

# 'DOWN UNDER' Newsletter

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## PERISCOPE MEMORIAL WARDEN

Ned Newcombe

## September 2020



**AUSTRALIA BRANCH**

**HMS TRENCHANT at the North Pole**

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## STANDARD BEARER

John Harrison



## SECRETARIES SCRIBBLE

Fellow Submariners, Associates and Friends

I keep pinching myself on how lucky I am that I came to Australia when I did. I had not been here for more than a couple of dog watches when the pandemic hit us. We, in Western Australia, are pretty well living as normal. Yes, we are still social distancing but when I see the extent of the problem in the Eastern States and even worse back in UK, we are extremely fortunate to be living here.

Our meetings are back to normal, Memorial Services happening again, our mid-year luncheon went off without a hitch and we can look forward with confidence.

I was pleased to be able to accompany our president and his wife down to Albany for the US Navy Submarine Memorial which had been postponed from May. Not having ventured that far I found it a nice drive. Although it is only an ordinary road with 3 lane sections every so often to overtake the trucks it was far less stressful than driving on the UK motorways. Stick it in cruise control at 110kph (the limit on that road) and try to stay awake. As the service was on the Friday afternoon, we travelled down on the Thursday but over the weekend still managed to have a recce of the area and visited the Whaling Museum and spent a few hours at the ANZAC museum. That is a must for anybody who has not been there before. It was also great to catch up with Bob Pitman who I thought who was looking well and clearly being well looked after by his family. We also met up with some of the Submarines Association Australia (WA Branch) members which led to a lovely evening dinner in our hotel. It was just a pity that there were only three branch members and our wives attending as I had been led to believe that the branch went down as a larger group. Maybe it was just down to the change of date.

Nearer home a number of us accompanied our president to the AE1 Memorial held in the Rockingham Navy Club. Again, we were warmly welcomed by the hosts. It was a lovely service and instead of wreaths each

person attending was given a yellow rose to place in a vase, one for each named member of the crew. Mick Hanlon read the Naval Ode during the



Service. On completion the Submarines Association Australia (WA Branch) treated us to a succulent barbeque washed down with copious amounts of rum. I was driving so gave that a miss. I was pleased to be able to show them photographs of the AE1 & 2 Memorial in Barrow-in-Furness in UK and queried why their service was AE1 only. Apparently, it is because the AE2 was scuttled in the Dardanelles without loss of life, albeit some died whilst prisoners of war.

Now, read this next bit carefully as it is important.

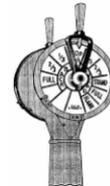
When I was at the AE1 Memorial I discovered that the normal Remembrance Service will not happen, at least not on Remembrance Sunday. It will take place on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November i.e. the anniversary of when the WW1 armistice was signed. As usual it will be at the Maritime Museum in Fremantle at 10.45. The timing is so that the 2 minutes silence will be at 11.00. The more astute among you will immediately realise that this clashes with the branch AGM on the same day.

After discussions with the President and two committee members who were also there the President decided that the AGM will be held on the following Wednesday i.e. 18<sup>th</sup> November. I will give more detail in the next newsletter.

Allan Thomas has arranged a branch picnic at the Kings Park, Perth on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November at 12.00. It is earlier than the normal December date so that it does not clash with the Xmas Luncheon. BYO picnic and refreshments.

I have been having discussions with the family of an RN Submariner, Gerald Holmes, who are trying to find out more about their fathers' submarine service. He died about 40 years ago without telling his family of his exploits. Although his family are Australian citizens living in the Adelaide area the submariner himself did not serve in Australia. He was a wartime submariner. I am trying to help them, so this is ongoing.

*Well, that's all for now, finished with Main Motors and steering.  
Coxn, pipe leave to all the ships company.*



Regards Dave  
Branch Secretary

### **MEMBERS MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES** **WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

1. The President, Mick Hanlon, opened the meeting at 12.00 by welcoming everyone. He then proposed the traditional toast to Absent Friends and those who have crossed the bar.
2. Attendees: Total:
  - a. Members: 13 - Mick Hanlon, Dave Barlow, John Harrison, Buster Keating, Bob Wood, Allan Thomas, Roy Stedman, Ned Newcombe, Paul Meakin, Tom Oates, Richard Drain, Karl Campbell, John Reeve.
  - b. Associates: 2 - Ted Manning, Pat Thomas
  - c. Ladies: 6 - Pat Hanlon, Wilma Hannah, Yvonne Newcombe, Pat Thomas, Charlotte Keating, Morag Campbell
  - d. Guests: 1 - Lee Stedman
3. Apologies:  
Jim Dandie, Gavin Scrimgeour, Tony Richards, Tony Maddock, Eoin Douglas Smith, Barry Morgan, Barry Grace, Frank Wilson, Angad Singh, Steve Dyer, Alex Kent, Bob Pitman, Jim Major, Dennis Williams, Pete Treen, Mick Hannah
4. Presidents Report
  - a) The President Mick Hanlon gave a full report on the US Navy Submarine Service Memorial in Albany. He was accompanied by Dave Barlow and his wife and was pleased to be able to meet Bob Pitman.
  - b) He had received an email from Steve Dyer who had misgivings relating to the proposed Branch Rules. Mick responded to Steve explaining the reasons why the rules were necessary, but that amendments could be made if required.
5. Minutes of August Meeting:  
John Keating pointed out that the financial details had been included in the Newsletter edition. The secretary apologised for this oversight. The minutes were then passed as a true record unanimously on the proposal of Allan Thomas, Seconded by Ned Newcombe.

6. Action from the minutes:

- a. Changeover of the signatories for the cheques to be arranged.
- b. Tracy Priest the granddaughter of Eve Tallwin had been in touch to say that Eve was now in a care home in Adelaide. She said how much she enjoyed 'Down Under' and passed it on to her mum who also enjoyed being kept in touch.
- c. The Draft Branch Rules have been sent out.
- d. A sound system has been provided for the meetings by the Navy Club. This was to alleviate those who had difficulty in hearing what was going on.
- e. Allan Thomas to pursue the Xmas Lunch. See the social secretaries report.

7. Membership Report

- a. Full Members 41 made up of:
  - i. Paid Up 31
  - ii. Life Members 9
  - iii. Affiliates 1 NB the Affiliate pays branch fees, but National fees are paid via another branch.
- b. Associate Members 4

8. Welfare Report

- i) Dennis is keeping reasonably well but not able to attend the meetings. His pacemaker has been renewed and he had an epidural in his spine
- ii) Pete Treen is still in hospital undergoing tests but is expected to be allowed home today or tomorrow.
- iii) The full list of submariners who have crossed the bar was read out and this will be included as a separate item in the newsletter.

9. Treasurers Report

- a. The treasurer, John Harrison, gave a full report of the branch finances with all accounts in a healthy state.
- b. One of the deposit accounts had matured and the second one would mature later this month. He proposed renewing them both under the same deal. This was agreed unanimously on the proposal of Paul Meakin and seconded by Richard Drain.
- c. Discussions are in hand with the President and Treasurer to amend the signatories.
- d. The treasurers report was approved unanimously on the proposal of Paul Meakin, seconded by John Keating.

10. Secretary's Report & Correspondence

National

- (i) Following Rev Paul Jupp standing down as the National Chaplain, a new chaplain has been appointed. It is the Rev Prof Stephen Dray, BA, MA, BD, PhD, DMin, ThD, FHEA, FSK who is also the chaplain of the Essex Branch.
- (ii) Discussions are ongoing with the Government and the RBL relating to the Embankment Memorial Service and the Remembrance Sunday itself.

Branch

- i. Correspondence received from members with apologies for today's meeting.
- ii. Correspondence received from Submarines Association Australia (WA Branch) with an invitation to attend their AE1 Memorial in Rockingham this coming Sunday. It is noted that our President, Mick Hanlon, has been asked to read the Naval Ode.
- iii. Arrangements for the Annual Periscope Service are well in hand.
- iv.

11. Social Secretaries Report

- i. Allan Thomas gave more detail about the Xmas Luncheon stating that as it was a Saturday and a Christmas Menu the cost will be \$52 per head. It will be on Saturday 12 December at 11.30 for 12.00 at the RAAFA Club in Bull Creek. The secretary was detailed to invite the Submarines Association Australia (WA Branch) President and our Sponsors.
- ii. The Branch Picnic will take place on Sunday 15 November in the Kings Park from 12.00. BYO picnic and refreshments.

12. Any Other Competent Business

- A Cold War Medal has now been approved by the Ministry of Defence and welcomed by RAF and Royal Navy but not yet the Army.
- A generic request has been received for 'Crowd Funding' to create a maritime Museum in Plymouth based around the decommissioned submarine 'Courageous'. The branch agreed to wait for more detailed information on the project before committing any donation.
- The Rum Raffle raised \$145 and was won by Yvonne Newcombe.
- The Lunch proceeds raised \$130.00.

13. The President Shut the meeting at 12.40 followed by a very enjoyable buffet lunch and social chit chat.

<b>RN SM Association - Australia Branch, CTB's - Sept 2020</b>					
<b>Date - Name:</b>	<b>Rank:</b>	<b>SM Service:</b>	<b>SM's served on:</b>	<b>Member of SA - Age:</b>	
22 Aug - Peter Inchcliff	AB	1970's	O Boats	NM; Age 69 Lapsed member of Hull & E Yorks branch.	
27 Aug - Michael 'Jan' Hillman	LME	1962 - 1968	TALENT, TRUMP (64/65) & GRAMPUS (65/68)	NM; Age 81	
28 Aug - Craig 'Pom' Pomfrett	CPOWEA	NN	COURAGEOUS (80/82) & VALIANT (1988 end of commission & watchkeeping on hulk	NM; Aged 68 former member in Lancs area	
Aug 20 - Colin Chambers	POCK	1969 - 90	RENOWN, VALIANT & WARSPITE	Scottish; Age 61	
29 Aug - Robert 'Bob' Cliff	LME	1959 - 67	ALDERNEY, ODIN, OTUS, THERMOPYLAE & TRESPASSER	Former member of Derbyshire Submariners; Age 80	
29 Aug - John Ronald Drysdale	PO(WSM)	Left in 97	RENOWN, REPULSE & VANGUARD	NM; Age 63	
2 Sept - Alan McCullough	CPOWEMO	1969 - 89	ALLIANCE, ANDREW, OTTER, OSIRIS, NARWHAL, CONQUEROR & RESOLUTION; later served at HMAS PLATYPUS Sydney, NSW	NM; Age 74	
4 Sept - Mick Rowe	S/Lt	NN	SENTINEL, SEALION, THULE & SCORCHER	Essex; Age 80	
12 Sept - Mark 'Fozzie' Forster	CK	1984 - 91	REPULSE & WARSPITE	NN; Age 54	
Sept 20 - Peter Lever	ABUW	1954 - 66	ALCIDIE (60/62), AMBUSH (62/63), ANDREW (63/64) & ALLIANCE (64/65)	Colchester; Age 83	
Sept 20 - Andy Clarkson	LRO	1963 - 75	ORPHEUS (63/65), Civilian (66/69), AURIGA (70/71), AENEAS (71/72), OBERON (72/73), ODIN (73/75) & ORACLE (75)	Españe Levante; Age 78	
<b>RN Navy News Sept 20 Edition, there were 3 SM CTB's; we had covered all 3 in earlier newsletters.</b>					

## HUMAN TORPEDO

Albert Brown

### *Final part continued from the August issue*

There remained a short period of time for training to be carried out with the parent submarine, for the final trial the two machines were taken out to sea and launched about 6 miles from the entrance about 8pm or 9pm. Smith and I had an eventful run; on going under the first boom, my nose clip came off and fell into the bottom of my face piece. As soon as we came to the surface inside the net, I opened the visor to fix things, hoping Smith would not dive again in too much of a hurry. But with wet hands the replacement of a slippery nose clip proved too difficult a manoeuvre, so I decided to leave it off and shut the visor, judging the risk of carbon dioxide poisoning to be a justifiable one in 'practice battle' conditions. On the way out, after we had completed the attack the machine gears suddenly stripped, and Smith was left with no means of varying the speed and none of going astern.

We could have surfaced alongside the net, where we knew there to be a launch from the Wolf, but we decided to carry on out to sea to pick up Trenchant despite the defect. But before we could get back to the rendezvous and because of the many extra obstacles we had to surmount, the machine was completely out of compressed air and Smith and I were completely out of oxygen, we were accordingly running on the surface with visors open when we sighted the Submarine. There was only one problem of stopping, round and round we went again and again until we could reach a line thrown from the big boats casing which eventually halted us. When we climbed out of the water it was 4.20, it had been a long night.

Trenchant sailed on 22 October with the torpedoes resting on the Port and Starboard Saddle tanks.

Down below in the control room the 4 of us were observing all that was going on, we had checked our escape equipment just before leaving. Each of us had been issued with a .38 revolver and ammunition, local currency, a small bag of 25 gold sovereigns, a silk map, a small dagger, needle and thread for sewing up wounds, a compass, hacksaw blades, a watch and a tablet of poison. All of this had to be concealed among our clothes and carried inside the diving dress. There was also the "Siamese Blood Chit", a small square of white silk. On this, in addition to a very garish Union Jack, was a message inscribed in several Oriental languages to the following effect: -

"I am a British Naval Officer who has been engaged in operations against the Japanese. If I am captured, I cannot continue to fight against the Japanese, so I appeal to you to hide me and provide me with food until I can re-join our forces. If you will help me by giving me food and hiding me in safety until our armies arrive in Malaya, you will earn the gratitude of my Government, who will give you a big reward and I am authorised to give you a chit to this effect."

The sea trip to Salanga Island on the coast of which lay Phuket Harbour was uneventful, and on the morning of the attack, Trenchant was in position 6 ½ miles to seawards from the target area.

The 4 of us had a good look through the periscope at the targets, Eldridges and Woolcotts target was just inside the harbour entrance, she was the 5,000 ton merchantman "Sumatra" but our target the "Volpi" of 5,272 tons way lying further in, right at the extreme end of the waterway, to reach her we had a considerably longer trip. She was out of commission and partly submerged and in the process of being salvaged by the same team as had refloated the "Sumatra." I was told the divers were working round the clock on her.

The day passed terribly slowly, and nightfall brought a great sense of relief. Dressing took less time than had been expected and the 4 of us had to sit about in a sweltering control-room, clad in thick rubber suits, with the sweat literally pouring off us.

We were glad when we were able to man the machines at 10 o'clock, the sea was very flat as the submarine submerged and left her two offspring's afloat.

The night was lit by a brilliant moon, which had its advantages as well as its disadvantages. I could not see where we were going but I could see where we had come from, as we sat back in the torpedoes.

I happily connected myself to the machine oxygen supply, then came the trim-dive, which went well enough as far as Smith and the chariot were concerned. But for me things were not plain sailing. As soon as we submerged, I felt the water coming through the vent in the headpiece and within minutes I was flooded from feet to neck. It did not worry me very much until I had to dismount to secure the warhead, which Smith had noticed working loose. I had to keep a very firm grip on the securing gear to prevent myself plummeting to the bottom. Smith and I felt very confident about the whole job. It was

quite straightforward there being no nets across the harbour and we never saw any and probably no other defences either. Both of us were old hands at the actual business of handling a machine below the water, so the night should be a 'quiet number'. We had several natters together to formulate a plan of campaign and had decided to simply ride in on the surface for the first 4½ miles and keep dived for the last 2. Nothing stopped us keeping to that programme. After having gone about 3 miles we were able to distinguish first Eldredge's target then our own. Smith was a little worried about the phosphorescence that the propeller was churning up. This was a feature of tropical waters to which none of us had become fully accustomed.

When the time came for diving, we remained below for 400 yards at stretch surfacing slowly every time to check course and to take in the situation as a whole.

This part seemed slow going, and, indeed, we were being forced off course considerably by the strong cross current, but by trial and error we eventually got into position some 300 yards away from the target and dived for the attack. Soon we could see the dark shape of the hull appear and with motor stopped we glided smoothly alongside; the depth was about 20 feet.

The intention was to place the charge vertically under the centre line of the ship as near as possible on the engine room plates, but on sinking slowly to 40 feet we both realised that with the position in which the ship was wedged we would never manage to get ourselves or a charge underneath her. Partly to think again, partly to try another attempt we withdrew. We kept deep on the next attempt, but our luck was no better.

So, I dismounted and went forward to have a look at the ships side, moving slowly past Smith and past the warhead. The water was so dark that before I had gone some 4 feet from the nose of the chariot I was completely out of sight from Smith, but in a few minutes I was back, to indicate by signs that there was no hope of securing the charge on the ships side. It was disappointing, but there was nothing to be gained by stopping where we were, so with the main ballast slowly blowing we crept up the side of the ship towards the surface. At 15 feet we came to a deck, Smith stopped the ascent for me to dismount, well to get out of the cockpit for a third time on the trip. This time I took the charge with me and lashed it to one of the deck-fittings and took the pin out of the time-setting clock. I had about 45 minutes on the clock when the lashing parted, and my hand was cut. I had to grab the charge again and struggle with it across the deck. The fuse-clock was ticking away, and I knew my time was running out as I negotiated a series of steps down into an engine-room and placed the charge where it could not move. Then I had to take a chance and put another 4 hours on the clock; that is when my life was in my hands. But I was too preoccupied with several personal discomforts, to start with, my suit was full of water and one of my hands were bleeding badly from a cut sustained when I half stumbled with the charge, a further fall had torn open my head piece and gashed the top of my skull. I could feel my hair sticky with blood, through the hole in the rubber. However, as I made my way up the engine-room ladder and across the deck to where I thought Smith would be waiting, I was able to reflect on the big bang I had left just below me. By the time I re-joined Smith I had to been aboard for some 20 minutes - long minutes they had been too. I let Smith feel the split pin that meant the charge had been set, we shook hands and were away. The usual routine for departure was a long dive for about a mile at about 10 or 15 feet, course to be as estimated by Number 1. This was Smiths intention as the chariot surged slowly forward and away from her target, but we had barely gone 10 yards before he felt this breathing coming with difficulty and before we had gone very much further he knew for certain that his equipment had a defect. In a hurry he brought the machine to the surface, ripping open his visor and disengaging his mouthpiece. His mouth was severely burned by the soda lime that had worked loose from the canister. Luck had changed and we were in a not very promising situation, all we could do was to carry on at full speed on the surface and hope for the best.

We had been proceeding in this fashion for about 90 minutes and the time was between 2 and 3am when Smith sighted the Trenchant some 40 yards away. We had been dead on course, the next moment a dark shape appeared to port and proved to be lofty Eldridge's machine. Things could not have been better timed. Hezlet ordered the chariots to be scuttled. With my headpiece full of water and my back to Smith I was not sure what was happening, the machine started to dive, and a leg hit my head so I grabbed it as I was still connected to the machine for oxygen supply. I managed to disconnect myself and still hold on until I got a hold of the Submarine. Casing. If not, I would have been at the bottom with all the water and hole in the suit.

As soon as we got aboard and down below Hezlet had the 'Plugs pulled out' in double quick time. My suit was almost bursting open with the weight of water inside it. I always got by, but no one could swim with that. I was a non-swimmer.

The mystery was that I had managed to conceal the fact through the best part of 3 years. McArthur was highly amused when he heard about it.

Back in Trenchant there was an air of satisfaction and the 4 divers, after a brief comparison of notes, were packed off to get a few hours' sleep. We were called again at 5.30am half an hour before the charges were due to go up. Woolcotts target disintegrated to be followed 5 minutes later by ours. We were all allowed frequent peeps through the periscope to see the effects of our handy work. The 2 explosions were quite different, the first was a sharp crack and the vessel seemed to move upward. The second was considerably duller and seemed to expand its energy horizontally outward. The Trenchant continued on patrol for a further 3 weeks much to the delight and interest of the charioteers. During this time Hezlet was able to make a successful attack on a convoy and the boat was subjected to some depth charging. On return to Trinco reports were submitted and the 4 of us went on leave to a rest-camp in the hills. When we returned to join the other teams, we found them packing for home.

Authority had decided against any further chariot operations in the Far East.

The Commander in Chief had said that he would not be responsible for sending men on operations where return might not be possible, when it was known that all men captured would immediately lose both eyes and testicles. As a result, everything was being wound up as far as this mode of warfare was concerned.

All those now 'out of work' would be given a comprehensive choice of jobs and every effort would be made to see them placed in the appointment of their choice, charioteering had to come to an end.

By the time I got back to the UK the war was over. I spent my last days at the DSE tank before I was demobbed.

The end had come for the lad they tried to make a Steward; and out of about 400 lads that tried to get into the job I was the only one that got through and did a successful operation.

'A non-swimmer' and at last they changed me over to a Seaman and I was awarded the DSM for this operation.

***Compiled by Dave Barlow from interviews with Albert***

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A man walks into a bar and asks for a beer. After drinking it, he looks in his shirt pocket and asks for another beer.

After drinking that one, he looks in his shirt pocket again and asks for another beer. This happens about another seven times before the bartender asks him, "Why do you keep looking in your pocket?"

The man replies, "I have a picture of my wife in there. When she looks good enough, I'll go home."

A guy was sitting quietly reading his paper when his wife walked up behind him and whacked him on the head with a magazine.

'What was that for?' he asked.

'That was for the piece of paper in your trouser pocket with the name Laura Lou written on it,' she replied.

'Two weeks ago, when I went to the races, Laura Lou was the name of one of the horses I bet on, I bought you those flowers with the winnings, ' he explained.

'Oh darling, I'm sorry,' she said. 'I should have known there was a good explanation.'

Three days later he was watching TV when she walked up and hit him in the head again, this time with a frying pan, which knocked him out cold.

When he came to, he asked, 'What was that for?' 'Your horse phoned'

Students in an advanced Biology class were taking their mid-term exam.

The last question was, 'Name seven advantages of Mother's Milk.' The question was worth 70 points or none at all.

One student, in particular, was hard put to think of seven advantages.

However, he wrote

- 1) It is perfect formula for the child.
- 2) It provides immunity against several diseases.
- 3) It is always the right temperature.
- 4) It is inexpensive.
- 5) It bonds the child to mother, and vice versa.
- 6) It is always available as needed.

and then the student was stuck.

Finally, in desperation, just before the bell rang indicating the end of the test, he wrote:

- 7) It comes in two attractive containers and it is high enough off the ground where the cat cannot get it.

He was awarded an A.



