident for the Feb/March edition of *The Red Ensign* and recently contacted the AAMH Newsletter editor asking that the matter be mentioned in our Newsletter, hence this article. Herb was on a merchant ship *Tanda* in the region at the same time and counts himself as very lucky not to have met the same fate. He has called for any vessel to drop a tribute if passing over *Behar*. The ship lies at approximately 87° 10' E. 20° 32' S. Lest we forget.

**Paul Weaver** - Palmyra.

## HMAS *Sydney* Senate Inquiry - government responds

An 18 point Government response to the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee's *Report on the Loss of HMAS Sydney* was tabled in the Federal Parliament on 29 June 2000.

Following is an abridged unofficial summary of the Government response. The complete official response with the original recommendations can be downloaded from the RAN website [http://www.navy.gov.au/8\\_archive/jfadt.htm](http://www.navy.gov.au/8_archive/jfadt.htm)

1. All Commonwealth records 1939-1945 are in the open access period of the Archives Act. The public has a right to view them unless they are deemed exempt. Of the *Sydney* archival material which Australian Archives assessed for publication of a research guide, all material that was directly relevant has been released for public access. A review of the Archives Act 1983 was done by the Australian Law Reform Commission in 1998 and the government has

disinterest in conducting another.

2. The RAN has agreed to put up \$20,000 to search the Public Records office in London for a Board of Inquiry report into the loss of HMAS Sydney.
3. The Australian War Memorial is in principle willing to cooperate in an comparative analysis of Carley floats held by the WA Maritime Museum and the Canberra War Memorial.
4. Australian Archives will conduct a preliminary search of British Phosphate Commission records in Melbourne. The government is unenthusiastic about the original recommendation to search the Commission's records in London where there are 853 various items and files.
5. Funding to the tune of \$16,500 is available for Chinese and European cemetery restoration on Christmas Island by the local shire council.
6. The RAN, the Office for Australian War Graves and Department of Transport and Regional Services will attempt to locate the grave of the unknown-sailor. Non-commitment on the use of an archaeologist or the granting of an exhumation order.
7. The Christmas Island Shire Council be kept fully informed. The government does not support a proposal to consult with relatives of other people buried in the old cemetery because of cost.
8. Medical records of Sydney crew are open and may be sought by any member of the public. Relatives may have copies at no cost.
9. If a positive ID of the Christmas Island unknown-sailor is made there are several options. Reinterment on Christmas Island, or burial in war cemeteries at Geraldton or Perth. Relatives, if identified could be involved in the decision regarding these options, but the government response as it is written does not give them the option of taking the remains to another place of their choosing. (This omission has already provoked public contention.)
10. The RAN agrees to sponsor a seminar in WA to focus on determining the location of the wreck of *Sydney*. Final assessment to be by the RAN, the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust and the WA Maritime Museum.
11. A response which suggests several avenues for the navy to opt out of a search for the wreck following the seminar mentioned in Point 10. (Those billion-dollar Collins subs still can't find sunken warships at their backdoor.)
12. Rejection of the proposal for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust and the Australian Government. (The proposal appears to have been intended to supercede a 1997 MOU between the Trust and the WA Maritime Museum which recognised the Museum could act in its own capacity and as an agent of the Commonwealth in regard to control of the wreck of HMAS *Sydney*.)
13. The Australian Government does not support an initial grant of \$100,000 to the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust to define the search area. Nor would it support the Foundation's proposal that it match a public appeal on a dollar for dollar basis up to two million dollars.
14. If the wrecks lie in Australian territorial waters they can be protected by existing legislation. Currently there is no instrument to protect them if they are in international waters. A UNESCO Draft Convention is being negotiated to cover such matters, but ratification is some way off.
15. The government will allow all "stakeholders" to contribute to a management plan if the vessels are located.
16. The Government does not oppose the construction of a memorial to HMAS *Sydney* but rejects government funding in entirety; public subscription being an important factor. The government response contains a reminder that the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust is committed to long-term commemoration.
17. The RAN will investigate a proposal to establish a research grant scheme covering Australian naval history.
18. The RAN will meet the cost of services for HMAS *Sydney* memorials commemorated in 2001.

## **Tassie off the map - again**

Perth Mint recently struck a special medal to flog off in commemoration of the Olympic flame being trundled all over Australia. Trouble is the map of Australia does not have Tasmania. For the geographically challenged, Tassie is that very large island which is shaped a bit like a triangle, south of Melbourne and south east of Adelaide. It moments like these .... Duh!

## **Founding documents online**

*Documenting a Democracy* on the web is now the place to go for copies of original documents considered highly important to the founding of each Australian state/colony, and their ultimate federation. Few historians will have previously seen all the documents that are available because the originals are scattered all over the place. Accompanying them are pictures of key persons, with a warning that they might now be dead, for those who are sensitive about such matters. <http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au> lets you view, and if you wish, download copies of the documents in seconds. When the site first became operational the only format downloadable documents were available in was Microsoft Word RTF, which excluded non-Microsoft internet users. Inquiries have revealed that the more common PDF format and some others will be added to the site to make the download option more versatile.



## ***Duyfken* days in Queensland**

By accounts the commemorative voyage of modern *Duyfken* to Cape York and places thereabouts has been a great success and greatly stimulated local interest in early maritime history. Nearby Cooktown, opposite the unusually named Leprosy Creek on the Endeavour River, has a small museum in the centre of town which addresses the maritime and pioneer history of the region. Apparently amongst many interesting things nautical on display is a *Duyfken* model and the croc which starred in the movie *Crocodile Dundee*. A souvenir booklet commemorating the *Duyfken's* recent visit is available for visitors. Don't trip over the huge anchor and propeller near the corner of Walker and Hope Streets.

## **Submarine tragedy shocks world**

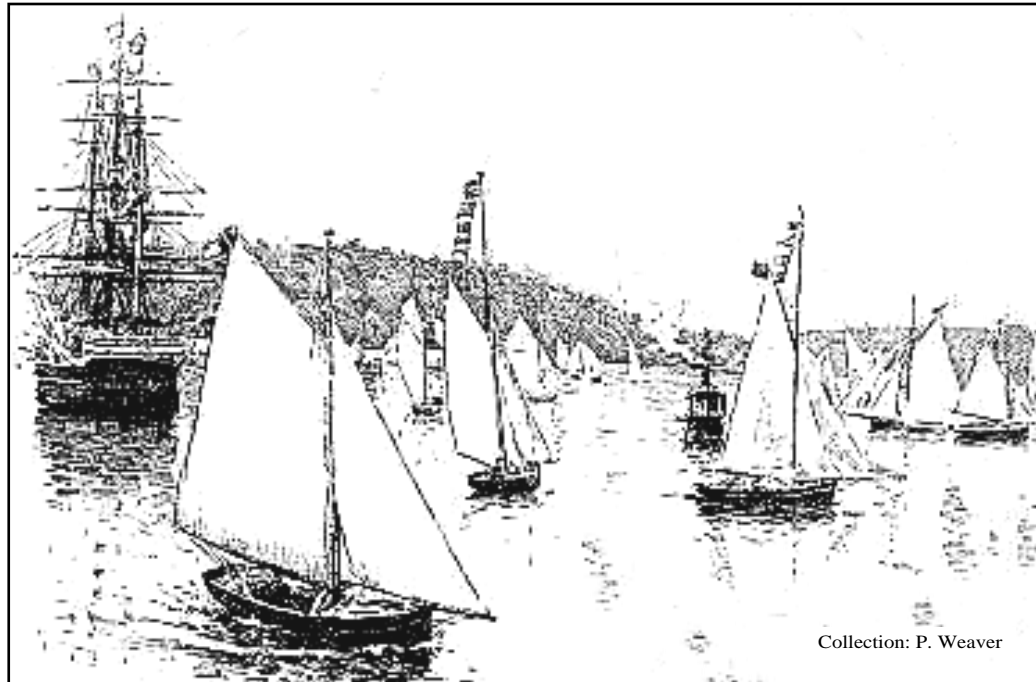
The 12 August sinking of the 14,000 ton Russian nuclear submarine *Kursk* in the Barents Sea with the loss of all on board has sent emotional shockwaves around the world; and followed the spectacular crash of a French Concord airliner a few weeks before. The aircraft crash appears to have marked the end of supersonic passenger air travel because all other Concorde's have subsequently had their airworthiness certificates cancelled. It remains to be seen if the loss of *Kursk* and the developing groundswell of Russian public opinion will force a reduction in the still very large and strategically dangerous Russian submarine fleet.

Undoubtedly submariners in all countries are of a kindred spirit, and will have muttered a silent prayer for those who were lost. The incident serves as a grim reminder to that the profession is still a very dangerous one, and that mistakes can have irreversible and catastrophic consequences.

Since WW2 at least seven state-of-the art submarines from various countries have gone to the bottom with the loss of all on board.

## **Yachting one of few freebies at the Olympics**

One of the very few events which can be seen for free at the Sydney Olympics this month is the yachting on Sydney Harbour, and that is the way it has been for a very long time. The sketch below of a regatta on the harbour was done a hundred years ago and is included here as another freebie for you. Australia's last Olympic gold medal in yachting was in 1972.

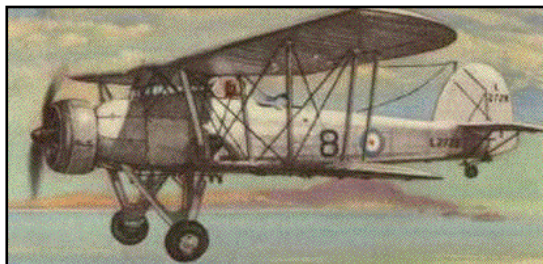


Collection: P. Weaver

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A Fairy Swordfish  
(See Merchant Navy article p.5)

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