From the Desk of the National Vice President

The HMAS Perth National Association, today collectively, feels that melancholic sadness and acute sense of loss as we bid farewell to not only a remarkable and great Australian, but also a father of our Association, and our last living link with HMAS PERTH 1. Frank McGovern was well known within the PERTH community for his unflinching devotion towards ensuring that the memory of sacrifice made by his ship and shipmates on the night of 1 March 1942, and to the deprivations of captivity endured by the survivors at the hands of the Japanese for the duration. The story of Frank McGovern needs to be told and must be told. It is so pertinent today that we are all reminded of how men under extreme duress, coped with and came to terms with the actual and brutal wrongs of a devastating time in recent history. This, in stark contrast to the fanciful notions and perceived social wrongs that are paraded before us on a daily basis now. Frank crossed the bar peacefully at 1045pm on Wednesday 24 May 2023, aged 103. Your duty done sailor – rest in peace.

Mike Carlton, has generously donated his eulogy to Frank McGovern for this edition of PUNDIT. Thank you Mike and please accept our heartfelt appreciation for your contribution.

I would like to thank all those who have contacted me since my hospitalisation on 25 April. Your thoughts and sentiments are greatly appreciated, and thankfully I am well on the mend now.

I would also like to extend thanks and gratitude on behalf of the Committee to Commander Tony Nagle, C.O. HMAS PERTH III, for his postings on the activities of the ship, particularly the March 1st Sunda Strait commemorative services, and PERTH III’s winning of the Gloucester Cup.

I have also asked our webmaster to look at our website design with a view to expanding its content to include more information and photographs of P3. I believe this would be a proactive step towards encouraging a greater participation within the Association from former and current P3 members.

Darrell Hegarty is our webmaster so if there is anyone with material, photos, etc., of PERTH III that they would like to see included on the website, please contact Darrell directly.

In response to several enquiries received earlier suggesting that our post AGM dinner be reformatted into a general reunion for the DDG crews. I have only received a dozen or so replies, the majority of which favour retaining an informal gathering and dinner with an open invitation to former crew members of Hobart and (Continued on page 3)
DVA has produced a new Medallion marking 50 years since the end of our involvement in the Vietnam war, along with an individual Certificate printed with the name of the applicant. See the Obverse, Reverse pictures and Certificate copy on page 3 of this issue. Application may be made online at National Mail & Marketing:­


Note that you MUST save your selection to complete the application. To save, click the three dots. It’s one medallion only per veteran but the personalised certificate may be reprinted for other family members and/or friends.

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Mike Carlton has very kindly given us a copy of his Eulogy to Frank McGovern for publication in this issue. Mike’s Eulogy starts on page 4.

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I’m beginning to become VERY angry with Google. They started out as a very good search engine, and they are still so. They should have stuck with the provision of a search function, but NO - the evil “MONEY” started to take over, and they then started to silently track all users without express permission and then initiated GMAIL. They keep moving the goal posts on GMAIL without telling anybody. At the moment I, and probably a lot of others, CANNOT send email from a non-gmail account to anybody else who does use gmail. Also people who have a gmail account often cannot send email to others who don’t have a gmail account.

***

To possibly overcome this ‘Google’ problem, we may need to cease sending PUNDIT to each member via email, rather we could leave PUNDIT as normal, shown in the "Members Only" page of the website and simply email the address to each member. PUNDIT may then be read online or if preferred, downloaded for printing. This change will be informed to all by email if it is to happen.

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The Albanese government has released its long-awaited Defence Strategic Review, with major impacts across the Australian Defence Force, yet Navy is set for another review to shape its future force structure.

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Well, Winter has hit us with a bit of a vengeance, especially on the East coast. We do hope that all members are managing to keep themselves and their families nice and warm.
Brisbane to attend if they so wish. As many of the crews have served across all the DDG’s, therein lays the common ground.

It is not possible for me to organise another reunion along the lines we had in Hobart in 2011. It is an immense amount of work, that took almost 18 months to bring together. Given that we are all slightly more than a decade older since then, and all the more subject to the ails of aging, I believe it a better alternative to extend an open invitation across the board to all former crew members and their friends to attend. They would be most welcome.

The Committee had originally decided on Ballina RSL as a venue for the 2023 AGM. That is no longer the case due to the over inflated hire costs of facilities. In consultation with the committee I have decided to push the AGM date out to later in October at a venue to be advised.

The winter months are almost upon us again with only the warming prospect of the much anticipated Blues v Maroons clashes to take the edge off a little. Hopefully, Freddie’s men will step up this year. Well, it can’t hurt to be optimistic.

On a more light-hearted note, while reminiscing with a firey old former QMG recently, he offered the astute observation that during the mid to late sixties, unbeknown to any potential world enemies, the Garden Island based fleet, without exception, was at its most vulnerable from 1700 every weekday for approximately one hour. I wonder if anyone can remember why? The only clue I am able to give is it had nothing to do with debating offerings from the respective ships’ scran serveries.

Stay warm and safe throughout the winter months.

*Warwick Luttrell*

(Warick Luttrell)
National Vice President

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**ASSOCIATE RENEWALS ARE DUE SOON**

Membership renewals are due on July 1st for **Associate Members** only, amount is AU$20 for each year you wish to renew, and should be paid as follows:

1. Renewals may be paid be cash at any Commonwealth Bank, by cheque at Commonwealth Banks, by Money Order through the mail, or **PREFERABLY** by direct deposit using Internet Banking. Make sure that your name and/or Membership number are associated with your deposit.

2. Our Bank details are:
   - **Branch:** Commonwealth Bank, Narrabeen NSW
   - **Acct name:** HMAS Perth National Association
   - **BSB:** 999 999
   - **Acct #:** 9999 9999

3. Our mailing address for cheques or Money Orders. **DO NOT SEND CASH** via post.
   - Membership Secretary
   - HMAS Perth National Association Inc
   - PO Box 626
   - MERIMBULA NSW 2548

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(Right) **THE NEW DVA VIETNAM MEDALLION AND CERTIFICATE**

- **Obverse**
- **Reverse**
Perth Pundit

A Farewell to Frank McGovern

By Mike Carlton  1-Jun-23

Frank McGovern was one of our greatest generation. As youngsters, they grew up in the Depression of the 1930s, doing it tough. And then, just on the threshold of their adult lives – as it was all about to begin for them - they were plunged into a World War not of their making, but which they knew had to be fought and won. They went to it and did it.

That was Frank’s story. He grew up in Paddington, a hard-scrabble, working-class suburb back then. His dad worked on the trams. And I’ll quote you what he told me of those times:

Like everybody else, we didn’t have much. Things were tough during the Depression. Bread and dripping went down well: you’d get down to the bottom of the dripping container where the gravy was. We kept it in the icebox. Before the Depression, you’d have a baked dinner. In the Depression, you might get a piece of bread. Rabbit was alright. I think it was a shilling at that time for a rabbit. Baked rabbit, stewed rabbit...

Frank and his older brother Vince played cricket in the back lane, with a garbage can for a wicket. But he got himself an education at Marist Brothers Darlinghurst – which is now a block of expensive apartments. He got his Intermediate Certificate and a good job with the Water Board and for a little extra pocket money he joined the Royal Australian Navy Reserve. Training at Rushcutters Bay on the weekends he was already in uniform when war broke out in 1939. They called him up straight away.

“Don’t worry,” he told the Water Board. “I’ll be back in a few weeks.” And they promised to keep his job open for him.

One of the great strengths of Frank’s character was a sunny optimism, looking on the bright side, hoping for the best - in people and in life. He didn’t always find it, far from it. At times he encountered the worst, the very worst. But he never gave up looking. And when life knocked him down, he picked himself up and got on with it.

So picture now that morning, that very early morning, of Sunday the first of March, 1942. It is not
long after midnight in the Sunda Strait, that stretch of water that separates the islands of Java and Sumatra. Frank’s ship, the cruiser HMAS *Perth*, fought gallantly against an overwhelming Japanese force that night. But torpedoed four times and shattered by gunfire she is sinking. The order comes to Abandon Ship. Frank is on deck, at his action station, the .5 machine guns. Here’s how he did it:

*I just jumped over, and down I went, right under. And one of the screws was still slowly turning, I saw it as it went down. In the phosphorescence in the water I saw this bloody huge blade, turning slowly and coming closer towards me. I said my last prayer and the next minute I was straight in amongst it. I was tumbled around like I was in a giant washing machine and it shot me aft like I had a propellor up my backside. I went like a rocket...then shot out of the water...*

Frank struggled to get on a raft and was eventually picked up by a Japanese destroyer. His big brother Vince didn’t make it. Vince was in the engine room and he went down with her, one of the 374 men lost that night. Frank never forgot him, he carried the memory with him always. I recall that as we talked about it a few years ago on the anniversary, Frank’s eyes welled with tears. He missed him still.

From that day forward it was three and a half years as a Prisoner of War of the Japanese, much of that time enduring the horrors - the hell - of a slave labourer on the infamous Burma-Siam Railway. His friends and shipmates died around him, with such tragic frequency that after a while Perth’s ship’s bugler, “Elmo” Gee, played the Last Post only once a day, for all of them.

Frank, always the optimist, secretly kept a diary in a tattered notebook. Skin and bones, malnourished, he jotted down what he planned to eat when he got home: cheesy potatoes, honey and coconut tart, date and bacon roll. It sounds funny now, but he never once doubted that he’d make it. He endured, he survived, with the courage, the strength of character, that sustained him all his life.

In September 1944 they sent him to be a slave labourer in Japan, packed on board with countless other Australians - navy army and air force - in what they called one of the hellships, the Rakuyo Maru. She was not marked as a PoW ship and an American submarine torpedoed and sank her off the Philippines. Once again Frank found himself struggling in the sea, surrounded by wreckage, oil, and injured and drowning men. This time he made it into a lifeboat with some other *Perth* sailors. They set the sail and for three days they battled westwards - these skinny, malnourished, half-naked men - hoping to make it to China.

*I stayed on the tiller in our boat. We found an empty cigarette tin and used that to drink water out of the keg at dusk and sunset. It was stinking hot, so we’d look out for the Noah’s Arks, dunk ourselves over the side of the boat in the water and get back in.*

Eventually a Japanese destroyer picked them up and they were sent on to Japan where he ended up at a prison camp at Kawasaki near Tokyo, working yet again as a slave labourer in a factory. On the night of Friday the 13th of July, 1945, the Americans firebombed Tokyo: wave after wave of bombers, walls of flame and smoke. They dropped 452 tons of high explosive bombs on a petroleum dump right next door to the camp.

Frank was hurled high into the air, tumbling over and over, and landing in a shell crater unable to move his legs, fearing his back was broken:

*I was just lying there with this excruciating pain. I spoke to a bloke lying next to me but he didn’t answer. He was dead. Then it started to train, which doused the fires. As I lay there that night all I could hear was the swish of the rain. Nothing else, nothing. I wondered if I would ever be able to walk again. The night wore on, the loneliest night I ever spent. Then dawn came, and I heard voices in the distance. Our blokes were coming back to the camp. They washed me down, got all the mud and blood off me, and with about a dozen others they pout me on the back of a truck and took me off to hospital.*

There he was looked after by an American medic. Buck Barlow was his name. Frank had a phenomenal memory, never forgot a name. Barlow told him one day the Japanese doctors were murdering the patients, opening a vein in their groin for blood transfusions. In agony, weeping with the pain, Frank got out of bed and struggled to walk again. A few days later they were paraded before a Japanese officer, who drew a line in the sand with his sword and ordered the prisoners to walk to
It got to my turn and I thought: I’ve got to do this. I have to get away from this place. And I did. I got up to the end, very stiffly, but I could not do a right about turn. I would have fallen over. So I did a quarter turn, and then another one, sweat pouring off me. But I made it. They put us on the back of a truck and took us to a new camp, away from the bombed out factory area.

When the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, the Americans were dropping food to the prison camps in Japan by air, tons of it. Free at last, he and a mate went out for a look around outside, in a country which had inflicted so much torment upon them:

_We went into one place and there was a woman and her husband and they had a photo there, edged in black, probably of their son who had been killed, just like any other family. We realised they’d been browbeaten and starved. They had a couple of mementos there and we were going to trade but in the end we just gave them some food and left._

What extraordinary compassion. Humanity. Decency. Kindness. That was very much Frank’s nature. The core of his being.

And, I should add, a humble modesty. Never once did he boast about his exploits or the hardships he endured. When he told his story it was always in memory of his shipmates who did not make it back, and in particular memory of his big brother Vince. He wanted their stories told too. So that younger generations might learn what they had done.

But never once, to my sure knowledge, was he bitter. Or filled with hate, or anger, or an urge for revenge. And I wondered why at first.

But I came to the conclusion it was because he had seen so much evil and hatred - so much of man’s inhumanity to man - that he wanted no more of it. He understood that hatred would consume him. So he put it behind him. He rose above it...and beyond it...and got on with life.

He derived strength and joy foremost from his family. Then his friends, particularly those shipmates who had endured the prisoner of war camps with him. Year in, year out, they’d meet once a month for a drink and a bite to eat, to keep the warm fire of their friendship glowing. One of his closest mates was _Perth’s_ last surviving officer, Sub Lieutenant Gavin Campbell, now also passed away. The HMAS _Perth_ Association was very precious to him, to the last. And he was the last. The last of them all, the last survivor.

Frank dearly loved the navy. And the navy loved him back. He was proud of his service, and rightly so. He liked nothing better than being invited to visit the current HMAS _Perth_ to meet and talk with today’s generation of young sailors.

Let me quote to you the signal from the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond:

_IN AN AGE WHERE THE MEMORIES OF GLOBAL CONFLICT AND NAVAL WARFARE GROW DIM, OUR NAVY MUST HOLD THE EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES OF VETERANS LIKE FRANK DEARLY. THE RESILIENCE, ENDURANCE, AND FORTITUDE DISPLAYED BY FRANK AND HIS GENERATION OF SAILORS IN WAR, AND AS POW, SERVE TO INSPIRE TODAY’S SAILORS WHO MAY ONE DAY FACE THEIR OWN GRAVE CHALLENGES. WITH FRANK’S PASSING WE HAVE LOST A VALUED EXEMPLAR._

So true. It is right to be sad today, most especially for those nearest and dearest to him. It is a time for sorrow.

But as we farewell Frank McGovern we should also reflect and be thankful that our lives are richer for having known him. He gave us and taught us so much.

Goodbye, sailor. May you have fair winds and following seas. As they say in the navy, Bravo Zulu. It means “well done.”

_You were a fine man. And a great Australian._
WA AREA REPORT

We have had a quiet time in the West, apart from our Friday End Of Month gatherings and a picnic in Kings Park. Sad to hear the news about Frank McGovern - may he rest in peace.

Anzac Day March was also a quiet occasion for us as we had a small number of attendees. Fortunately the rain arrived just after the march.

Greg Shimmen

(Greg Shimmen)
President, WA Area

ACT AREA REPORT

We continue to be denied parading the HMAS Perth banner along Anzac Parade this year, as the War Memorial's redevelopment project continues. The ACT Branch of the RSL conducted a modified veterans' march through the western grounds of the Memorial. Marches and Commemorative services at Queanbeyan, Goulburn, and towns on the South coast attracted a number of ACT members. Your correspondent attended a 0630 Dawn Service held at Greenway Views LDK seniors' village, followed by a 0700 Gunfire Breakfast at the village restaurant.

For your information, the following was extracted from the RSL Australia website titled “The Traditions of Anzac Day”: “Many Australians enjoy a ‘gunfire breakfast’ between the Anzac Day Dawn Service and mid-morning march. A gunfire breakfast typically involves rum-laced coffee or tea, hot food such as bacon and eggs, and is a chance for veterans – and often other community members – to enjoy shared camaraderie.

The custom stems from ‘gunfire’ – a mix of rum and black tea dating back to at least the 1890s. It was made by British Army soldiers – likely as a warming dash of morale or liquid courage ahead of the day’s battle – and later adopted by Australian and New Zealand forces.”

ACT Area shipmates and friends will be advised by email/telephone of the date and venue for this year’s Annual General Meeting and Pre-Christmas Lunch.

In closing, Area President Peter Eveille and the members of the ACT Area extend their best wishes to all shipmates, friends and their loved ones who may not be travelling too well at present.

Stay safe and keep smiling'

Jack Aaron

ACT Area Committee

QUEENSLAND AREA REPORT

Well here in sunny Queensland we have had a fairly quiet couple of months, winter is starting to kick in.

Our President Darryl Neild is currently spending 6 months travelling Europe, primarily based in Denmark with family and travelling from there, he is due back the first week of September.

One of our long serving members Paul ( Rip ) Kirby is not travelling well at present, he fell and broke his hip a week or so ago, Doctors doing checks before they operate to correct this have since found 4 blockages to his heart.
He is currently in ICU at the Prince Charles Hospital here in Brisbane while the doctors work on which procedure to tackle first.

We wish him well.

Apart from that we hope all members and their families stay warm and safe over this winter period.

One of our members Darby Munro, spent Anzac Day in Thailand and sent some photos home. While he was there he placed the old British Ensigns on over a dozen or so graves of Perth 1 crew.

Cheers

Terry McLeod

Qld. Sec/Treasurer

NSW AREA REPORT

G’day All,

The ANZAC Day March was badly (not) organized, but we managed.

Sadly, Young Frank McGovern crossed the bar last month at 103. He was the last surviving member of any person who sailed in H.M.A.S. Perth 1. I got to know Frank quite well since I retired. He was a real “gentleman” and I am so glad I met him, I will miss him a lot. Photo taken at the ANZAC memorial Hyde Park Sydney last year.

Cheers

Mike Kay

Mike Kay
&
Frank McGovern
VICTORIAN AREA REPORT

Services Attended

* Anzac Day in Geelong. A large turnout of veterans & a large group of locals lining the route.
* Sunday 7th May. Battle of The Coral Sea, at The Shrine of Remembrance, USA Consulate attended with several Ex US Servicemen. A good many RAN veterans were in attendance. A good day followed by refreshments.
* Sunday 28th May. USA Ex-Servicemen’s annual service at The Shrine of Remembrance.
* Thursday 1st June. Attended the funeral of Frank McGovern, it was a privilege to attend the last of The Greatest Generation.

Upcoming Events.

* Sunday 18th June. N-Class Destroyers annual service at The Shrine.
* Sunday 2nd July. Waurn Ponds Memorial Service. This is a WW1 service, We attend out of respect of the RAN personnel from that war.

That is about it.

Kind Regards

Pete Johnston

Pete Johnston
Sec/Tres
HMAS Perth National Assoc.
Victorian Area

HMAS PERTH III DEPLOYMENT PICTURES

Kindly sent to us by LEUT Darren Lazaro RAN

Some imagery of Perth’s latest deployment. Perth sailed for operation in late January returning 24 Apr just in time to march in the city of Perth for Anzac day.
Kind regards,

[Signature]

Darren Lazaro
LEUT, RAN
OOW
HMAS Perth

FFH 157

“Fight and Flourish”

Above: Commander Nagle welcomes Chief of Navy Australia, Vice Admiral Hammond, onboard HMAS Perth during a recent port visit in Singapore
Rabbits Available for sale

Murphy has surfaced again - the polo shirts we previously had are no longer in production and we’ve now selected another model, 100% polyester, available this time in six colours: Aqua / blue / white (pictured); Silver / white; White / black; Navy / white; Black / white & Pistachio (Lt green) / navy.

Available in: (Approx chest size in cm)

**Mens:** S(104), M(110), L(116), XL(124), 2XL(130), 3XL(142) & 5XL(158).

**Ladies:** 8(93), 10(98), 12(103), 14(108), 16(113), 18(118), 20(124), 22(130) & 24(136).

These polo shirts are available, embroidered with either the ‘DDG ship’ crest (far right) or the PERTH III crest (right). When ordering please state colour, size and crest desired.

We have official copies of a Navy Video on DVD, made in 1965 (as a film) of the commissioning of HMAS PERTH. The video is titled “The New Ship” and is selling for $15 including p&p. This PERTH II DVD, contains THE NEW SHIP (1965), ON THE GUNLINE (1968), PERTH TRIBUTE (1999) and an extra short film. These films were made by Navy during PERTH II’s life and have been recorded to DVD for the Association.

We also have a DVD, containing videos of dives on PERTH I (2009) and HMS EXETER (2008), as well as a slide show of some pictures of PERTH I crew, by Dr Andrew FOCK of the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. This DVD also has video of the PERTH I Commissioning ceremony and PERTH I sailing into Sydney.

We can arrange for a name badge to be made to order similar to the one in the photograph at the right. The badge is coloured White with black lettering and the cost of $25.00 includes postage. This is a new design replacing the older navy blue badge and is available with either a pin clasp or magnetic holder. Please specify the holder you require when ordering. The badge is 3” x 1” or 75mm x 25mm.

Postage and packing is additional to most of the prices quoted above, except where mentioned and would generally cost $9.15 for one or two items.

These are just some of the rabbits we have available for sale to Members. Further photographs will be featured in future issues of Pundit to give you an idea of the total range of items we have for sale. We will hopefully be adding to our range from time to time, so watch this space for future releases.

**PLEASE NOTE**

All orders for rabbits are to be forwarded to:

The Secretary
HMAS Perth National Association
PO Box 626
MERIMBULA NSW 2548
THINKING OF CONTRIBUTING?

We would be very happy to accept your articles for publication in any issue of PUNDIT

Contributions should preferably be typed with a good quality of print for scanning or presented on a CD-R or CD-RW - returnable if requested. Disk contributions should preferably be in plain ASCII text without any formatting - save them from your word processor as “ASCII (DOS) text”.

Handwritten articles will also be accepted, although they may take a little longer to appear in print, as they will need to be re-typed.

Photographs supplied for the article should be either glossy prints or good quality JPEG files. Photos will be returned after scanning if requested. Please don’t send photographs embedded in an MS Word or ‘PDF’ document.

Please send your contribution to:

The PUNDIT Editor
HMAS Perth National Assn Inc
PO Box 626
MERIMBULA NSW 2548

Your contributions may also be sent via e-mail to:

editor@hmasperth.asn.au

ADDRESS or PERSONAL DETAILS CHANGE

Please use this form only for an alteration to your personal details such as mailing address, email address, telephone or mobile number. You should include your membership number to ensure we change the correct database entry. If you wish to join our Association, please use the application form available from our website.

SURNAME: ....................................... FIRST NAME: ......................... INITIALS: ..............

STREET: ................................................................. SUBURB: ........................................

STATE: .................. P/CODE: .................. PHONE NO: ...........................................

Membership #: .............. E-MAIL: .............................................................

I wish to have the capitation of to go to .......... Area (Insert State / Area or leave blank)

If no choice is made above, the capitation will go to the Area Committee of your residence.

Detach or copy, and mail to the Membership Secretary, PO Box 626 MERIMBULA NSW 2548

Association Products for sale

HMAS Perth Association Blazer Pocket (dk blue) ...... $20.00

DVD - The New Ship 1965, On the Gunline & PERTH Tribute 1999 - (inc postage) ........................................ $15.00

DVD - Dive video of PERTH I and HMS EXETER by Dr Andrew FOCK - (inc postage) ................................ $5.00

HMAS Perth II decommissioning mug ...................... $12.00

HMAS Perth Polo shirt - see previous page for colours - order only (including postage in Oz) ............... $45.00

The Mediterranean Diary by Jim NELSON
Reprinted for Association (inc postage in Oz) ........ $12.00

All Lapel Badges ( “We were winning”, White Ensign or Navy Anchor) .................................................. $5.00

Association name badge - white, order, with Magnetic or Pin attachment (please specify) ............... $25.00

Keyrings – Navy Anchor ........................................ $5.00

Vietnam Service cloth Badges ................................ $5.00

PERTH (1) wall plaque ............................................... $???.

(plus $8.50 postage - NONE left)

PERTH (2) wall plaque ............................................... $???.

(plus $8.50 postage - NONE left)

Most items above include p&p unless stated otherwise. All orders to Secretary, PO Box 626 MERIMBULA NSW 2548