

2017 – COMMEMORATING 1942, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY'S DARKEST YEAR

During 2017 the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) will pause to commemorate a number of important 75th anniversaries as it focuses on what was, arguably, the RAN's darkest year – 1942.

For Australia's population at that time, 1942 began with a growing sense of trepidation as war spread to the Asia-Pacific following Japan's attack on the US Navy fleet in Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The war that had begun in Europe in September 1939 had become a truly global conflict.

The fast-moving events of December 1941 created genuine concern throughout Australia. Not only had the United States Navy's (USN) Pacific fleet been crippled in the attacks on Pearl Harbor, but two powerful British warships, the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* and the battlecruiser HMS *Repulse*, deployed to reinforce Singapore, had both been sunk within days of their arrival in the region.

The Imperial Japanese thrust southwards continued unabated and soon Malaya, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies had fallen. Never in Australia's short, modern history had its shores been under a more immediate threat.

Those concerns soon crystallized when on 19 February 1942 the first of 64 Japanese air raids took place on the strategically important port city of Darwin. The war was by then well-and-truly on Australia's doorstep.

In response to the dramatic change to the deteriorating strategic situation in the Asia-Pacific, new alliances were formed, notably between Australia and the US, and it was not long before units of the RAN and the USN were in action in the hotly contested wrestle for sea control in the the Coral Sea. The Battle of the Coral Sea in May saw Japanese attempts to invade Port Moresby by sea thwarted in what became the first fleet action in which planes launched from aircraft carriers, engaged the opposing forces. It was also the first naval battle in history in which neither side's ships sighted or fired directly upon the other.

Elsewhere in Australia, industry continued to ramp up and ship-building efforts were increased to provide the Navy with the vessels it would need to take the fight to the enemy. Repair facilities were also in demand as an increasing number of damaged and war-weary ships returned to Australia for repairs and refits.

By the end of 1942 HMA Ships *Perth*, *Yarra*, *Kuttabul*, *Canberra*, *Vampire*, *Voyager*, *Nestor* and *Armidale* had all joined the growing list of RAN wartime losses in a year during which there was little to celebrate.

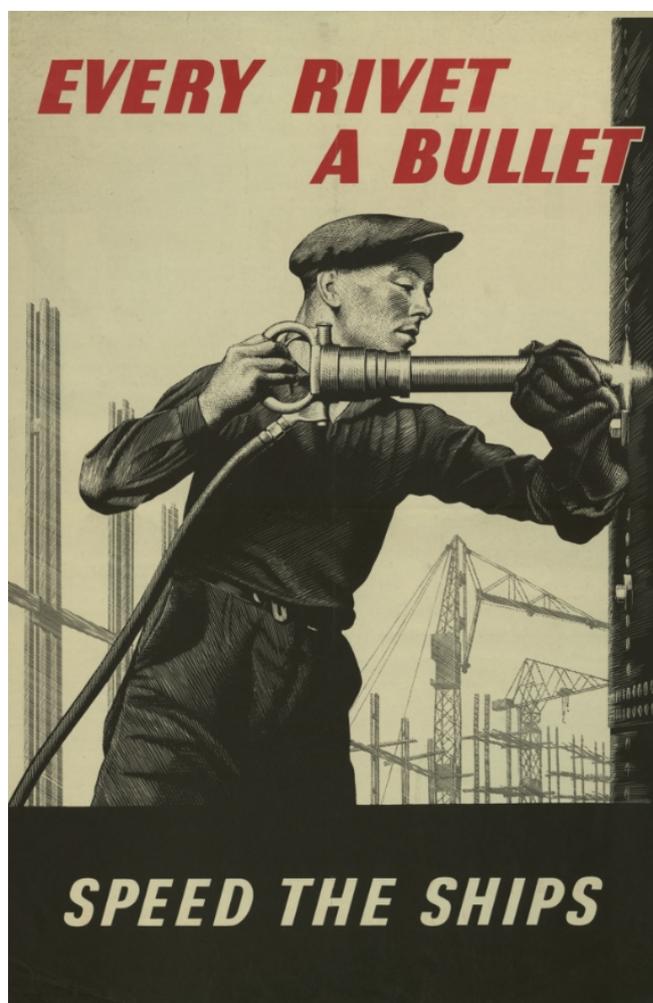
With the number of surviving World War II veterans rapidly diminishing, this year's 75th anniversary commemorations will be all the more poignant as the

Navy pauses to acknowledge their service and remember those who made the supreme sacrifice.

This Semaphore features a time-line of key 1942 events with links to resources aimed at providing those hosting commemorative activities with readily accessible material that will assist in that endeavour – Lest We Forget.

John Perryman

Director Strategic & Historical Studies



In 1942 Industry was essential in taking the fight to the enemy with maximum use being made of shipbuilding and repair facilities throughout Australia

1942 – A Time Line of Commemoration

8 January – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Whyalla* (I) (Lieutenant LN Morison, RANR(S)), commissioned. She was in Sydney Harbour during the Japanese midgeet submarine attack of May 1942 and also endured Japanese air raids while later operating in New Guinea. Today she is the centrepiece exhibit at the Whyalla Maritime Museum, South Australia, and is one of just two *Bathurst* class corvettes preserved as museum pieces.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-whyalla-i>

20 January – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Deloraine* (Lieutenant Commander DA Menlove, RANR(S)), assisted by her sister ships, HMA Ships *Katoomba* (Commander AP Cousin, RANR(S)) and *Lithgow* (Commander AV Knight, DSC, RANR(S)), attacked and sank the Japanese submarine *I-124* north of Darwin. *I-124* was the first enemy submarine sunk in Australian waters. Lieutenant Commander Menlove was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his part in the action.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-deloraine>

3 February – On that day in 1942 the Australian light cruiser HMAS *Hobart* (I) in company with the Royal Navy destroyer HMS *Tenedos* rescued a total of 70 passengers and crew, including women and children, from the merchant ship *Norah Moller* which had been crippled by Japanese bombers while transiting the Banka Strait. Of the 57 rescued by *Hobart*, 28 were wounded and six died on passage to Tanjung Priok.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-hobart-i>

6 February – On that day in 1942 a shell splintered Carley float life-raft containing the corpse of an unidentified Australian sailor was sighted in Flying Fish Cove, Christmas Island. The float was recovered and the sailor was buried in the Old European Cemetery overlooking the sea. It has since been determined that the float and body came from HMAS *Sydney* (II) which sank following a fierce engagement with the German raider HSK *Kormoran* in November the previous year. All of *Sydney's* 645 crew perished. The body has since been exhumed and was reburied in the Commonwealth War Grave cemetery at Geraldton with full Naval honours in November 2008. Efforts are continuing to try and identify the body using DNA extracted from the remains.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-ii-part-1>

7 February – On that day in 1942 the Tribal class destroyer HMAS *Warramunga* (I) was launched at Cockatoo Island Dockyard. *Warramunga* subsequently saw active service in the Pacific theatre during World War II and later during the Korean War. Two RAN ships have proudly carried this indigenous name.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-warramunga-i>

18 February – On that day in 1942 the *Bathurst* class Australian Mine Sweeper (AMS) HMAS *Wallaroo* was launched at Poole and Steel in Sydney. The ship had only a short commission, meeting her end in the early hours of 11 June 1943 when she sank following a collision with the

US liberty ship *Henry Gilbert Costin*. Three sailors from *Wallaroo* died as a result of the collision.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-wallaroo>

19 February – Each year on this day the RAN pauses to remember those who lost their lives in 1942 when Japanese bombers carried out the first of some 64 air raids launched against the Northern Territory capital Darwin. Eight ships were sunk, two were beached and later refloated and many of the other 35 ships in the harbour were damaged by bomb or machine gun fire. Darwin town and the RAAF aerodrome were also heavily damaged by the raid.

27 February – On that day in 1942 Commander Frederick Norton Cook, RAN took part in a successful combined operation raid against a German enemy radio station located at Bruneval, 12 miles north of Havre, France. For his part in this daring commando raid he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross 'for daring, skill and seamanship whilst serving in HMS *Tormentor* as Commander of the Naval Forces. He showed the highest qualities of cool and resolute leadership combined with skill and daring in landing the beach parties and re-embarking all troops under fire, thus achieving the result which his careful organisation and training of these forces deserved'. This experienced RAN officer was later appointed as the commanding officer of HMAS *Assault*, the RAN's combined operations training school located at Port Stephens, NSW.

28 February – On that day in 1942 HMAS *Perth* (I) under the command of Captain H.M.L. Waller, DSO*, RAN steamed into a fierce night action against superior Japanese naval forces in what became known as the Battle of Sunda Strait. At the time of her loss, early on 1 March, *Perth's* ship's company totalled 681, comprising 671 naval personnel, six RAAF personnel and four civilian canteen staff. Three hundred and fifty crewmen including Captain Waller and three civilians did not survive the sinking. Those who did survive numbered 328 (324 naval, three RAAF and one civilian). Four naval personnel died ashore without having been taken prisoner. A further 106 men died in captivity (105 naval, one RAAF). Four sailors were recovered from captivity in September 1944 when they were among prisoners of war rescued after the sinking of a Japanese transport. After the end of hostilities 214 men (211 naval, two RAAF and one civilian) were repatriated to Australia.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-perth-i>

4 March – Each year on this date the RAN pauses to remember those lost in HMAS *Yarra* (II) (Lieutenant Commander RW Rankin, RAN) in 1942. The story of *Yarra's* final action is one of heroism in the face of overwhelming odds against a superior enemy naval force. Of *Yarra's* complement of 151, 138, including her captain and all officers, were killed in the action or died subsequently in life rafts.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-yarra-ii>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/lieutenant-commander-robert-william-rankin>

9 April – On that day in 1942 HMAS *Vampire* (I), (Commander W.T.A. Moran, RAN) was sunk by Japanese



carrier borne aircraft in waters off Ceylon. Commander Moran and eight ratings died as a result of the action which also claimed the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes*. *Vampire* had previously distinguished herself as part of the famous 'Scrap Iron Flotilla'.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-vampire-i>

15 April 1942 – The first of eleven US 'S' Class submarines arrived at New Farm, on the Brisbane River, in company with the tender USS *Griffin* under the command of Captain RW Christie, USN. By the end of the month four were on active war patrols.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/usn-submarines-based-brisbane-during-world-war-ii>

16 April – The *Bathurst* class minesweeper, HMAS *Katoomba* was launched by the Deputy Mayoress of Katoomba, Mrs H. Lloyd, in 1941. On 20 January 1942 *Katoomba*, along with HMA Ships *Deloraine* and *Lithgow*, and USS *Edsall*, were co-credited with sinking the first enemy submarine in Australian waters, the Japanese mine laying submarine *I-124*.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-katoomba-i>

4 May – On that day in 1942 the Battle of the Coral Sea began. Over the next four days Japanese and Allied naval forces wrestled for sea control of the hotly contested Coral Sea in a fleet action fought between opposing carrier-borne aircraft. HMA Ships *Australia* and *Hobart* formed part of the Allied escort force playing an important role in preventing a Japanese landing force from transiting the Jomard Passage and landing at Port Moresby. The battle proved a strategic victory for the Allies and a major reversal for the Japanese.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/about/history/feature-histories/battle-coral-sea>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-australia-ii>

7 May – On that day in 1942 HMA Ships *Australia* (II) and *Hobart* (I) came under aerial attack from Japanese torpedo and high level bombers in the Coral Sea. The naval force was without fighter cover but escaped damage through evasive action, shooting down three of the enemy aircraft.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-hobart-i>

16 May – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvettes, HMA Ships *Bunbury* (I) (Lieutenant J.S. Bell, RANR) and *Horsham* (I) (Lieutenant W.H. Newby, RANR), were launched in Brisbane and Melbourne respectively. They were two of sixty corvettes built in Australia during World War II.

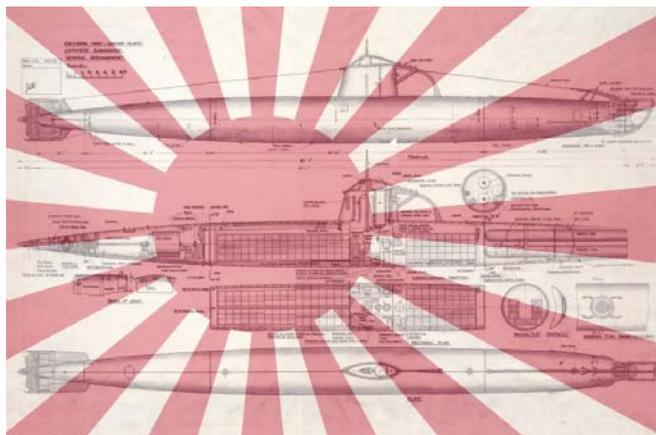
<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-bunbury-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-horsham-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/australian-corvettes>

31 May – On the night of 31 May 1942, three Japanese Type A midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour after being transported to Australian waters by ocean-going "mother" submarines; *I-22*, *I-24* and *I-27*. The ensuing attack resulted in the loss of HMAS *Kuttabul* and 21 of her crew when a torpedo, intended for the American cruiser

USS *Chicago*, struck the seabed beneath *Kuttabul* and exploded. All three Japanese midget submarines and their crews were lost in the attack.



<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/japanese-midget-submarine-attack-sydney-harbour>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kuttabul>

15 June – On that day in 1942, the N class destroyer, HMAS *Nestor* (Commander A.S. Rosenthal, RAN), was part of the covering force for a large convoy in the Mediterranean when she was straddled by two heavy bombs and crippled. The convoy was about 100 miles north of Tobruk and heading for Alexandria when it came under air attack. One bomb fell about 50 feet off *Nestor's* starboard side and the other two or three feet off her port side amidships where she was holed. No. 1 Boiler Room was flooded with the loss of all inside; Stoker Petty Officer J.B. Bulmer, RAN, Leading Stoker C.B. Hill, RAN, Leading Stoker M. Burns, RN, and Stoker L.J. Blight, RAN. The ship's medical officer, Surgeon Lieutenant S.A.C. Watson, RANR, "displayed outstanding bravery in immediately entering No. 1 Boiler Room in order to rescue the crew who he knew must be either killed or seriously injured." Watson recovered the bodies of all four men and was recognised with a DSC. *Nestor* was taken in tow by HMS *Javelin* whilst still under attack by German bombers, however, with only 80 miles covered over the ensuing ten hours, and with German submarines sighted in the morning of 16 June, the decision was made to remove *Nestor's* company to *Javelin* and scuttle the Australian destroyer.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-nestor>

1 July – On that day in 1942, an unmarked Japanese transport, *Montevideo Maru*, was torpedoed and sunk by the submarine, USS *Sturgeon*, whilst conveying Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees from Rabaul to Japan. It is believed that 845 POWs and 208 civilian internees (1053 in total) were lost in the attack. Two RAN coast watchers were known to be aboard *Montevideo Maru* when she was lost. Sub-lieutenant E.H.F. Mitchell, RANVR, had been a coast watcher operating on the south coast of New Britain when his position was overrun by Japanese forces on 9 February 1942. Chief Yeoman of Signals S. Lamont, RANR, had been a coast watcher on Anir Island, east of New Ireland before he too was captured.



6 July – On that day in 1942, the first of Australia's five Q class destroyers, HMAS *Quiberon* (Commander H.W.S. Browning, OBE, RN), commissioned at Cowes on the Isle of Wight. During World War II she served in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, and the Mediterranean Sea. She conducted three post-war tours of duty in Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force before being converted into an anti-submarine frigate. *Quiberon* conducted several tours of duty in Asian waters as part of the Far East Strategic Reserve and exercised as part of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation before decommissioning on 26 June 1964.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-quiberon>

29 July – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Broome* (I) (Lieutenant Commander R.A. Denovan, RANVR) commissioned in Brisbane. She served for the majority of the war years in Australian and New Guinea waters conducting anti-submarine and escort duties. She decommissioned in April 1946 and was temporarily commissioned into the Royal Navy before being transferred to the Turkish Navy in August. *Broome's* ship's bell now hangs in the Broome RSL.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-broome-i>

31 July – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Dubbo* (I) (Lieutenant A.G. Thomas, RANR(S)) commissioned in Sydney. *Dubbo* spent the first two-and-a-half years of her sea-going career in Fremantle attached to the anti-submarine and escort group. She later served in Darwin and Port Moresby, and bombarded Japanese positions at Muschu Island, Wewak and Kairiru Island in April and May 1945 and in the Solomon Islands in June. She conducted post-war minesweeping operations before decommissioning on 7 February 1947 having steamed 104,923 nautical miles in just four years of service.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-dubbo>
<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/australian-corvettes>

9 August – On that day in 1942, the Australian heavy cruiser, HMAS *Canberra* (I) (Captain F.E. Getting, RAN), was lost in the Battle of Savo Island. *Canberra* was part of the screening force for the Allied landings at Guadalcanal on 7 August. She was on night patrol near Savo Island north of Guadalcanal when, in the early hours of 9 August, she encountered a Japanese fleet comprising five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and a destroyer. The Japanese opened fire on *Canberra* and she was hit by at least 24 shells within the space of two minutes, and put out of action. Of her crew of 819, 84 were killed or died later of their injuries, including Captain Getting. Three American cruisers were also sunk and many other vessels damaged. In addition to those lost in *Canberra*, 939 American sailors were lost, and another 654 wounded.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/battle-savo-island-loss-hmas-canberra>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-canberra-i>

13 August – On that day in 1942, MV *Dorset* was sunk in the Mediterranean Sea when the convoy she was part of came under enemy air attack. During the action, a young Australian naval gunner, Leading Seaman William Rutledge Anderson, RANR, coolly went round the guns

repairing and rectifying minor troubles and assisting at whichever gun was most actively engaged. *Dorset's* Master said that he was always in the thick of the fight and his cheerful manner was an inspiration to all. Anderson was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal as well as the Lloyd's War Medal for Bravery at Sea for his actions.

25 August – On that day in 1942, Sub Lieutenant Hugh Thomas McDonald, RAN, was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for actions in HMS *Amazon* in taking convoys to and from Murmansk. During one engagement on 1 May 1942, after German destroyers had hit *Amazon's* forward superstructure, McDonald realised that there were casualties in the ship's wheelhouse. McDonald ran down to man the wheel taking charge of the starboard telegraph, ensuring that the ship was out of control for only a short time.

29 August – On that day in 1942, the Tribal class destroyer, HMAS *Arunta* (I) (Commander J.C. Morrow, DSO, RAN) sank the Japanese submarine RO-33 off Port Moresby using depth charges. *Arunta* had been in commission only five months and it was her first encounter with an enemy vessel in World War II.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-arunta-i>

8 September – On that day in 1942, Lieutenant Commander Arthur Stanley Storey, RAN, was awarded his second Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in HMS *Cleopatra* in driving off strong enemy forces on 22 March 1942 resulting in the safe passage to Malta of an important convoy. As the Squadron Gunnery Officer and Gunnery Officer in *Cleopatra*, he produced an inspiring and well-directed volume of fire from an untrained ship, some of whose controls had been shot away and control ratings killed in his presence.

9 September – On that day in 1942, the 4 Australian N class destroyers of the 7th Destroyer Flotilla, HMA Ships *Napier* (Lieutenant Commander A.H. Green, DSC, RAN), *Nepal* (Commander F.B. Morris, RAN), *Nizam* (Lieutenant Commander M.J. Clark, DSC, RAN) and *Norman* (I) (Commander H.M. Burrell, RAN), joined an assault force at Madagascar whose Government was sympathetic to the Vichy French. The 4 destroyers participated in the initial amphibious assault at Majunga the following day and continued to provide gunfire and other support over the ensuing weeks. The Madagascan Government capitulated on 5 November 1942.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-napier>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-nepal>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-nizam>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-norman-i>

13 September – This year marks the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Warrnambool* (I) (Commander A.J. Travis, RAN) when it struck a mine whilst conducting post-war minesweeping operations in the Great Barrier Reef. Four sailors were killed; Stoker R.J. Garrett, Ordinary Seaman J.H. Hyland, Able Seaman D.B. Sigg and Signaller N.L. Lott.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-warrnambool-i>



<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/australian-corvettes>

22 September – On that day in 1942, Lieutenant Commander Desmond Aubrey Menlove, RANR(S), was awarded a Distinguished Service Order for skill and resource when commanding HMAS *Deloraine* when the Japanese submarine *I-124* was destroyed off Darwin on 21 January 1942. Other members of *Deloraine's* crew were also recognised for their part in this action.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-deloraine>

21 October – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Kapunda* (Lieutenant Commander DA Menlove, DSO, RANR(S)) commissioned in Sydney. *Kapunda* was active during the war years conducting escort, patrol and shore bombardment operations. No ships were lost while under her escort. She decommissioned on 14 January 1946 having steamed 110,177 nautical miles on war service.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kapunda-i>

30 October – On that day in 1942, the *Grimsby* class sloop, HMAS *Warrego* (II) (Lieutenant Commander ADC Inglis, RN), completed a survey to establish a safe navigable passage from Milne Bay to Cape Nelson, through Goschen and Ward Hunt Straits, in preparation for the Allied landing at Buna, New Guinea. It was part of a hydrographic task in which surveying ships of the RAN would enable a series of Allied assaults right through the South West Pacific Area to final victory. Hydrographic surveying remains an important role in today's navy.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-warrego-ii>

4 November – On this day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvette, HMAS *Gympie* (Lieutenant Commander CWJ Patterson, RANR) commissioned in Brisbane. *Gympie* spent the majority of the war years in Australian and New Guinea waters on escort and anti-submarine duties. She was present at Koepang, Portuguese Timor, for the Japanese surrender before decommissioning in Brisbane on 23 May 1946 having steamed over 100,000 miles in RAN service.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-gympie-i>

23 November – On that day in 1942, the improved Tribal class destroyer HMAS *Warramunga* (I) (Commander EFV Dechaineux, DSC, RAN) commissioned in Sydney. *Warramunga* served extensively in the Pacific theatre during World War II and also undertook two tours of duty during the Korean War. She visited Asian waters twice more after the Korean War as a unit of the Far East Strategic Reserve before decommissioning on 7 December 1959.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-warramunga-i>

28 November – On that day in 1942, in two separate actions, two Australian ships scored victories against Axis vessels. In the Mediterranean, HMAS *Quiberon* (Commander HWS Browning, OBE, RN) and her sister ship HMS *Quentin* sank the Italian submarine *Dessie* north of Bone, Algeria. Meanwhile, in the southern Indian Ocean, HMAS *Adelaide* (I) (Captain JCD Esdaile, OBE, ADC, RAN) intercepted the German blockade runner *Ramses*, flying a Norwegian ensign and identifying herself

as *Taiyang*. *Adelaide* did not fall for the ruse and opened fire. *Ramses's* crew abandoned ship and scuttled her.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-quiberon>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-adelaide-i>

30 November – On that day in 1942, the *Bathurst* class corvettes, HMA Ships *Armidale* (I) (Lieutenant Commander DH Richards, RANR(S)) and *Castlemaine* (Lieutenant Commander PJ Sullivan, RANR(S)), came under air attack on three separate occasions by a total of 15 Japanese bombers whilst en route to reinforce Allied guerrilla forces on Timor. On that occasion each attack was repelled without damage or casualties. The following day *Armidale* was attacked and sunk by Japanese aircraft. HMAS *Kuru* (Lieutenant JA Grant, RANR(S)), which was also in the area, was also attacked by an estimated 44 aircraft in 23 separate waves but survived with minor damage. In addition to her crew of 83, *Armidale* carried three AIF soldiers, two Dutch officers and 61 Indonesian troops of the Netherlands East Indies Army. Forty RAN personnel, the two Dutch officers and 58 NEI soldiers were lost.

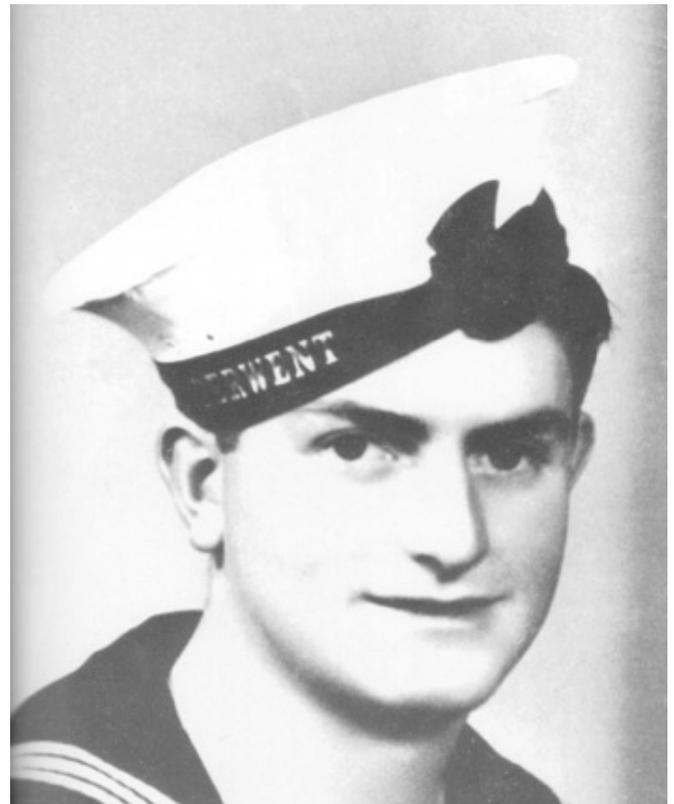
<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-armidale-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/seaman-edward-teddy-shean>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-castlemaine>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kuru>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/australian-corvettes>



*Ordinary Seaman E Shean who remained at his post firing his gun as *Armidale* went down. His heroic action saw many of his shipmates saved but ultimately cost him his life.*



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