



T.S. VINDICATRIX ASSOCIATION NSW-ACT

A part of the world wide Vindi family



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Yet though her splendour may have ceased to be she played her sovereign part in making me.-*John Masefield*



Merchant Navy Day 2009

The first Civic/Public MN Day service in Sydney, attended by the NSW Governor Marie Bashir, consul generals of Japan & Germany, Mayors & Councilors of Mosman and surrounding municipalities.

Officers from the RAN & RAAF.

Photo above- William Mackinnon Vindi 1941 laying our Vindi wreath.

Below the "Vindi contingent" showing the Red Duster.



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AUSTRALIAN MERCHANT NAVY DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mosman Cenotaph 3rd September 2009-09-22

Commander Michael Hickey, RAN

Commanding Officer HMAS PENGUIN

Drafted by LCDR Desmond Woods, RAN, Australian Defence College

Your Excellency, Consuls General, Mr Mayor, distinguished guests, merchant mariners, ladies and gentlemen.

The maritime history of Australia in peace and war has been until recently a largely neglected subject. Many Australians are just not 'sea-minded'. Though our National Anthem mentions that we are "*girt by sea*" most Australians think of the country as being "*girt by beach!*" This national sea blindness has meant that after both world wars ended there was little collective memory of the scale of effort necessary to win the War at Sea. Remembrance of the sacrifices made by sailors in war faded quickly.

This was true for the story of sailors of the RAN at war and was even more pronounced for the less visible Australian Merchant Navy. The Merchant Navy of the whole British Empire, which included the Australian Merchant Fleet, suffered proportionately the highest casualties of any of the allied services in the Second World War. Thirty thousand two hundred and forty eight British Empire merchant seamen who served at sea under the red ensign lost their lives doing so. The Australian Department of Veterans Affairs nominal roll records 3,500 Australian merchant seamen serving in World War II in Australian registered ships. The Australian War Memorial has placed the names of 845 of them, who are known to have died on war service during World War II, on the commemorative roll. The true number of Australian born merchant seamen lost on all the world's oceans will never be known as these 845 do not include the hundreds of unrecorded Australian seamen killed while serving in British merchant ships and in the ships of the International Seamen's Pool. Shipmates remembered them on ANZAC Day and bereaved families remembered their missing fathers, brothers and sons every day, but very little has been done to teach succeeding generations of Australians about them. School books and history lessons do not mention that the merchant navy's ships were the means by which Australian diggers and allied infantry were landed, sustained, armed, fed, reinforced and enabled to fight and win their land battles.

This omission is most profoundly true of the period of the 'Battle for Australia' and the campaign in New Guinea in 1942. Those brutal battles on the Kokoda track were finally won because the Japanese army was cut off from re-supply and was starved into retreating. First Australian and later American troops in the jungle and on the northern beaches were supplied with bread and bombs, bacon and bullets and fuel in vast quantities from the sea and were therefore able to take the fight back to the Japanese. New Guinea was won back from the enemy by the combination of the matchless courage and endurance of young soldiers and airman ashore and by the merchant seamen afloat who supplied them. Mariners achieved this logistical miracle despite their ships being strafed, bombed, mined and torpedoed under them.

That indisputable fact of our modern maritime history has been somewhat overlooked by a forgetful nation.

What has also been largely forgotten is that though our island continent was not invaded in 1942 its coastal waters most certainly were. Between December 1941 and August 1943 58 Japanese submarines sank 180 ships and damaged 15 more. During this period up to 40 long range attack submarines sank 38 merchant ships in Australian waters. During this same period in the Indian Ocean and South West Pacific Japanese aircraft sank 50 more merchant ships and damaged another 53. By the war's end 76 merchant ships were lost in Australian waters to mines, torpedoes, shelling and bombing. Twenty-nine of these were Australian registered and 349 Australian seamen were killed on these ships or perished later.

Taking merchant ships into harm's way under these circumstances required a quiet heroism and an uncomplaining dedication to duty which was unsurpassed by any of the armed services. Merchant seaman at war had the unreserved admiration of the sailors of the world's navies, who recognised cold courage when they saw it.

Given the mortal danger at sea it would have been unsurprising if there had been desertions or refusal of duty by Australian seamen. This never happened. The master mariners and men of the merchant fleets of not only the British Empire, but also of the United States, Norway and the Netherlands, with stoic courage and hardihood, accepted that the odds were stacked against their survival, shouldered their kit bags, slung their hammocks, loaded cargo and steamed back into danger anyway. Why did they do this? The seamen of the British Empire, America and occupied Europe signed on because they knew that without their ships at sea the war could never be won and the world restored to peace and sanity.

They wanted to "do their bit." Churchill expressed the same idea in 1943.

He wrote: *Sea Transport is the stem from which victory blooms. Since without supplies no army is good for anything.*

As many Australian merchant seamen served in British as in Australian vessels. They sailed in freighters and troop ships, hospital ships, landing ships, tramp steamers and most dangerously in tankers and ammunition ships. Many stayed in their civilian ships when they were taken up from trade into the navy and converted into auxiliary warships, armed merchant cruisers, and escort aircraft carriers. They were at the evacuations and resupply of troops and civilians from Dunkirk, Malta, Tobruk and Singapore.

They were present in the lethal six year long Battle of the Atlantic.

The merchant navy fuelled and supplied the British Pacific Fleet and the RAN which depended on its tankers to be their fleet supply train in the vast Pacific as the allies advanced on the home islands of Japan in 1945.

Finally they brought home the thousands of sick, emaciated allied prisoners of war who had survived four years of brutal captivity. Thirty-seven Australian merchant seamen died while POWs.

It is true to say that wherever there was a hard, unglamorous, dangerous but vital task to be done the red ensign was there. The Merchant Navy provided the muscle power and heavy lift necessary to get the job done and the war won.

Thirty thousand seamen of the Empire's merchant navies forged the sea links in this logistics chain with their lives. The oceans floors of the world are strewn with the wrecks of their broken, burnt ships and the remains of the men who went down with them. Not for them the exhilaration of being able to fight back or to steam at speed into action. When World War Two broke out their ships carried worn out World War One guns without range finding.

Later the RAN supplied naval gunners to Defensively-Equipped Merchant Ships (D.E.M.S.) and thirty-eight of these gunners lost their lives alongside their merchant navy comrades. These lumbering merchant ships were not "greyhounds of the deep". They were more like fat St Bernards bringing sustenance where it was needed through storm and tempest.

Mostly they proceeded at the speed of the slowest ship in the convoy, often less than ten knots.

Even in peace time it was a hard, physical life at sea and consequently merchant seamen were mostly young.

Many were just teenaged boys, with all their lives ahead of them.

Here is the posthumous George Cross citation for one 18 year old apprentice who managed to get clear of his burning ship though mortally injured. Let his story stand for countless others examples of youthful heroism.

When the painter was cast off the boat drifted back towards the burning ship and it was clear to all on board that it would require a tremendous effort to pull it out of danger. Most of the occupants, however, were so badly burned that they were unable to help, but Apprentice Clarke took an oar and pulled heartily for two hours without a word of complaint. It was not until after the boat was clear that it was realized how badly he had been injured. His hands had to be cut away from the oar as the burnt flesh had stuck to it. He had pulled as well as anyone, although he was rowing with the bones of his hands. Later when lying at the bottom of the boat his thoughts were still with his shipmates and he sang to keep up their spirits. Next day he died, having shown the greatest fortitude. By his supreme effort, undertaken without thought of self and in spite of terrible agony, Apprentice Clarke ensured the safety of his comrades in the boat. His great heroism and selfless devotion were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Merchant Navy.

Those who were lost, and those who finally came home, scarred physically and mentally by battle, but alive, have left an enduring legacy of service above self for us to learn from.

Many gallant actions and incredible feats of endurance after sinkings are recorded, but the deeds of those who perished in boats that were never found cannot be known.

Both the heroism and the tragedy should now take a more prominent place in the annals of Australians at war.

That capacity for endurance of the common man facing uncommon danger is a lesson that every generation needs to learn afresh.

What is the purpose of today's ceremony? What do we owe to these men who served at sea in a war that started seventy years ago today? Quite simply we owe them more than sixty years of peace and liberty and our material prosperity. We owe them more than we can ever repay. But all that their elderly shipmates, still among us, ask from us, is our recognition of their friends and comrades who never made port and who now have no grave but the sea. All that their families ask is to share their loving recollections of their menfolk who did their duty, never grew old, and never will.

Our presence today indicates we are also mindful of all those who have served, and are still serving, in the Australian Merchant Navy in the six decades since 1945, in peace and war. We particularly remember those who have lost their lives not to the violence of the enemy but to the ever variable and dangerous sea itself.

May all our fellow countrymen commemorated here today, those who were killed in action and those who survived the wars of last century but who have since died, wheresoever they may lie, rest in peace.

We remember their steadfastness, their bravery and their sacrifice with humility and gratitude.

They are not forgotten in Australia, the land they loved, and they never will be.

They need no dirge for time and tide fills all things, with tribute unto them. The warmth of a summer sun, the calm of a quiet sea, the comforting arm of night, the generous soul of nature and the power of a seabird's flight.

Blow golden trumpets blow, mournfully for all the golden youth and shattered dreams that lie where God has lain his quiet dead for all the world to see, upon some alien ocean bed.



Photos - **Left**-, L to R Catherine & Ron Wylie who have spent much of the past 10 years campaigning for this day, next to them is Louis Bonnici a Maltese born seaman now domiciled in UK who laid a wreath on behalf of UK MNA president Vivien Foster.

Above - our President Mike Siegle lays a wreath.

Right - the Mosman war memorial

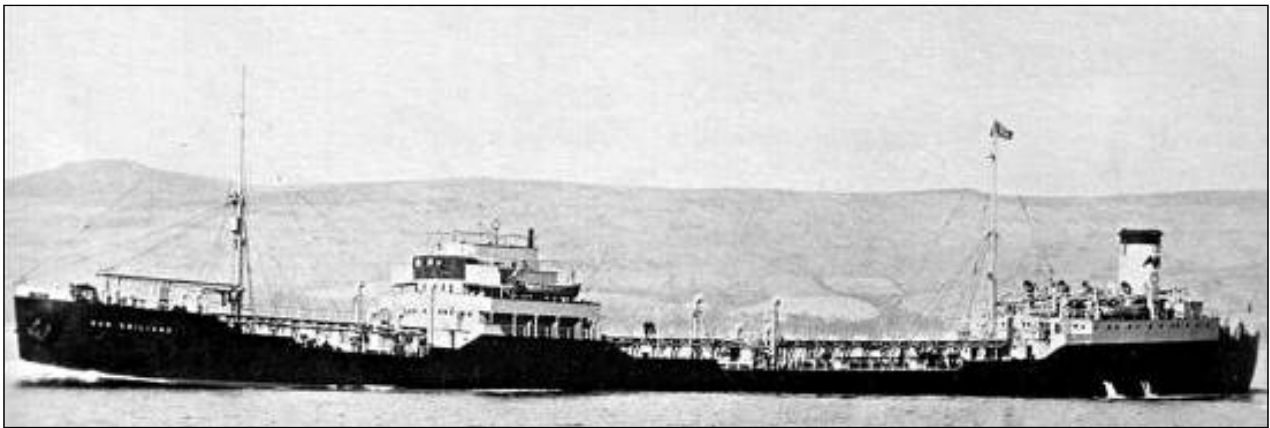
A day to be proud of. A day to remember.

The MN Day ceremony was well attended with about 200 people being present, as well as the NSW Governor and other distinguished guests, a naval honour guard hoisted & dipped the Ensigns an excellent local school band provided the music for the service.

Following the service everyone walked to the nearby Mosman RSL Club (including the Governor and her entourage) for lunch and some free drinks, all of which I later discovered were paid for by Ron Wylie himself.

It was great day all round, it started off well for Peter Bearman, David Partridge & myself at Circular Quay were the ferry skipper recognising our MN badges and came down to the wharf and invited us up to the bridge for the trip across to the Zoo. Were the bus driver completed the daily double by, after dropping the other passengers deviated from his route to drop us three and some others close to the memorial in the park.

The loss of the "San Emiliano"



The keynote speech by Commander Michael Hickey, RAN, which is reproduced in full here as it was thought by many on the day to be 'landmark' speech as it comes from a non Merchant Navy source *namely* the Australian Defence college and it ties together very well the wartime story of the British and Australian Merchant Seaman.

The speech includes the London Gazette citation on the posthumous award of the George Cross to apprentice Clarke.

The next couple of pages tell that story;

At 03.24 hours on 9 Aug, 1942, the San Emiliano (Master James Wilfred Tozer), dispersed from convoy E-7, was hit by two torpedoes from U-155 about 450 miles west of Trinidad and sank in flames after breaking in two. The U-boat had to avoid the flames on the water surface by diving. The master, 35 crew members and four gunners were lost.

Eight crew members were picked up by a US Army transport and landed at Paramaribo, Dutch Guinea.

The apprentice Donald Owen Clarke was posthumously awarded the George Cross and the chief radio officer D.W. Dennis was awarded posthumously the George Medal, both for their outstanding bravery.

The following account was written by the San Emiliano's Chief Officer, Captain T.D. Finch.



Apprentice
Donald Owen Clarke GC

We left Trinidad on 6 August 1942 in convoy, bound for the Cape and eventually Suez. In the evening of 9 August the convoy dispersed. Round about 6 in the evening as dusk fell I noticed a ship coming up from astern with full navigation lights blazing, indicating a neutral vessel. By 7 o'clock she was half-a-mile on our starboard beam and I noticed with the lights she was carrying that she was a hospital ship. By 8 p.m. when the 3rd officer relieved me of the watch she was well down on the horizon and disappearing. I've always had the idea that the U-boat must have been hanging around then, probably on the surface on that particular track and must have seen the hospital ship and more than likely saw us silhouetted against her lights.

(From a US navy report made from an interview with Chief officer Finch- The tanker was on course 100°(T), speed 11½ knots in 60 fathoms, radio silent, not actually zigzagging at the moment of attack as the Master on the bridge, was using all possible speed to clear himself from the Red Cross Ship, Newfoundland, which, fully lighted, had just passed close aboard, crossing the San Emiliano's bow from the port side. Previous to this time the ship had been using zigzag diagrams numbers 9 and 37 during daylight hours. One look-out was stationed on top of the bridge, while three gunners were at their post on the after gun platform. The ship was being conned by the Third Mate, who had the watch, but the Master was on the bridge. The weather was clear, slight sea running, wind East force 2 to 3, visibility good, no moonlight. At the time of attack the lights of the Red Cross Ship Newfoundland were visible, about 10 miles distant on the starboard bow.)



*Left- the Newfoundland
Leaving Algiers.*

*Right in her peace time
Furness-Withy livery
Bombed 40 miles off Salerno
on 13 September 1943.
38 killed. Built 1925, con-
verted to Hospital ship 1940.*



At about 9 o'clock I decided to turn in for the night and was partially undressed when there was a terrific explosion from the starboard side which was immediately followed by another. I jumped out of the bunk, rushed to the cabin door, which came away in my hands, saw that the mess was ablaze, and started to run down the alley-way. I saw the apprentice running around and shouted to him 'Quick, this way . . . follow me'. We rushed back into my cabin, smacked the door back into position to prevent the fire entering, undid the thumb-screws to the port-hole, opened it up, and pushed the apprentice through it, and I followed him, landing on the shelter deck, down the ladder to the fore-deck and ran to the focs'le head which I judged to be the safest place.

By this time the ship was ablaze from bridge to stern, the whole sky being lit up by the flames which must have been hundreds of feet high. I saw the starboard life-boat had crashed into the sea but the port life-boat was still hanging in the davits, so I shouted to the apprentice 'Come-on ... quick . . . we've got two minutes to get that boat away. If we don't, we're dead'.

As we were running along the fore-deck towards the bridge, this boat also crashed into the sea. . . . We had to jump from the shelter deck to the falls about 6 feet and slide down them. Three other men threw themselves into the boat in desperation. At this time I had let go the after painter and noticed men running round the poop who were on fire, throwing themselves into the sea which was itself on fire.

(from the same USN report -I managed to climb through the port on to the fore deck and a few of the crew succeeded in following me. I saw No.2 forward lifeboat was undamaged and the Wireless Operator volunteered to release this boat. This man crawled on his hands and knees through the flames and released the falls, jumping into the boat as she was still made fast to the ship by the forward painter. I was unable to release the painter but managed to swing the boat off from the ship. Actually it was lucky for me that the painter had jammed because, as the ship still had weigh on her, on releasing the painter we should have drifted into the flames)

We were about 40 ft. from the ship's side when the 3rd officer came running along the fore-deck from the focs'le head shouting 'Wait for me, wait for me!' He dived over the side and we picked him up. At the same time there was another man on the focs'le head shouting, but there was nothing we could do because out of the 5 or 6 who got away into the boat, only 3 were able to row. Slowly the ship drew ahead of us whilst we struggled to keep clear of burning sea. We heard some screams for help and rowed over and pulled out of the water a fireman who was terribly burned, so much so that when we pulled him into the boat, the skin from his body and arms came off in our hands like gloves, and he was in a very bad way indeed.

Loss of the 'San Emiliano' continued

Eventually we heard two other cries for help and found in the water an able seaman who was clothed and not burned. Shortly after we picked up a pumpman in the same condition. We tried to pursue the ship, looking for survivors, but it was an impossible task because those in the boat were so gravely injured and collapsing, leaving only three to row against the wind and sea.

So we stopped rowing and found the first apprentice terribly burned, so much so that his hands had to be freed from the oars with scissors. The third officer and I attended to the wounded and were horrified at the extent of their injuries. There seemed no further signs of life anywhere so we hoisted sail and set course for Trinidad.

This time, the fireman who had been in such agony all night, died, and within minutes the second steward who had suffered terrible abdominal wounds and burns also passed away. I went over to him and lifted the blanket covering him and noticed the whole of his stomach badly injured and exposed. He had been very patient during the night and the only thing he complained of was the cold. Both these men were committed to the deep.

We had been sailing for an hour or two when the second mate called me. He had been badly burned and severely injured below the waist. He wanted water which I gave him, but even then I knew it was hopeless and a few minutes later he passed away, and as I covered him up with a blanket I noticed that the senior apprentice's life was also drawing to a close. About mid-day he died having been very badly burned all over his body and had been so very brave trying to keep up the morale of the rest of the men by singing.

The most pathetic thing about the whole tragedy was the extreme youth of these lads, which was uppermost in my mind as I committed them to the deep.

We continued on our voyage, in utter despair and sadness.

At about 1 o'clock in the afternoon we heard the hum of a plane. He circled round several times, increasing height and then dropped a parachute, which held a cask of water but this broke on impact and so was wasted.

I wasn't too concerned about water at that point as I reckoned I had enough to last us about 30 days.

We proceeded and just before dark the plane returned. He dropped the second parachute and this time it was a churn, rather like a milk churn. It was a good drop as it landed about 30 to 40 yards away from us. We picked it up and inside was a flask of iced water, cigarettes, chocolates and soup and a message saying 'steer south, coast within 110 miles'. I had had a rough idea that this was so, but steering south for me was against everything, e.g. current and the wind. However I decided to try so we turned round and headed south as far as we could judge.

Dawn broke, we tidied the boat as far as we could and had a few rations. About ten o'clock the plane appeared again and dropped another parachute and this time it wasn't food but a message saying 'Help coming'.

About an hour after dusk we spotted a schooner sailing without lights. I grabbed a torch and signalled because I thought this was the help that had been sent, but as soon as he spotted the signal he turned away and went off into the night. About an hour and a half later the whole sky was lit up by flares, we heard a plane, and then the flares came down lighting up the whole ocean and we spotted our rescue ship which turned out to be the 'Admiral Jessop', U.S. Army Transport. He came along side and took the wounded off first, the rest climbed on board and then all were taken down to the sick bay and put under sedation.

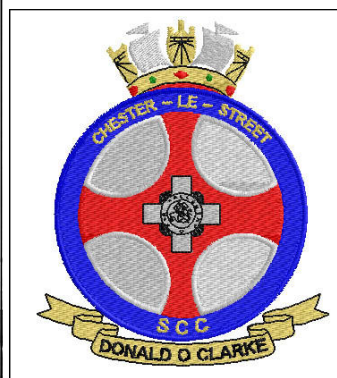
Before I was put under sedation the captain asked me what to do with the life-boat, and I told him to sink it as it had been such a boat load of misery, despair, and death, and I wanted no more to do with it. I learnt later that I could have sold it and with the cash I could have clothed the survivors.

Six survived out of a crew of 46, but before the war was over I think another three of those saved at that time, lost their lives later. For his conduct in the aftermath of the sinking. Chief Officer Thomas Daniel Finch was awarded the George Medal (London Gazette 20 July 1943), together with the Lloyds War Medal for Bravery at Sea.

Donald Clarke was born in Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham in 1923 where he is still remembered by the community. The local Sea Cadet unit bears his name and the congregation of the parish church of Chester-le-Street made a memorial chapel in the south aisle to those who lost their lives in the Wars. The cross in the chapel takes the form of a replica of the George Cross, awarded posthumously to Donald Owen Clarke.



San Emiliano



Sea Cadet unit crest

U-Boat 155 that sank the 'San Emiliano' was bombed by a Catalina of VP.-53 Sqn U.S.N East of Barbados and lost with all 52 hands on the 8/03/43 after a successful career being launched in Oct 1940



An echo from the first world war. The letter below comes from a Norma Clayton who runs a the writing group that our John Mears attends, it was written by her father's uncle.

The Clan Maccorquodale' off Millers Pt. Sydney 1915.

Photo from the National maritime collection—the 'Thomas Hood collection' on Flickr.

SS Clan Maccorquodale
Gaba Tepe, Turkey
5th. May 1915

Dear Mother,

I am writing this now so I wont forget all that I have to tell you, but I won't be able to post it it until I get back to Alexandria or some other British town.

Well to start from the beginning we arrived at Lemnos island (a Greek Possession) from Alexandria on April 29 with a cargo of Mules and 300 English Tommies. I managed to get ashore in Lemnos and visited the prison camp containing over 1000 Turks and some Germans. There is also a big English and French camp there, On the Sunday after we arrived when one of the Troopships was leaving, two Bum Boats with 6 men in them were sucked in by her propeelor. Both boats were broken to atoms & three of the men were killed. It was a terrible accident, seeing the boats going through, just as if it was a sausage machine. In the small town the is a very big Greek church, as it is always open like the R.C., I went in to have a look. I was very surprised to find it contains no seats at all— the people have to satnd throughout the service. The walls were also decorated with oil paintings and it seems to be the same breed as the Roman. Well after a couple of days we came up here and were greeted by the 'Queen Elizabeth' and a bout another dozen Dreadnaughts shelling the Turkish Positions. This place and away down the coast is just alive withwarships, Aeroplanes, Balloons, Submarines, Minesweepers and every other kind of craft known. It was dreadful to see the poor Australains just getting hacked up by the hundreds when they were making a landing and the warships could not fire as they were afraid of hitting our own men. Altogether 2300 Australians were either killed or wounded on that first day. My Word! Mother, war is a terrible thing, I never thought it would be dreadful as this until I saw it. The Minesweepers are at work constantly bringing the dead out to sea to bury them.

The 'Queen Elizabeth (Screaming Lizzie) and two other battle ships were within a few hundred yards of us last night shelling a position. Needless to say I had no sleep the noise was simply terrific.

We are only anchored about a mile from shore so we have a splendid view of the battle field. We can see the Turks bringing a gun into position, when all of a sudden one of our warships fires a gun and the Turks are no more. They must be losing thousands daily. When I get home I will tell you all about the battle. It is to awful to express on paper. On Sunday we got a great surprise. About 12 o'clock there came a storm of 12" shells from the "Goeben" in amongst about 50 transports and dozens of of other ships. One collier was sent to the bottom& several others were damaged. We were so close toin to the shore that the shells passed right over us. You should have seen the scatter of ships. They all had their anchors up and out to sea in double quick time. Mrs Souter's son (I think Mrs Souter goes to the church) was shot through both arms last Wednesday, but I hear he is getting better. Our natives are scared out of their lives, it is all you can do to get them to stay out of their quarters.

Will add a few more lines before I post this.

Your loving Son, Francis



HMAT (His Majesty's Australian transport) A6 'Clan Maccorquodale '

Loading for Gallipoli, in Sydney Harbour 1915, following her requisition by the Australian Commonwealth. Torpedoed & sunk by a submarine of Alexandria Nov 17 1917
No casualties.

VOYAGE TO MURMANSK

A maritime Memories Cruise

Organized by Vindi Boy Des Cox of Snowbow productions <http://www.snowbow.co.uk/news/index.html>



Left –the 'MV Discovery' built in Germany in 1972 as the 'Island Venture' - extensively refitted and renamed since then in one of her many guises since she was the 'love boat' in the so named TV show. Fly's the Red Ensign, UK officers, majority of crew from Philippines. The report and photos of the cruise below are largely from Rob Andrew a Vindi Boy friend of mine who lives in Warrington, some lines and photos are from Wikipedia, Russian, and other websites. Ed.

We sailed from Harwich on the East coast on the 19th July 09, after drinks with the master Captain Brocklehurst, a very nice fellow, just before we sailed a bugle sounded played by a Royal navy sailor and shipping company flags of the many shipping companies that had ships in the Russian Convoys were hoisted aloft.

A very moving start to the voyage, it brought many a tear to many an eye amongst those on deck. We were then escorted out by a RN patrol boat & Tugs dressed overall.

Across the North Sea which is as busy as a motorway with ships in all directions, to Bergen in Norway were some Norwegian vets joined us, we had about a 10hr stop there then on up the coast to various ports and Fiords.

At MURMANSK, we sailed up a very long river, passing all kinds of vessels when all of a sudden this Aircraft Carrier came in sight she was a very modern type and it appears is the only carrier they have in their Northern fleet she was having a wash and brush up , a band was playing us in and we reciprocated with a blast on the whistle, we then passed a couple of subs which were obviously mothballed and rusty to boot and a largish battleship which was having her bottom scraped in a floating dry dock. on then to our berth passing various icebreakers and smaller vessels.



A big band and TV crews greeted us at the berth on the main seafront and the normal Posse' of customs and official personnel were marching up and down the gangway, all seemed to be very friendly except this one pretty little customs officer who was so dressed efficiently and spick and span that I decided to try to take her photo (NE- ERT!!!! WHICH IS RUSSIAN FOR GET NUTTED) was the loud rebuff and I went scuttling down to my cabin with my tail between my legs I could see myself strung up like 007 with a noose around my neck .

When the official business was completed we were led down to some coaches and with a large police escort followed by a few ambulances we set of through the city to a large war memorial known as 'The the memorial to the Great Patriotic War'' on the top of a hill overlooking Murmansk.

First up was the lengthy speeches it was a long stand and speeches of welcome came from everybody, who couldn't speak English so that meant it had to be interpreted, after about an hour and a half was the wreath laying ceremony at which I laid our Vindi Boys wreath it was only a small one as I couldn't accommodate a larger one taking it all the way there I had to put it in the ships cooler as it was, it's my wish that Russian people will if they can read English,



appreciate our gesture of putting it at the foot of their unknown soldier, and it was the only wreath there that was fresh. English flowers which I got complimented on by the Russian television lads who were there to record the event, even the Russian wreaths were artificial, my brother did his bit carrying the Royal Navy ensign into the enemies camp, I think they appreciated that it was dipped at their Statue to their fallen warrior, it was a nice ceremony and we had the British under attaché for the Moscow embassy there and she seemed to be happy to be amongst her own kind and she did us proud by turning up in her best!! uniform complete with gold braid and sword

It was funny you know Terry the wreath I took even had by accident their national colours in it and that is what attracted this television bloke over to me to ask if they were English flowers from England which I said yes from down our street

I am so glad I took that little wreath in Fresh flowers from the VINDI BOYS, I felt really good about that.

I loved the Russian navy uniforms they are quite smart and the lads themselves were very disciplined, they were absolutely ridged for at least an hour and a half, very impressive. After that ceremony we were taken to the cemetery where a lot of the lads who had died were buried,



Bob's brother 'Dips' the white ensign at the cemetery



there were flowers around the graves and it was very well kept, a young lad there in the forefront was only 16 yrs old but no mention of what ship which was unusual, as most of them were Royal navy and a lot of Americans and Polish seaman, everybody said a few prayers and we were taken back to the buses not allowed to wander around only in the cemetery where a few eagle eyed, obviously security men were hovering around us, who'd want to do a bunk in the arctic circle, as we learnt later most of the forces there want to get out as its so miserable during the winter months the only good thing about that place is there are 3 women to every man.

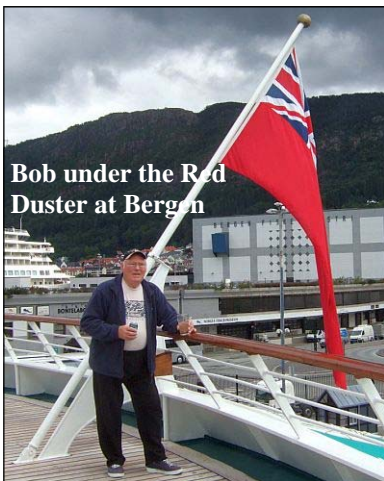
We were then taken to a park which seemed a happy place kids playing and a lot of ladies parading around looking for likely mates in the middle of this park was a obelisk with a message about the gallant merchant seamen and the warships that escorted them up from the British shores to the gallant Russian people fighting against the fascists 1940 etc, this memorial was put up by the international people who look after the graves and they have no connection with any country whatsoever or political organisation, which I thought was a wonderful gesture by the Russian people to allow it to be on their territory.

We were then taken to the Icebreaker LENIN it had a large gangway up to her open deck very narrow entrances and I started to get claustrophobia, so I declined the visit and sat down on a seat on the quay side and this security guy sat with me and we struck up quite a convivial conversation, it was a beautiful day and he wanted to get home to his wife and children who were on holiday from school. I laid back and watched a wedding party arrive on this quay side and perform a locking of their betrothal by putting two locks together and locking them around the iron railings the throwing the keys in the sea. I looked around and the whole of the ironwork was covered in locks.

This young couple were deliriously happy.

Arriving back on board I felt as if every part of our visit was really worthwhile. The people there it seems have a rough time in the winter, they only get 16 days of summer in July and we hit the exact time in the middle, it was 73 degrees that day we were there and then it starts to cool off and the night seems to take over all their lives. I am really glad I went because it served two purposes first and foremost the remembering the lads who lost their lives and secondly I had never been so far north and met another side of humanity which I felt privileged to meet and hopefully the people there had another insight of what we look like the old enemy which we ain't, it is so much easier to comprehend that we are all part of the globe when you see children playing and ladies pushing prams along the pavement and waving to you as we had British flags flying on the coaches.

We arrived in Murmansk about 8 am and departed about 6 PM as I can remember. The aircraft carrier wasn't up to it on our way out and they must have missed the time for our departure as there was only one lonely sailor up on deck as we



Bob under the Red Duster at Bergen

were sailing past and the rest of em must have kept some young apprentice on watch as all of a sudden a mass of bodies came flying up from the bowels of the ship and tried desperately to organise themselves into some kind of playing formation, and we heard some kind of music being played as we were rounding a bend and out of sight .

It was a most enjoyable voyage but not forgetting what I went up there for, in fact for all of us who have any connection with the Vindi organization.

HOMEWARD BOUND- Rounding North Cape a Remembrance service was held. We

all assembled on deck aft and we were invited to sing hymns and there was a sea going padre on board who got the proceeding underway with ABIDE WITH ME, as soon as that hymn reverberates around the afterdeck I just fall apart I had to hold my face down as we were the centre of attraction I was stood under-

neath the Red duster I think Des Cox had me stand there as I was the only one with a Vindi Badge on my jacket at that time. We had a rousing service and all the passengers joined in not just our group of maritime memories men and ladies the last of the wreathes were thrown overboard and



Bob's wreath (Front)

3000 poppy petals were then thrown over us and I have kept some, most of them went overboard quite fitting too.

At the outset of our journey we were having interviews on the bridge deck with the Vets and one was dressed in a kilt and full regalia very impressive a fine figure of a man must have been into his eighties when we got to the speech ceremony in MURMANSK he was stood up amongst all these Russian ministers etc ,eventually it came for him to make a reply in what I thought would have been Scots, but he spoke in Russian which took me and a lot of people around me with complete surprise a Scotchman talking Russian! It's bad enough trying to understand scotch here let alone try to understand a Scotchman speaking Russian (I wonder what the Russians thought of it? They looked amazed) apparently

he is the principle of the Arctic convoy group in Scotland.



Left The Laddie in the Kilt who gave the 'thank you speech at the Murmansk Memorial service.

In Russian!

Right the memorial in the park dedicated to all those who gave their lives on the Russian convoys.

The logo at the top says-Arctic campaign memorial Trust-

Murmansk – Gt. Britain

Thanks Bob, great story.



BRANCH BIZZO

The next Quarterly branch meeting will be at the Pyrmont Bridge Hotel, Monty's Sat. 28 Nov @11am
The meeting has been brought forward three weeks so that it won't clash with the Christmas party.

Summary of the minutes of the last meeting -TS Vindicatrix Association NSW/ACT

Held on the 12th September 2009 at NSW RSL Sydney

Present -Mike Siegle, Terry Hales, John Mears, Brin Hansell, Mick Wilkinson, George Murray, Don Jenkins, Vaughn Richards, Richard Brown, Kevin Bedford. Apologies -Bill King, Peter Bearman. Minutes of the last meeting accepted. - Presidents Report, there was discussion re the MN Day ceremony at Mosman, everyone thought it went off very well and was a thoroughly good day - It was decided that our branch would try to get as many members as possible to attend the MN Day Ceremonies each and every year.

Secretary's Report.-Unable to attend owing to illness.

Treasurers Report. -Tabled the Financial report for period 1st June-31st August 2009

Opening Balance \$6147.00 Closing Balance \$6020-Total amount of slops in stock \$662.00

Web Bosun's Report. -New website up and running <http://vindicatrix.org/index.htm> / www.vindicatrix.org.

General Business.

Christmas party- bookings slow in coming in-need support from members here.

Raffle prizes needed, this is our only opportunity to replace the money spent each year.

Venues and ideas for next years picnic and other get-togethers-ideas from Members welcome.

BBQ in your back garden??

Meeting closed 12 noon

Late News

Following discussions between interested parties at the recent 2009 Downunder Vindi reunion in Caloundra
The decision to hold Bi-annual Downunders was rescinded-we are now back on an annual schedule
And the 2010 Downunder Vindi Reunion will be hosted by the West Australian Vindi Branch.

The social front seems to be quite quiet, at least nothing has been reported to me for inclusion here, so you will have to put up with my ramblings!

Maureen & I had the pleasure of Bill & Jacqui King's company the other weekend. The girls took themselves off to Berry to view some private gardens that were open to the public.

Bill & I being of a much more practical & sensible nature gave the HARS museum at nearby Albion Park the pleasure of our company for a few hours. HARS = Historical Aircraft Restoration Society.



And they do an amazing job, it is truly mind boggling the amount of restoration work they have already completed and if the ambitious plans they have come to fruition they will have really large fleet flying.

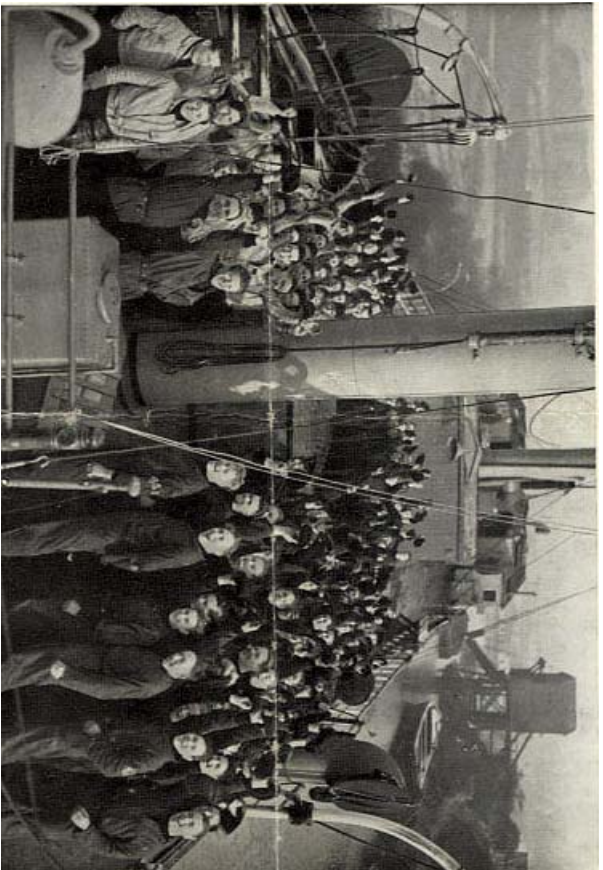
If any other members fancy a visit there you can come and stay at our place for the night, save you having to driving too far in the one day and we can have a drink or two and a good chinwag. Ed.

Australian Song Writer of the year Award

Tony King, son of Vindi Boy Bill King, with wife Jacqueline went to the awards night for the Australian Songwriters Association. Tony took out the top award for 3 categories and was placed in two others. The prestigious 'Songwriter of the Year' award was kept secret until the end. There were over 2,000 entries, so the competition was pretty awesome.

The photo shows Tony with two very proud parents.





**ALL HANDS ON DECK
Don't Abandon Ship!
We want you**

It's Christmas Party time

Come and join the crew at the best party in NSW

At the Occidental Hotel Saturday Dec. 19th. @ 12noon
Corner of Erskine & York St. behind Wynyard station.

Better than ever at this new CBD venue

Good food/Drinks & A Good time Guaranteed

Don't forget a \$5/10 present (male/female) for Santa's sack.

Donations for Raffle prizes welcome

\$30 per person

Bookings ASAP we need to give final numbers SOON

Please phone Mick Wilkinson to book in

telephone 99053161

