#### **Quarterly Newsletter**

# **The Australian Association for Maritime History**

Publisher of The Great Circle

Special: "Bye bye twentieth century" issue

#### **Message from the President**

As all AAMH members are aware the publication of the AAMH journal *The Great Circle* has unfortunately fallen well behind schedule. You will have recently received Volume 20 Number 1 (the first of the 1998 volumes) and we are still hoping to have two more numbers out in the near future. On behalf of the AAMH Executive Committee I ask you to be patient until this problem is finally overcome.

Dr Kathy Abbas gave the annual Vaughan Evans Memorial Lecture in Maritime History at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney on Tuesday 5 October 1999. Dr Abbas is the President of the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project which is investigating British ships scuttled in Newport, Rhode Island during the American War of Independence. She presented the most recent findings from maritime archaeological fieldwork conducted on wrecks believed to include James Cook's HM Bark *Endeavour*.

A joint conference of the AAMH and the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand (EHSANZ) was held from 2 to 5 December 1999 in Sydney as this newsletter went to the printers. I will have a report for the next issue.

The Annual General Meeting of AAMH was held in Room 366 of the Social Sciences South Building of Flinders University on Friday 12 November 1999 at 12.30pm. Among the issues discussed were *The Great Circle*, the AAMH Newsletter, the Annual Vaughan Evans Memorial Lecture and the joint conference with EHSANZ. There have been some changes to the Executive Committee with Marie Boland resigning as Secretary. We would like to thank Marie for her efforts over the last twelve months.

On behalf of the new Executive Committee and interstate delegates I would like to take this opportunity to extend to all our members and friends festive greetings and best wishes for the coming holiday season.

Mark Staniforth Adelaide.

### The AAMH Executive Committee, currently based in South Australia is:

President: Mark Staniforth Vice-President: Gerald Doherty Treasurer: Nathan Richards Secretary: Terry Arnott

#### **State Representatives**

Western Australia: Malcolm Tull,
Paul Weaver, Peter Ridgway
NSW: John Bach, Cynthia Hunter
Tasmania: Barry Lewarn
Northern Territory: David Carment
Victoria: John Anderson
Queensland: Vacant
ACT: Simon Ville

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The Great Circle

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In 2000 the Quarterly Newsletter has been scheduled for the printers on the final Mondays of February, May, August and November. Contributions need to be sent direct to the editor well before these dates.

#### Freo conference a success

There were three fisheries conferences at Fremantle during November, which is just about enough for any small town. The one sponsored by the AAMH and the Fremantle Maritime Museum was in the middle (8-10 Nov) and so did very well, with a satisfactory attendance on all of the three days. Malcolm Tull and Sally May put in an enormous amount of work prior to organise it and are to be congratulated. So too is the Museum Director Graeme Henderson for authorising use of the venue. Excellent catering was sponsored by fishing magnate and Museum Chair Mr Michael Kailis. Delegates came from across Australia and from countries around the Indian Ocean rim, including Kenya. By accounts they all felt their attendence was well worthwhile and have since returned to their homes with much to consider.

#### **Information from other organisations**

The *AAMH Newsletter* is always pleased to publicise relevant events of other organisations, but please advise the Newsletter editor well in advance. For example a leaflet from The Company of Master Mariners of Australia for an interesting 30 September event was received by the editor on 2 September, after our last edition went to press.

Britain's National Maritime Museum is launching a refereed "e-journal." Further information can be had from their website, http://nmn.ac.uk

The Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada offers a new C\$12,000 renewable fellowship for post-graduate study leading to an MA or PhD. The recipient will be expected to take on an editorial internship involving two journals, *International Journal of Maritime History* and *The Northern Mariner*. As an added incentive the University claims to have the largest maritime history archive, and one of the most comprehensive library collections relating to maritime history on the planet. For information contact the university's graduate coordinator Dr Christopher Youe, cyoue@morgan.ucs.mun.ca

Not going to the Sydney Olympics? The *19th International Congress of Historical Sciences* will be held at Oslo, Norway 6-13 August 2000. Check it out on their website. www.hf.uio.no/oslo2000 or email the secretariat at oslo2000@hf.uio.no

Still in Scandinavia, The International Maritime Economic History Association (IMEHA) will hold the 3rd International Congress at Esbjerg in Denmark from 3 to 5 August 2000. The congress website is open for registration at: http://www.fimus.dk/Congress/congindx.htm

The Greenwich Maritime Institute has two attractive post-graduate programmes running over 1999/2000. The Institute is on the grounds of the University of Greenwich. The courses can be completed in one year's full time study, and two years part time. Course cost for foreign students is currently £6,950. Entry is with a good honours degree, or with relevant alternative experience acceptable to the course committee. If you're cashed up it sounds like a great way to spend a year in London. Further information is available from Dr Sarah Palmer, Director, Greenwich Maritime Institute, Cooper Bld. King William Walk, Greenwich. SE10 9JH. Fax +44(0)181-3317690. Email: S.R.Palmer@gre.ac.uk

#### Internet and the historian - unprecedented instantanious public documentation of events

It took the Governor General to finally determine that the services of Defence Secretary Mr Paul Barratt were no longer required earlier this year. Perhaps no other public servant in Australian history has been more "public" than Mr Barratt in protestations over his removal, with *The Australian* newspaper in particular carrying almost daily articles over several months about the developments. In the issue of 2 September p.2 a photograph appeared of the grim looking former secretary finally clearing out his desk. In association with the article, the paper's flagship company News Ltd carried on its website the full text of an exraordinary six page letter written by Mr Barratt to MR Moore-Wilton, Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and presumably the bureaocratic gatekeeper to the Minister for Defense. For the general public, such an immediate and intimate view of life at these lofty levels of the Public Sevice is probably unprecedented.

Mr Barratt complained that the reasons provided for his dismissal were so ambigously broad that he was precluded from responding adequately. He felt the Defence Minister's lack of confidence in him was unjustified. He believed it stemmed "from alleged but unspecified shortcomings in my management of the Collins class submarine project." He had prepared a report on the 16 year history of the project for the Minister, which was delivered on 10/2/1999. He considered the report to be of a high quality, comparable to anything he had seen in 30 years of public life. He felt there was an undeclared agenda to replace him with Dr Malcom McIntosh, who had worked on a later and far more scathing report on the submarine project.

Mr Barratt's view of the project was that "submarines are notoriously difficult to build, and that the first boat in the water is inevitably a prototype...with so lttle in the way of cost and schedule overuns, (the project) is a remarkable achievement, and the allied submarine community, with whom we deal simply cannot understand why we are conducting such an ill-informed public campaign against ourselves." He said that Australia was at its highest state of readiness since the Vietnam war, and that he had forged a very effective working relationship with Defense Services Chief, Admiral Barrie. He said this had been achieved "without conscription." Interestingly some weeks later Admiral Barrie was obliged to defend a public comment he had made about the worth of conscripts.

Mr Barratt concluded his letter by saying that premature termination of his five year contract would impose economic

disadvantage and requested that a reccommendation not be made to the Governor General to terminate his appointment. The complete letter was available at www.news.com.au on 2 September.

Well Mr Barratt has gone, and since then Australia did indeed embark on its biggest overseas military operation since Vietnam with the deployment of thousands of service personnell to East Timor. Most were airlifted to Dili, and for the Australian historian the event has offered, through the internet, an astonishingly large volume of highly relevant documents, unprecedented in the speed they have become available in the public arena. The UN, the PM, the Defence Minister, the Army, the US President, Admiral Barrie, Maj Gen Cosgrove and the East Timorise independence movement have all produced useful material, and then there was the mainstream media, especially the television service provided by the Nine Network. Through the *Today* and *Sunday* programmes Australians were provided with interviews with all the key players, and many of the transcripts were quickly available from Nine's website. The ABC also provided many transcripts on the web for the wealth of material it gathered. From Indonesia the internet provided an alternative view, especially through *Antara* and the *Jakarta Post*. The latter also provided a platform for letters from many Australians, some critical of Indonesia, and some of Australia. In contrast very few letters from Indonesians have appeared in Australian newspapers. For all the criticism levelled at Indonesia, the journalists at the *Jakarta Post* seemed to have a more ballanced and rational outlook on East Timor than many Australian publications.

Well, the stuff pouring from all these sources has slowed down a bit, and some of it has gone forever. The message for historians is pull it down and print it on paper when you can. It is unlikely that electronically stored material on domestic computer systems today will be easily retrievable in twenty, let alone 100 years time. PW.

#### **Mushroom department**

Do you think your government and popular media treat you like a mushroom? Maybe it's true, because there is lots of information out in the rest of the world that never cracks a mainstream mention in the lucky country. Spin doctors rule here OK!

http://www.qsl.net/yb0rmi/cland.htm will provide you with an extensive list and links to clandestine news services, radio broadcasts and stuff that big brother would prefer you not to see. Be careful to type in the <u>yb0rmi</u> bit correctly. Type in ASIO on your search engine and chances are you will not come up with much. They are pretty shy, but http://www.igis.gov.au/ opens the door to a swag of annual reports about this strange organisation. The CIA is much more open and many Australian academics routinely tap into the big brother of all big brothers at http://www.odci.gov/cia/ then follow the link to the World Factbook. They even have a page for kids, but one suspects whoever compiled it has never had any of their own. Never mind, look up Australia to see how many of our youth could be pressed into active military service if the balloon really went up. (Like if we were invaded by space aliens.) The Australian PM has many speeches, media interviews available at http://www.pm.gov.au/new.htm and the Minister for Defence provides a similar service via http://www.defence.gov.au/index.html and you can even register for automatic receiving of his media releases by email, but admittedly they have become a bit dull since his controversial comments about "hot pursuit" of Indonesian militia. Other Australian government departments also offer this sort of public information service, but seem be a bit choosy about whom they process to receive it. The Department of Foreign Affairs will tell you a bit about foreign affairs and when foreigners are getting a bit jaded with Australians at http://www.dfat.gov.au/home.html The Whitehouse Briefing Room at http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/html/briefroom.html provides transcripts of many of the many daily matters which confront the US President. However if you really want the really good stuff on ballistic missiles, thermonuclear warheads design, anthrax research and all the other nasty things which might convince you that humans will be very lucky indeed to complete another millennium then go to the US Defence site at http://www.defenselink.mil/ The Australian Army at http://www.dod.gov.au/timor/update.htm has some interesting stuff on East Timor and a page with links to many other allied military forces, most of which are pretty feeble. For Indonesian news media check out the English language Jakarta Post at http://www.thejakartapost.com:8890/ which is undoubtedly has been a "primary" source for many Australian journos. UNAMET in East Timor is at at http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/ but if this doesn't come up then go in via the UN Homepage at http://www.un.org/ and work back. Lots of things on all these sites for maritime historians prepared to think for themselves. That's enough for now Mulder; and remember, trust no one! PW

#### HMAS Perth decommissioned

On 30 August as our last newsletter went to the printers, Australian destroyer HMAS *Perth* gave a series of blasts on its siren and departed Fremantle, the port of its namesake city. The day before, the state's Premier, Richard Court had announced to the media that the ship would be gifted to the WA Government after it was decommissioned on October 15. A man of nautical boldness, Mr Court gave a clear signal that he favoured the sinking of this historic ship as a dive wreck off the WA coast in a similar way to the former HMAS *Swan*. For those who had served on it, and those who had been lobbying for it to become a floating exhibit alongside the new maritime museum building and Oberon submarine, Mr Court's view was greeted with mixed feelings. However the leader of the state opposition was in no doubt that it should be kept afloat as part of

the museum display. The counter argument was that this option would be too expensive.

HMAS Perth was the RAN's first guided missile destroyer. One of three based upon the US's Charles F. Adams class and built for the RAN in Michigan, the ship was commissioned 17 July 1965. From 2 September 1967 to 10 April 1968 it was attached to the US Seventh Fleet for war duties off the coast of North Vietnam. During this deployment it tracked 64,750

nautical miles and fired 13,351 5-inch shells.

A second assignment to the region lasted from 19 September 1968 to 20 April 1969, with 44,820 nautical miles sailed and 7,648 shells fired. As well as bombarding coastal targets under American direction, Perth was deployed on escort duties for the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. A third deployment took place between 14 September 1970 and 8 April 1971. 39,857 nautical miles and 9,712 5-inch shells fired.

The ship was awarded US Navy Unit Commendation and a Meritorious Unit Citation by the Americans for its activity during these periods. HMAS Perth was the only Australian ship to be damaged by enemy fire during the Vietnam conflict, without fatalities. The



HMAS Perth departs Fremantle on 30 August Photo: P. Weaver

reparation scars of these actions were still faintly visible on the starboard side in 1999. Interestingly, most of the crew in 1999 had not been born when they occurred.

Vietnam service ended in 1971 and the ship was put to other duties. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan generated three deployments to the northern Indian Ocean during 1980 to 1982. Between 1986 and 1989 the ship was given a major refit at Garden Island dockyard. Over time various weapon- systems have been replaced and the RAN says that even in 1999 the ship is still amongst the most powerful in the Western Pacific. However, the requirement of 330 crew provides a serious economic argument for replacement. More modern ships require much fewer. The maintenance schedule is also heavy in order to combat corrosion and an increasing number of mostly out-of-sight stress fractures. During its 34 years of service the ship covered more than a million miles, the only other RAN ship to do so being HMAS Moresby. A replacement ANZAC Class frigate is currently under construction and is expected to become the new HMAS Perth when it enters service in 2004. Paul Weaver.

#### Relax - it was only a cargo of plutonium

Pacific Pintail and Pacific Teal, shadowed by who knows what passed by southern Australia and Tasmania during the last week in August en-route to Japan with a cargo of plutonium. An ABC news report 2/9/99 11am said that Pacific Pintail ran into trouble in heavy seas in the Southern Ocean about 200 miles off the southern WA coast and an injured US crewman was airlifted off Albany. The ship apparently came into waters under Australian jurisdiction. All went very quiet about such matters after that; until the near meltdown at a nuclear recycling plant in Japan.

#### Navy PR lashes editor over September issue

A navy PR officer has sent an emotive letter to the editor, too long to reproduce, saying that the last issue looked like a concerted attack on the credibility of the navy. He said there were blatant errors in the article "Navy proves new subs can fire old torpedoes at old ships." The last warshot fired by an Australian submarine was 12 years ago. (The report said "more than ten years) He said when Torrens was torpedoed, media were not allowed to witness it because of safety issues, not because the navy was concerned things might not go according to plan - the navy had not forgotten media helicopters all trying to get the

best pictures with the HMAS Westralia fire last year - the torpedo test was not for the benefit of the media. As for the term "sitting duck" (which was a reported term used by others) the writer said that is is more difficult to hit a silent hulk than an operational vessel. The gentleman added for the record Mk 48s have a range of over 40km. He said the comment attributed to Commodore Dunne which suggested explosives were also on the ship was absurd. (The actual comments were broadcast and widely reported.) He said Commodore Dunne had not been the senior submariner in the past as reported. Included with the letter was a sheet of official illustrations explaining what actually happened when a Mk 48 torpedo destroys a ship and why there appeared to be two blasts.

Interestingly this matched the editor's careful explanation in September of the process in refutation of The editor the extra explosives theory. The PR officer felt the newsletter article should also have stated that ex-navy officer and state politician Mark McGowan who criticised the navy was a legal officer. (Not sure why, but assumably to discredit his views in some manner.) On the article "Navy overlooks sea scouts from Camp Waller" he says the obvious

question is why didn't the editor previously advise the navy of the existence of the group? (After 50 or so years? Anyway, the editor never gets invited to any ceremony organised by the RAN.) In the mention about a new book on the Vietnam war, the letter writer was adamant that the former HMAS *Sydney* aircraft carrier was broken up and is not used as a static training platform by the Chinese. In the article on HMAS *Torrens* he said the information on torpedoes is wrong. Apparently the ship carried Mk46 weapons. The writer said "Navy crosses line with anal antics" was grubby and ill-informed. On the matter of an alleged rape of a female officer in the early 1990s, he said no one was actually found guilty. Neither did he enjoy the items on the Duke of Edinburgh, the US aircraft carrier or mention of sailors, alcohol, and their being overweight, nor the few typographic errors. Unfortunately the correspondent has not replied to any of the editor's emails or letters since.

#### Support for mahogany shipwreck rekindled

Two long-time searchers for the purported Portuguese "mahogany ship" buried somewhere under the dunes 14km west of Warnambool (Vic) managed to recover some old wood samples with an auger last June. Jim Henry (72) and his young offsider Des Williams (70) retrieved some small pieces of European oak from a depth of 3.1 metres. Jim says he first heard of the mahogany ship as a child and has been searching for it since 1978. Des has been spending a month every year in the dunes over the past eight years. A local heritage officer Peter Ronald tempered the excitement by suggesting it might relate to cargo lost from *The Falls of Halladale* wrecked at nearby Peterborough in 1908. From a report in *Herald Sun*, 19/8/99:5.

#### Foreign scientists get in lather

Some boffins at Manchester University and Sao Paulo reckon that a ten thousand year old female skeleton they have

examined is "Negroid" not "Mongoloid" and therefore Africans had crossed to southeast Asia, thence to Australia, thence to South America where they flourished until the Europeans arrived. Someone has even claimed a well known rockpainting in NW Australia (shown right) of an "ocean going" boat fits in with the tale. This was the belief of scientists, said the ABC TV news reader in all seriousness on 2 September. They even said the skeleton is the oldest ever discovered. Not sure about the foreign scientists, but the



manner in which the theory was presented by the ABC suggests that the dumbing down process in Australia has been an outstanding success. Good thing they didn't find out Tasmanian Aborigines had curly hair. It used to be a favourite item for 19th century social Darwinists on the Africa trail.

#### More Batavia murder victims uncovered

Australia might have just taken its first two gunshot casualties in East Timor but it was the digging up of skeletal material from the notorious 1629 *Batavia* massacre which got front page treatment in *The West Australian* on 7/10/99. Inside were another two full pages showing how archaeologists from the Fremantle Maritime Museum had been busy digging away under a Hill's hoist in the backyard of a fishing shack on Beacon Island to recover an assortment of broken skulls and bones, some of which belonged to a child. That night all the current affairs TV programs carried segments on the episode. Abrolhos fishermen and historians not part of the Museum structure quickly questioned the operation and this immediately brought a hostile response. "*The West*" on the following day (p.5) carried a juicy reaction from a Museum employee in apparent concurrence with the opinions of other unnamed "museum sources" about Geraldton identity Max Cramer, who for many years has lobbied for all the *Batavia* relics to be housed in Geraldton, the nearest WA city to where they were dug up.

Prior to the October excavations there had been the remains of eight *Batavia* victims in museum collections. There are probably other people buried elsewhere on the Abrolhos islands, but some victims are also thought to have been disposed offshore by their murderers.

The 8 October newspaper report said that the archaeologists suspected the latest bones were laid in a mass grave, and that there were three adults and a juvenile. There was speculation they might be a preacher and his family mentioned in early records of the *Batavia* incident.

In mid-November there was another major feature article in the West about an attempted facial reconstruction on one of the skulls. It was reminiscent of the death mask of Ned Kelly.

It is impossible not to notice the morbid sensationalism which has enveloped the exhumed remains of *Batavia* victims. Aside from the recent treatment in the media, the Fremantle Maritime Museum has long had on public display the skeleton of a victim from the *Batavia* massacre emphasising the macabre evidence of a cut throat and a cutlass mark to the skull, and apparently there is another skeleton on display at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. There is an

increasing groundswell of opinion that these sad human remains should not treated as sideshow exhibits, and instead respectfully reinterred an an appropriate place on the Abrolhos Islands.

As we went to press a replica of *Batavia* arrived in Sydney on/in a ship from Holland. Having no relationship to the east coast of Australia nevertheless, it will spend the next year or so trolling about there. It will be docked at the Australian National Maritime Museum, which no doubt will present some excellent exhibits during the lead up to the Olympics. PW.

#### Japanese submarine attack on Port Gregory WA - 1943

At about midnight on 28 January 1943 Japanese I Class submarine *165* commenced bombarding Port Gregory north of Geraldton WA. Firing from a range of about 7,000 metres, the submarine lobbed about ten 3.9 inch shells in close proximity to a narrow gauge railway which ran from a salt works on the nearby landlocked Hutt Lagoon to a ship loading point. They had been intending to attack Geraldton but were discouraged by the sea and air activity.

A curious aspect about the attack is that it went unnoticed because Port Gregory had been abandoned for some time, but the Japanese did not know this, nor did they appreciate that the railway was puny, more like one might find for push carts in a mine. Word of the attack only came with the 1954 publication of Mochitsura Hashimoto's Sunk: *The story of the Japanese Submarine Fleet 1942-45*. London: Cassell. However it took much longer for the news to filter through to the west

coast. Barbara Winter/Poniewierski claims in her 1995 book *The Intrigue Master* that the information was initially suppressed from the Australian public, (p.181) the implication being that Australian authorities during the war were aware it had taken place.

Local historian Glenys McDonald heard of the attack in the early 1990s and obtained concurrence from the RAN in 1992 that it had occurred. She visited Port Gregory and discovered that the shell craters still existed; and in 1999 they are still there, although perhaps for not much longer because of inevitable development of the townsite. They have been surveyed by her son who is an RAN navigator. The photographs of two of the craters were taken in June this year.

The railway has long gone, although a few scraps of twisted rail can be seen here and there. The salt works has also gone, the only traces being a some relatively small pieces of concrete and some steel, possibly the remains of a boiler. Paul Weaver.





Shell holes at Port Gregory - June 1999 Photos: P. Weaver

#### Tatura - concentration point for WW2 POWs

Tatura & District Historical Society was reformed in 1984, and identified World War II wartime camps as a major focus for collection of historical material. The Society began to research the camps extensively, and develop a large collection of photographs, written material and memorabilia. In 1991, the Bill Doller Room was opened to house the collection. It was named for one of the Society's members who played a major role in the construction of the room.

The opening coincided with the 50th anniversary of the arrival and internment in Camp 3 of members of the Temple Society who were German nationals from Palestine. Two distinct groups were detained in camps in this area during World War II. *Prisoners of War* (POWs) were enemy servicemen who had been captured in various theatres of war, and transported to Australia for the duration of the war.

*Internees* were civilians who were living in Australia, or other allied territories, and were deemed to be a security risk because of their nationality. Their backgrounds were very diverse.

There were seven camps in the Tatura area during WW2. Three of these camps were for POWs: Dhurringile was for 50 German officers and their batmen. Camp 13 (Murchison) held 4,000 POWs, mainly Italian and German, but also some Japanese after the Cowra Breakout in 1944. Camp 6 (Graytown) was a bush wood cutting camp initially housing about 250 Italian, then German POWs, the latter being mainly crew members of the *Kormoran*. Finnish seamen were held there too.

The remaining camps were for internees, and included Camps 1 & 2 (Tatura) and Camps 3 & 4 (Rushworth). Each of these camps housed around 1,000 internees. Camps 1 & 2 held single males mainly Germans and Italians. Camps 3 & 4 held family groups; Camp 3 held mainly German and Camp 4 mainly Japanese families.

Initially, barbed wire compounds were established and accommodation was provided in tents. In time, more permanent camps were established, with rows of army huts replacing the tents. Sleeping huts were usually 5-6m x 20m (16-18' x 60')

and constructed of galvanised iron. In addition, large recreation huts, kitchen and mess huts, and ablution blocks were provided. Camp 1 also included a first class hospital, and was the only camp to be sewered throughout. Internally, the sleeping huts varied in layout. For example, in the case of family camps, sleeping quarters were partitioned off with Masonite to accommodate family groups.

POW camps, and internment camps for single males had barrack-style accommodation. Guards and other support staff were garrisoned outside the compounds. Life in the camps varied depending on the nature of the particular camp. Family camps incorporated playing areas for children and the necessary school accommodation. Internees and POWs organised a wide range of activities to keep minds and bodies active including craft work, education, gardening, theatre music and sport. Some trusted prisoners worked on local farms. The camps were very adequately supplied with food, and treatment by guards was generally deemed to be good.

After the war, the camps were dismantled, so that little physical evidence remains today. However, it is still well worth visiting the sites to gain an appreciation of what they were like. Most of the camp sites are now on private property and in some cases owners or lessees need to be contacted before you enter. Tatura Historical Society can provide details of how to gain access.

After the war two war cemeteries were established in the area. The German War Cemetery adjoins Tatura Cemetery, and the Italian Ossario and War Cemetery are at Murchison Cemetery.

German and Italian POWs and internees who died in various parts of Australia during both world wars are buried at Tatura and Murchison respectively. A commemorative service is held at each cemetery every November.

The Tatura Historical Society has collected the stories of many former POWs, internees and garrison staff as part of its collection, and these are available for researchers to use. There is a large ongoing program of research and the collection is continually expanding. (The above from a Tatura and District Historical Society leaflet).



Heinz Homann, a young Kormoran POW sent to Tatura

All the survivors of the *Kormoran* were eventually taken from WA to Tatura. Dhurringile where the Officers were housed, is a mansion located eight kms south of Tatura. The other ranks were in Camp 13, a large camp nearby. Captain Detmers from the *Kormoran* was the senior officer at Dhurringile, and was responsible for other captured German army, navy and air force officers. He was one of those involved in the breakout by tunnel late in the war, one of many escape attempts. The museum has a wealth of research material, much of which has been gleaned from those who occupied the seven camps in this area. We also have one of the *Kormoran* survivors living in Tatura, and have frequent visits from another living in Melbourne, and from time to time crew members from Germany. One of the crew, Erich Meyer, who died in Perth, is buried in the official German War Cemetery, which is located here at Tatura.



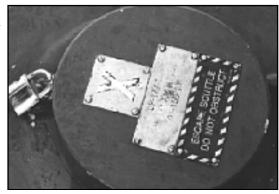
Tatura Museum and research facility

A number of books have been written about life in the camps, and these are available for sale at Tatura Museum: *Walls of Wire* by Joyce Hammond provides a comprehensive study particularly of internment camps in the Tatura area. *Stalag Australia* by Barbara Winter gives an overview of POW camps around Australia with many references to the *Kormoran* crew (\$35 posted). *German War Cemetery* which I have prepared, lists briefly what is known of those who are buried there. Cost \$5 posted. Tatura and District Historical Society. PO Box 156, Tatura, Vic. 3616. **Arthur Knee.** 

Footnote: Arthur recently visited Coolangatta in Queensland and says that on a pedestrian walk along the picturesque sea cliff there is a bronze plaque for each of the 41 Allied ships sunk by enemy action around the Australian coast during WW2. Each plaque lists the detail of the sinking, location, and number of lives lost.

#### HMAS Westralia aftermath

On October 8 the Governor General announced that 25 people involved with the 5 May 1998 fire on HMAS Westralia would be recipients of awards for their efforts during the emergency in which four crew perished. Presentations were at Government House, Canberra on 13 October. They came at a time when there was still ferment amongst families of the deceased pushing for a coronial inquiry because of matters allegedly overlooked by the navy inquiry last year. The tragedy has taken its toll psychologically amongst surviving crew and officers, and some of these matters were highlighted in reports in The Australian and The West Australian on 8 October. The Nine TV Network's 60 Minutes carried a retrospective segment about the tragedy on 10 October. A list of awards appeared in The West Australian 14/10/99 p.7. Since the fire Westralia has been undergoing an expensive refit at HMAS Stirling base, which has



Lessons still to be learned - escape scuttle on the deck of HMAS *Perth* 1999

included the installation of escape scuttles from the engine room. Hopefully they will never have padlocks on them like the ones photographed on HMAS *Perth* when it was still in service a few months ago. *Westralia* has a projected service life until 2009. Apparently it is soon to commence sea trials.

#### Fremantle corrosion expert honoured

Ian MacLeod, 20 years resident at the Fremantle Maritime Museum was recently awarded the prestigious Batty Medal by the Royal Australian Chemical Institute for his outstanding contribution to the understanding of corrosion processes on materials associated with shipwrecks. His expertise is recognised internationally, and in November he visited South Carolina as guest of the US Navy to advise on the conservation of the remains of *Hunley*, reportedly the world's first submarine, which was destroyed during the Civil War in 1864 by an accidental explosion.

#### The Saint Alouarn discoveries

Philippe Godard spent much of his life as a consultant engineer in the Pacific, but on his "retirement" he settled in Perth. He is an accomplished researcher and author with many titles under his belt. His lavishly illustrated recent work on the *Batavia* incident is probably in most serious collections. Now he is working on the voyage of Saint-Alouarn and anticipates another book in the not too distant future. He was a co-discoverer of Saint-Alouarn artifacts at Dirk Hartog Island. The following talk was given at Geraldton in June and is reproduced with his permission:

The president of the Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is with pleasure that I have accepted the invitation of our association, an invitation extended to me via my old friend Max Cramer, to come to Geraldton on the occasion of your "June long-weekend" and briefly talk to you about perhaps one of the most forgotten characters in Australian history. I am referring to the French navigator, Louis-Francois-Marie Aleno de Saint-

Alouarn.

Philippe Godard - June 1999 Photo: P. Weaver

Many of you here today may be familiar with this snippet Of history. On a fine day in March 1772 at the southern tip of Dirk Hartog Island, the Island protecting the calm waters of Shark Bay, this Breton sailor and commander of the vessel *Le Gros Ventre*, sent his officers ashore to claim possession of that part of the Australian continent we now know as Western Australia, all in the name of the King of France, Louis XV.

The question is asked by many, who was this Saint-Alouarn? Born on the 25th of July, 1738 near Quimper in French Brittany, he belonged to a naval family. His father and uncle both died in 1759 during the famous battle of Cardinaux between the French and English fleets. Some men may have been discouraged from a life at sea after a blow like this, but not our Saint-Alouarn. It didn't take long for this young sailor to experience a baptism under fire, which he did time and time again against the "hereditary enemy." The "hereditary enemy" is what the French called the English, and some still do. It is during one of these skirmishes that he was taken prisoner and into captivity for two years in England.

The moment he was freed he returned to sea, serving on several of the King's ships, with varying success in the fortunes of war. On the 20th of June 1761, he married Jeanne Corentine Droualen with whom he had two sons. Tragically Saint-Alouarn was

to lose his young wife, her death coinciding with the request by the already reputed Yves Kerguelen-Tremarec to serve as his second in command of a fleet to be sent to the Isle of France, now known as Mauritius.

Despite a very poor state of health and the burden that his two young sons represented, Saint-Alouarn didn't hesitate and on the 1st of May 1771, he left the Breton port of Lorient on the HMS *Berryer*. Arriving at Port-Louis in the Isle of France, he was given the command of the store ship *Le Gros Ventre*. His mission; to accompany Kerguelen, himself the commander of the flagship *La Fortune*, to assure control of the opportunities supposedly represented by "the new route to the Indias" which had just been recommended by the Knight Grenier. (We must remember that at this time France had a very strong presence on the coast of Coromandel where it had established numerous trading posts, the most important of which was Ponidichery.)

The mission accomplished, the two ships returned to the Isle of France where the governor of the colony, the Chevalier d'Arsac des Roches, assigned Saint-Alouarn as Kerguelen's second in command for a secret expedition under the direction of the King of France. The aim of the expedition was to determine the existence of the mythic *Terra Australis Incognita* which the most distinguished geographers of the time believed existed in the lower latitudes and comprised an unknown sixth continent.

Sailing south through unknown cold and rough seas they finally, after twenty eight days, discovered a high land which Kerguelen, without due consideration, took for the prominence of the mysterious continent.

Impatient to bring the news of his "fantastic" discovery to his royal sponsor, (the king of France, Louis XV) he took the pretext of being separated from Saint-Alouarn by a storm for coming back as soon as possible to Isle de France, then to

France.

During that time, respectful of initial instructions to claim any new territory, Saint-Alouarn sent a squadron ashore and annexed for France what was to be revealed later as a bare and iced archipelago, today known as the Kerguelen Islands and part or the T.A.A.F. (Terres Australes et Antarctiques Francaises).

Saint-Alouarn was then to sail north-east until encountering New Holland, at the exact location of Cape Leeuwin. where he was expecting to meet Kerguelen as previously agreed upon by the two captains. An attempt to reach the shores of the present Flinders Bay was unsuccessful. Today a small island off the bay holds the name of Saint-Alouarn.

With no sign of Kerguelen's ship *La Fortune*, the precariousness of the position of *Le Gros Ventre* inhibited Saint-Alouarn from waiting any longer. He continued north with the aid of the most recent maps by famous French cartographer d'Apres de Mannevilette. In lure of the deteriorating health conditions of most of his crew, suffering from scurvy and exhaustion, Saint-Alouarn decided to anchor for some days in the calm waters of Shark Bay where the Dutch captains Dirk Hartog (1616) and Willem Vlamingh (1697) as well as the British privateer William Dampier (1699) had passed before him. But all these three were civilians not commissioned on any official mission. Furthermore, their opinion was that this part of New Holland was a deserted area which offered no interest for their respective nations to colonise.

Le Gros Ventre was anchored off Turtle Bay, at the northern extremity of Dirk Hartog Island. From here several dispatches were sent ashore. The first one was recorded on 29 March, 1772 under the command of Ensign Mengaud de Ia Ilage whom, accompanied by nine soldiers solemnly took possession of Western Australia. (It was two years earlier that Captain Cook claimed the east part of the continent for England). As with the claim to the Kerguelen Islands, the formal ceremony took the form of displaying the flag of the King of France, a white flag enhanced by three golden lily flowers. A salute was fired by the in-lying picket, and a hail three times of, "Long live the King!" after which a copy of the official document of annexation was inserted into two bottles sealed by a lead cap with a French coin, an "ecu au bandeau" representing King Louis XV inserted into the top of the cap that was then fastened around the neck of each bottle by wire. It is documented that one of the two bottles was strategically buried at the foot of a shrub overlooking Turtle Bay.

Already exhausted by such a long and precarious voyage, without encountering a single living soul since his departure from Isle de France, Saint-Alouarn was then to sail on to the Portuguese colony of Timor where his crew took a long and much needed rest before continuing on to Batavia. It was there that he and Mengaud de la Hage, together with some of their crew contracted tropical fevers. On 5 September 1772. *Le Gros Ventre* arrived back at Isle de France with its crew of ghosts. On the same day Mengaud de Ia Hage was to perish, followed three weeks later by Saint-Alouarn. Unfortunately for France, King Louis XV did not take up the claim on Western Australia. He died only two years later.

I will never forget the spontaneous declaration by my young friend, Kim Cramer, after I had authenticated the coin we had uncovered in its bed of sand on the heights of Turtle Bay, by the date and Latin inscription on what is this splendid silver ecu. "This is the most extraordinary discovery in Australia for a long time." he proclaimed. How right you were Kim

Dr Ian McLeod, Head of the West Australian Museum's Conservation Department has just confirmed your words in public here in Geraldton. I quote, "For Western Australia, Saint-Alouarn's bottle and coins rank up there with the Dirk Hartog and Vlamingh plates. The discovery of the coin by the Godard/Cramer expedition was one of the most significant finds in the past 50 to 100 years.

Thank you Dr McLeod for your lucidity and fair play. In the past the French explorers have received little acknowledgement for their contribution to Australian Maritime history. Just recently, Australia Post has dedicated a series of six stamps to navigators, who in its view have played a major role in Australia's history. Apart from one exception, that of Abel Tasman, I found only British names: Dampier, Cook, Flinders, Vancouver and Bass. There is not one French name, not even Nicolas Baudin's, who is inarguably one explorer who has contributed significantly and extensively to not only the discovery of uncharted waters, but also to original documentations of study in the field of anthropology, zoology and botany within this continent.

This form of cultural imperialism is no longer acceptable in a country which claims, rightly so, to be a melting pot as harmonious as it is exemplary to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, I retain the hope that future authors of books on Australian history will possess greater intellectual honesty by bringing together in one tribute all the heroic navigators, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, French and English, who contributed to the understanding of our world, and in particular to the understanding of this wonderful continent which we have the good fortune to live in, AUSTRALIA.

#### Philippe Godard, Perth

#### Help requested

Frank MacDonough is looking for details of an incident which took place off Surabaya on 26 September 1944 when the Dutch submarine *Zwaardfische* sank the German U-boat *U168* commanded by Kapitanleutnant Helmut Pich. Twenty seven survivors including Pich were picked up by the *Zwaardfische* and taken to Australia where they were imprisoned as POWS. So far he has been unable to find any records of Pich's imprisonment anywhere in Australia and would appreciate any help or advice.

Frank also mentioned he attended the launch of a book *Voices from Voyager* at HMAS Cerberus on 15 October. The book is a reflection on the disturbed lives of survivors of the collision between HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Voyager* on

10 February 1964. Frank's family had a loved one amongst the 82 men lost on that night, Chief Petty Officer Leslie Vincent. Frank is the researcher refused access to to November 1941 signals by Australian Archives, which has referred the matter to Britain. The matter was reported in our last newsletter. British permission for Australian's to see this material has still not been received.

His email contact is fmac@mikka.net.au

#### Queen still rules, OK!

The 6 November referendum revealed that the majority of Australians do not want an Australian citizen as Head of State. This also means that Prince Philip will probably stay on as head of the RAN for some time to come. One would have liked to be a fly on the wall on the following Tuesday 9/11 when the Loyal Toast was made at a formal dinner hosted by the Commander of Fleetbase West, HMAS Stirling. The dinner is a replacement for the Trafalgar Day affairs which were abandoned by the RAN a while back. Knowledgeable WA maritime and military historian Wes Olson spoke about the WW1 battle between HMAS *Sydney 1* and the *Emden*.

#### Navy reconciled with Germany over HMAS Sydney battle in 1990

During a world tour of HMAS Sydney IV in 1990 under Capt Robertson the ship called into Kiel Germany. Officially

the visit was described as a last minute decision, but an interesting illustrated souvenir booklet *HMAS Sydney World Tour 1990* which recently fell into the hands the editor makes one wonder if it was a highly planned operation possibly intended to counteract the rumblings then gathering momentum in Australia over the 1941 loss of HMAS *Sydney II*. A computer search of local newspaper files was unable to turn up an Australian press report of the visit, but a check in Germany revealed it was reported there.

Members of the German *Emden* and *Kormoran* associations, and current members of the German Navy were entertained by the RAN at a cocktail party and dinner; and at another function 15 Ship's company from Sydney IV were "thrilled" when they met up with 15 Kormoran survivors at a less formal function. Interestingly there is a PR person's



dream photo of two brothers in uniform, one serving on *Sydney IV*, the other in the German navy. More sobering is a group of beaming officers and crew from *Sydney IV* posing with *U995*, which sent many allied sailors in convoys to their deaths in WW2. The submarine is now a technical museum but tacitly serves as a monument to the activities of German submariners during the war.

The Australians were very impressed by the German Naval Memorial at Laboe on the north side of Kiel Harbour and honoured German war dead by laying wreaths at the Shrine of Remembrance. (See above). According to the booklet, the memorial is the only place that the Nazi flag is officially displayed anywhere in Germany.

Determined to further impress the locals socially, the booklet describes how a small group of *Sydney's* crew turned up at a local brewery and after a pre-session warm up worked their way through two, thirty litre and four ten litre kegs, which doesn't sound very much really. However, at the end off the night "those who could not walk out were carried out."

HMAS Sydney World Tour 1990 is obviously a rare publication which keen collectors might discover at specialist antiquarian booksellers. Sydney researchers will also be interested in the following account of the visit by a Kiel newspaper:

#### Sydney: A name reminds of sad times of war

This manoeuvre of the Australian *Sydney* will probably leave its mark on the history of the Tirpitzhafen: Seldom a warship drove a so elegant and fast a manoeuvre. The 30 year old commander dryly said: 'I see nothing unusual therein.' The event is remarkable for another reason: This is the first official postwar attendance of an Australian naval ship in a port of the Federal Republic. The occasion is so remarkable that yesterday the Australian Ambassador came from Bonn to Kiel. The *Sydney* (138 meters long, 211 men crew, over 30 knots fast) is on a voyage round the world since 5 March. The excursion to Kiel came unscheduled. On the way the program was revoked and then attendance in Kiel was made perfect. And that makes Commander Robertson very happy: He has his berth with the *Gorch Fock* at the same jetty. This arouses particularly beautiful memories with me. I was on board as the sailing-school-ship visited Australia during its voyage round the world... The crew will complete a tight land program. Brewery sightseeing tours, short trips and intensive meetings with sport associations are on the program. The Australian sailors want to play rugby, football and volleyball in Kiel, also tennis and squash. In response they invite the Kieler on board: Tomorrow (Friday) from 1 to 5 p.m. it's 'open ship'. With the on-board attendance some guests will have to correct their picture of the navy: On the *Sydney* there prevails an unusual conversational language, the addresses between the ranks are limited to the first names.

Captain Robertson said: 'We want to achieve a world record before we make it home on 18 September. We want to be the

first warship which succeeds in dragging twelve water skiers around after itself.

The Australian navy's first visit to Germany is however also connected with a serious review of the past. In German-Australian relationships the name *Sydney* has a sad rank: With the cruiser *Sydney I* the Australian navy had one of their most important victories during the First World War: Near the Cocos Islands it sank the German cruiser *Emden* after a battle in November 1914. 27 years later, on 19 November 1941 there again was a battle in the Indian ocean during the Second World War: The *Sydney II* fought against the German auxiliary cruiser *Kormoran* disguised as as Dutch freighter *Straat Malakka*. The Australian cruiser was so heavily damaged that it had to be abandoned on the way to the next port with 650 men on board.

Yesterday evening there was a peaceful German-Australian meeting in a house in the Duesternbrooker Way: Redlef Habben, whose father was a physician on the *Kormoran*, invited 15 survivors of the German auxiliary cruiser and 15 members of the *Sydney IV* to his home. Today there is a further meeting: Commander Robertson invited the *Kormoran* crew to dinner. With them there will also be a survivor of the *Emden. Kieler Nachrichten* 12 July 1990.

Thanks to Torsten Reimer in Germany for finding the article and doing the translation. 12 Water skiers behind an Australian warship. I'd like to see that. Ed.

#### Max Cramer Memoirs - a contribution to understanding

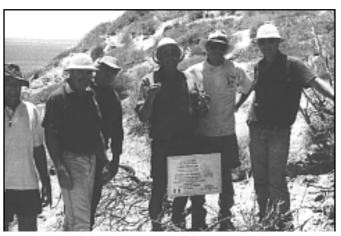
The dangerous reputation of the Western Australian coastline has been known for centuries through the many tragic shipwrecks which have occurred. More often than not the accurate location of these incidents was not well recorded and as time passed, only the somewhat vague folk memories few spectacular or notorious events survived. Following WW2 there began a revolutionary change through the commercial availability of personal diving equipment, with the result that many people began exploring the underwater regions of the coastline. Amongst these was a young Geraldton adventurer Max



Cramer. In 1963 Max was a leader in the team which identified the *Batavia* wreck on the nearby Abrolhos Islands. Ever since, and like many others, he has devoted himself to further underwater exploration and amateur discovery along the coast. Max was recognised by the State

Max Cramer 1999 Government just a few years back with a Photo: P. Weaver \$25,000 reward for his *Batavia* effort and has certificates of recognition for participation in the discovery of other ancient wrecks. He was also involved with the more recent initial discovery of the Saint-Alouarn artifacts on Dirk Hartog Island. (See photo right). Unfortunately success, enthusiasm and outspokenness has apparently earned him and his peers a degree of institutional hostility; and marginalisation - matters he discusses in his book with frankness.

Just published, *Treasures*, *Tragedies and Triumphs of the Batavia Coast* is a highly readable book about a bold twentieth century man who obviously is determined to live his life to the



In the book: Saint-Alouarn expeditioners at the discovery site L-R John Eckersley, Chris Shine, Philippe Godard, Max Cramer, Kim Cramer, Tom Bradley. Photo: John Eckersley

full. Importantly too, it is a work which all museum workers and maritime historians should read towards broadening their own perspectives. Superbly printed, 348 pages, 16 in colour plus 40 B&W photos and historical illustrations, many previously unpublished, and 6 maps. Soft cover A\$29.50. Hard cover A\$39.50. Postage: In Australia A\$5 Overseas A\$14. Available from the Geraldton Regional Museum, Geraldton. Western Australia. 6530.

#### **HMAS** Creswell invites visitors

The navy base HMAS Creswell has a small Historical Collection which may be of interest to readers living in or passing through the Jervis Bay area of NSW. Housed in a two story building which is itself historically important, the historical collection has an interesting number of naval artifacts and memorabilia dating back to the formation of the navy in 1911. The collection is concentrated mainly around those navy personnel who have passed through the college. Items belonging to such Navy notables as Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins, Lieutenant-Commander Robert Rankin and Vice Admiral Sir William Creswell are on display. As well, uniform epaulets (of the gold bullion type) from famous officers; a complete display of medals and a comprehensive collection of historical photos are complimented by albums which display members of the College at work and play through the years. Swords from different eras, and ship models are also on show, as well as older items from other navies. There is also a small display centred around Admiral Nelson.

HMAS Creswell is the naval college for officers of the RAN. Naval officers are educated there at various stages of their careers, and such has been the case since the college was founded just before WW1. The officers under training comprise a variety of categories: Midshipmen from the Australian Defence Force Academy, junior officers undertaking leadership courses;

and "special entry" officers undertaking initial training. The college is also home to the Maritime Studies Program of the navy and the RAN School of Survivability and Ship Safety Training. The base buildings of HMAS Creswell are of significant historical interest and visitors are welcome to drive around and view the stone and weatherboard classrooms; office accommodation and the magnificent clocktower which overlooks the parade ground, known as "The Quarterdeck." Houses built in the early 20th century are still in use for "on-board" naval personnel. There are also many items from HMA ships also to be found at various locations. For example a rangefinder from the first HMAS *Sydney*, plaques to ships lost, and various anchors etc.

The base is not accessible to the public on work days, but is usually open to visitors on weekends, although a phone call to 02 4429 7985 may be wise before attempting a long drive. Approval for special visits by large parties can requested from the Executive Officer on 02 4429 7900. It is also a good idea to contact myself, the Historical Collection Officer on 02 4429 7910 to arrange a welcome. HMAS Creswell is home to many people and much wildlife, and we therefore ask people to drive carefully when "on board." **Tom Lewis.** (Lt. RAN)

#### Flinders name-link to WA concludes

Perth resident Sophie Flinders (85) died on 20 November. She was the great-grand-daughter of Samuel Ward Flinders, the brother of Matthew Flinders. Ms Flinders was born with TB, endured a painful hip condition throughout her life and had no children. Her uncle Charles Edward Flinders was the first JP in the Kimberley region of WA. A short obituary in the West Australian 24/11/99:42 said her father, (Charlie?) a policeman was awarded the "Iron Cross" for his role in the rescue of the two German aviators.

These were probably Adolph Klausman and Hans Bertram, rescued from the Kimberly coast in the 1932 by Aborigines from Drysdale River. A Wyndham police party led by a Constable Marshal then took charge. Apparently Bertram later recovered some medallions from his wrecked aircraft and presented them in gratitude to his Aboriginal and European rescuers. One of Flinders' descendants later had involvement with the Fitzroy Crossing Hotel.<sup>1</sup>

#### East Timor - our near, and dear neighbour

According to the PM's address to the nation on 19 September "Indonesia is our nearest neighbour." Well not quite if one takes a look at the proximity of Cape York to PNG. Probably a mere slip in the scripting, but hardly an error you would expect the head of the nation and his well paid advisors to make. Anyway, within a few days a veritable armada of ships and aircraft was pushing across the Timor Sea from Darwin as part of the UN sanctioned INTERFET force to ensure that East Timor became independent of Indonesian rule. All pretty exciting stuff but no pollies did their sums first. It cost more than was in the coffers, and took more personnel than could be backed up by an impoverished Reserve Force. "Quick, gotta raise two more battalions of regulars." said



With some help from the Australian Army on 22 Oct, Xanana Gusmao forecasts a recovery for East Timor.

someone. After two months the whole show had become a pretty significant financial drain and so taxpayers earning more than A\$50,000 PA might have to fund it with a Medicare levy. The official reason for Australian involvement seems to be humanitarian. Nothing at all to do with the offshore maritime resources. The PM visited the troops on 28 November, autographed some rifles and said they were doing a good job.

#### Boer War a bit of a bore for members

Sorry to report that there was not a single response for a request on localised state items relating to the centenary of the Boer War, so there. In Perth there was a small commemoration service at King's Park, but not much else. In a way it is understandable because all the veterans from that war have long passed on. Below are excerpts from a long dead anonymous writer on the subject, which are probably more apt anyway in light of the results of our recent referendum:

When the historian of the future sets himself to record the successive stages of human progress, he is not likely to forget the closing year of the marvellous Nineteenth Century. Indeed, the unparalleled events that have occurred in the English-speaking countries of the world during the years 1899 and 1900 have so stunned the faculties of onlookers by their swift sequence, that posterity alone will be able to form a just and dispassionate estimate of the importance which attaches to them. The great historical picture cannot be grasped in its entirety by one who stands, as it were, quite close to the canvas. It must be removed some distance from the spectator before the infinitude of dramatic and picturesque details can be duly subordinated and the leading idea of the work can stand out in all its tremendous significance. When the eye of the historian can look beyond the real mists of war and the marching armies in the

For an Aboriginal perspective of the rescues see Green, N. (1988). *The Oombulgurri story*. Focus Ed. Service. Cottesloe. pp. 89-90.

foreground, the great fabric of the Empire will be revealed standing "broad-based upon a people's will" as no empire

has ever stood in the history of the world until now, and rearing its mighty watch-towers to the sky as a perpetual guarantee for the welfare, the security, and the inviolable liberty of all those who dwell within its shadow. And among the massive columns that support the mighty edifice, which spans the whole globe, the wondering gazer of the future will note, far in the extreme south, and the first to catch the glory of the sunrise, six pillars, standing solid, new cut, and enduring - the pillars of the sister states of the Federated Australia.

It is no secret that, year after year, the military forces of Westralia, in common with those of the rest of Australia, were kept up by the Government of the day in the half-hearted and lukewarm spirit produced by a false sense of fancied security. Session by session, when the estimates for defence were

brought forward in Parliament, short sighted Treasurers reduced the sum available for defence to the lowest possible limit, in order to conciliate their equally short-sighted supporters. Politicians of every shade of opinion agreed in condemning the growth of the military temper in this young land, and journalists wrote leading articles to prove that war was a relic of the barbarous past, and that a general disarmament of the nations was inevitable. In Europe, as well as in Australia, the voices of those who cried "Peace! Peace!" when there was no peace, began to be heard on every side, and in accordance with a rescript by His Imperial Majesty the Czar of Russia, a conference of international plenipotentiaries assembled at the Hague to formulate an Utopian scheme for securing the blessings of a perpetual armistice between the nations. But the conference was still sitting when the first rumblings of the war-thunder smote upon the cars of the delegates;





Tasmanian and Victorians of the first contingent come ashore at Albany enroute to South Africa November 1899. SS *Medoc* in the background.

Collection P. Weaver.

and hardly had they ceased their deliberations, when the bolt fell.

The answer to that insolent ultimatum, in which the Transvaal Secretary of State notified Great Britain that the continued presence of British troops in Natal would be regarded by the allied Republics as a *casus belli*, was swift and startling. The speculations of the theorists as to the impossibility of war were to blow to the winds. On all hands the attitude of *laisser aller* gave place to instant strenuousness, and nowhere throughout the British Dominions was the note of preparation for the coming struggle struck more resonantly than in Westralia, whose offer of assistance was made at once to the Imperial Government. That offer was endorsed by the Parliament of Westralia after a debate in which the loftiest ideals of true patriotism found expression, as well as the feeble misgivings of the faint-hearted, and the first of the great troopships, which have carried so many of our best and bravest to fight for Queen and Empire on the battle fields of South Africa, steamed away from Fremantle, bearing with it the hopes and fears, the pride and prayers of the people of Westralia.

It is well we should remember that the whole course of history exhibits no phenomenon in any way comparable with this which we, who are now living, have been privileged to look upon. Hitherto, the development of colonies in every part of the world has been followed by disruption from the parent stem. Now, for the first time in the annals of the world, citizens, nurtured amid the free institutions that they took with them far across the seas when they left the

Motherland, have sent their armed sons back across those selfsame seas to fight for the Motherland in her hour of need. How well those sons have fought let the events of the long and sanguinary struggle testify. When the student of the development of humanity applies himself to this subject in years to come, he may well marvel to find that the men of this province, forming part of the great island continent of Australia, bought with their blood no small share in the colossal work of human progress and enlightenment which is bound up in the maintenance, in its strength and in its integrity, of the mighty British Empire.<sup>2</sup>

The first Australians to participate in the Boer War were women nurses, initially as individuals then in groups. For an excellent summary of their activities see Goodman R. (1998). *Our War Nurses*. Brisbane: Boolarong Publications. pp. 1-11.

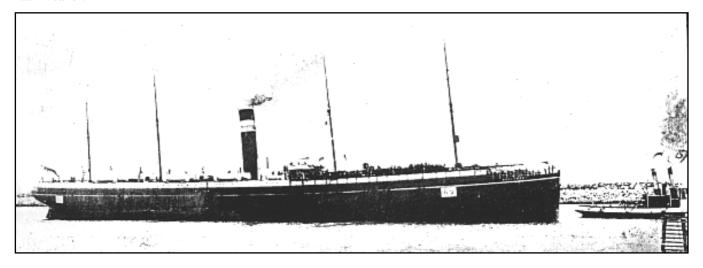
In Western Australia the first contingent comprised a handpicked company of 125 soldiers and 5 officers. Of these only 16 were WA born. After much civic celebration they trained to Albany and joined their counterparts from Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania on the *Medoc*, sailing on 8 November 1899.

It quickly became apparent that a serious underestimation of the task had been made and a second contingent was formed up, again with no shortage of volunteers, mostly Victorians and expatriate Englishmen. The *Surrey* had picked up troops from NSW and SA but the final point of embarkation was Fremantle which resulted in unprecedented displays of patriotism. Departure was on 3 February 1900.

Patriotic fervour in WA continued with a demand to raise a "Bushman's Corps" and soon another 125 handpicked men were deemed ready for the task. They embarked 16 March 1900 on *Maplemore* from Fremantle.

A fourth contingent involving WA was the Imperial Bushmen's Corps which differed from the first three, inasmuch as they retained their distinctive Australian character. The fourth and final contingent from WA was raised to be merged into the Imperial Army. After seven weeks of training near Perth, the 120 men and seven officers departed Fremantle on the *Manhattan* on 9 May 1900.

This is but a brief overview of the Western Australian scene. Australian colonies sent the equivalent of eight battalions to the Transvaal, and the Canadians and New Zealanders jumped in with equal fervour, with the result many of their finest and fittest were also smashed or destroyed. It is possible to see in the books of the time the creation of the enduring myth that Australians possess superior fighting qualities to all others. This has become the public relations person's justification for the broken bodies and ruined minds that have been the legacy of all conflicts Australia has been involved in since. The aftermath of the Boer War saw a questioning of such blind patriotism in Australia, and vigorous suppression of publications and views which were contrary to the official line. Neither did Australian military adventures begin with the Boer War. For example, there were previous military excursions, albeit colonial in origin, to New Guinea, the Sudan, to China, and to New Zealand. Paul Weaver.



SS Maplemore departs Fremantle with the third WA contingent for the Boer War

#### Old salt sees sauce

One of our senior members Capt Herbert Bolles (ret) writes to say that his 1998 book, *We seemed to get there* has been a sellout, which is a pity because the editor never got one. As well as his nautical adventures, he apparently also mentions some of the naughty things sailors got up to in ports.

Herb started as a cadet with Australasian United Steam Navigation and had a charmed life because he was transferred from a number of ships in the nick of time. Firstly from the passenger ship *Ormiston*, which was torpedoed in convoy off Coffs Harbour. (*Ormiston* made it to drydock in Sydney.) Then from the *Macumba* which was bombed and sunk in the Arafura

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Extract and photo of *Maplemore* from *How Westralia's Sons Served the Empire*. (ND). Melbourne: Photo Process House, pp.5-7.

Sea. On the *Tanda* he just missed being blown up with the *Fort Stikine* in Bombay. When he was transferred from the *Tanda* it was torpedoed and sunk between Columbo and Bombay. He served on several other ships gaining promotion along the way. With the Austasia line, a subsidiary of Blue Star, he captained *Matupi* and *Malay*. During his time Herb was also on *Gambhira* which caught fire in Sydney, and he spent 3 years with the WA State Shipping Service moving cargo up and down the West coast on *Koojarra*. During this time he discovered an uncharted island which is now named after the ship. He was then in the NSW Pilot Service for 21 years. Now Herb (76) has led such a charmed life one would not be surprised if he eventually gets fatally savaged by something as mundane a koala bear, but we hope not. Thanks for sharing your life Herb

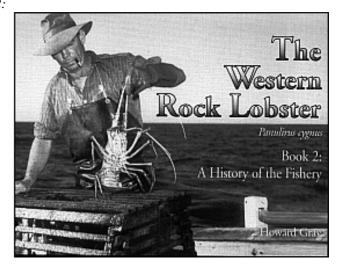
#### **Wow! Just in time for Christmas**

If anyone tells you that the internet and associated multimedia is going to spell the end of printed books, don't believe them. Neither of those formats comes close to the convenience and quality of presentation in a good book. Not only being generally mundane, the electronic based media are invariably overpriced and will very quickly become technically obsolete.

AAMH member Dr Howard Gray has just published the second in a two volume set of books relating to the Western

Australian crayfish industry. *The Western Rock Lobster. Book 2:* A History of the Fishery may well be the best presented so far relating to any sector of the Australian fishing industry. *The Western Rock Lobster. Book 1:* A Natural History was awarded the 1993 Whitely Medal for the best Australian Natural History book. The volumes were printed by Scott Four Colour Print in Perth, and the quality of reproduction can only be described as superb.

Both Howard's books contain many colour and black and white illustrations throughout, and are supported by an informed and well written referenced text, which is not surprising because they have sprung from his PhD thesis which was completed this year. Make no mistake, these two books have set a new benchmark in writing about Australian fishing history and are destined for fame. They should be in every formal collection relating to fishing history, anywhere in the world. "Where do I get 'em?" I hear you say. Well they will be available in



bookshops, but the quickest way now is from Westralia Books, PO Box 1559 Geraldton, Western Australia, 6531. Phone/fax (08) 9921 5844. or hsgray@midwest.com.au

Book 1: Softcover @ A\$24.95 Hardcover @ A\$34.95. (pp 112; gloss; ind; refs; bib; maps; illust col & b&w; append. Book 2: Softcover @ A\$39.95 Hardcover @ A\$49.95 (pp 294; gloss; ind; refs; bib; maps; illust col & b&w; append. Post and packing for Australian addresses is A\$9 per order. For overseas surface A\$15 per order. For overseas airmail \$A30 per order.

#### Is Australian history nearing death?

Some certainly think so, if we are to go by a flurry of letters in May to *The Australian*. The issue raises some good questions. For example, how effective are corporately structured institutions such as the many maritime museums in educating the nation, or are they places where privileged individuals mostly do their own thing, and regard contact with the wider public as an occasional and annoying necessity? Are these institutions really worth the increasing millions of dollars poured into them annually, or would the money be better spent elsewhere? Undoubtedly some do play an outstanding role, but could it be that mediocrity is more the norm for the others? And let's not forget the universities, most with history departments of one form or another. But how effective are they in raising the general public's awareness that history is an interesting and exciting subject? Why is history apathetically regarded by so many young Australians as boring? Are those who teach it boring? Are most students who take history units in their first degrees really interested? Could it be some organisations tacitly favour the agendas of governments to ensure survival. Is the history they present generally "sugar coated." inasmuch as one must never offend. Does it matter? Does anyone care? Then there is the world-wide mania for ship replicas. Are they truly educating the young about maritime history, or are they merely another corporate gimmick? Of course those directly involved will say yes they are educational, and be able to say how many human bodies have visited these projects, but how much really sinks in? Do such visits stimulate further thinking on the subject, or for most young people are they of no more intellectual worth than casually flipping through any picture book? Do we get what we deserve?

As editor by default of *The Quarterly Newsletter* of the past few years, I would like to say thanks to the many people who have offered encouragement and provided contributions. Can't do it without you. Merry Christmas and a happy new century. **Paul Weaver.** 

## The Australian Association for Maritime History Inc.

Quarterly Newsletter

If undelivered within 7 days please return to Dr. Malcolm Tull, Department of Economics, School of Business Murdoch University, Western Australia. 6150.

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The Quarterly Newsletter - The Australian Association for Maritime History is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Contributions are always welcome. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History. The editor is Dr. Paul R. Weaver, 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157. Email pweaver@starwon.com.au In 2000 the publication will go to the printers on the final

Mondays of February, May, August and November. Material for inclusion should be sent direct to the editor well prior to this date and should carry the author's signature. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of material.



HMAS Farncomb and the STS Leeuwin - Cockburn Sound WA 1999 Photo: P. Weaver