

The Western Australia Arms & Armour Society (Inc.)



Issue 196

November/December 2020





The Western Australia Arms & Armour Society (Inc.)

PO Box 5070

CANNING VALE SOUTH WA 6155

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PO Box 5070 CANNING VALE SOUTH WA 6155



WHERE AND WHEN WE MEET

7:30 for 7:45 pm start First Wednesday of the month at the Canning/Victoria Park RSL
162 Wharf Street (Cnr. George Way)
CANNINGTON

Entrance to off street parking is off George Way. Our meetings feature guest speakers & Show and Tell. Drinks are available.



EMAIL ADDRESS

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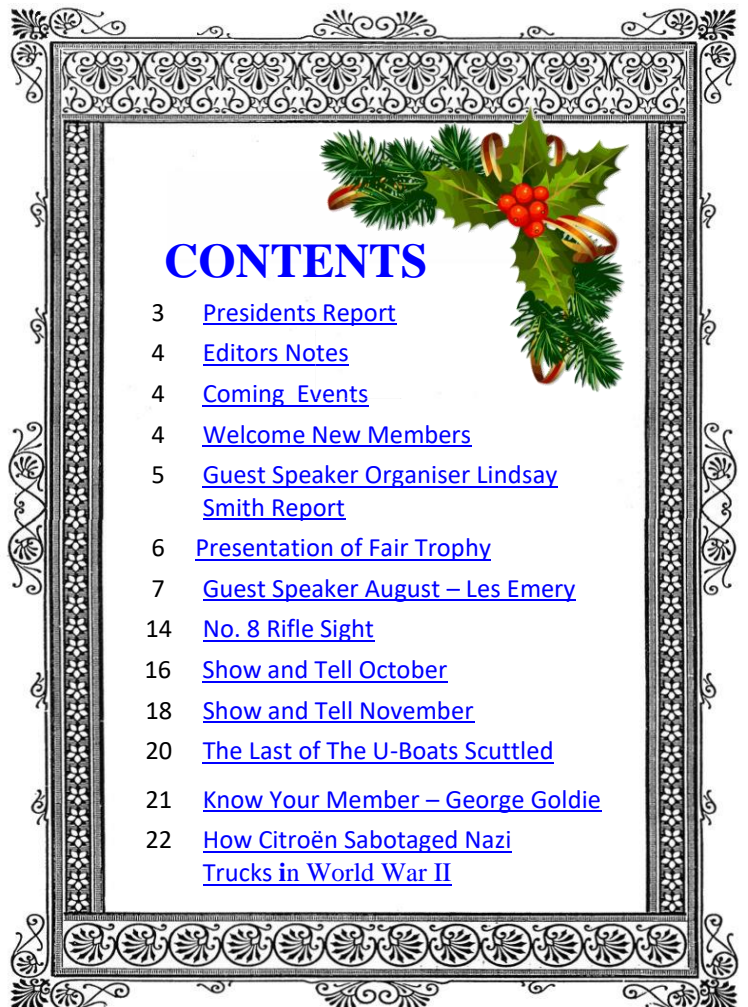
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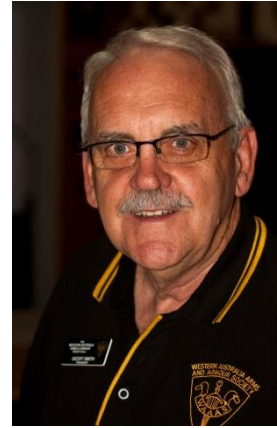


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PRESIDENTS REPORT

This is my final report for the year and what a year it has been, dominated by the COVID-19 virus. The virus of course necessitated lockdowns that Western Australia had not experienced before. I must admit that in the early stages I thought the measures the WA Government put in place were over the top, but it didn't take long to realise just how devastating the virus was, and with many of our members in that age bracket of extreme risk my thoughts were about survival. Our home, the RSL Canning Districts, needed to be closed/shut down and that removed a lot of the decision making that we may have needed to make on a voluntary basis. The loss of our April and June Swap Meets was a big hit to the Society's income. However, you can rest assured, your Society is in a brilliant financial position, which was helped along further by a very profitable 2020 Annual Fair. It seemed that the public had been starved of their militaria purchase opportunities and with domestic and international travel being non-existent they came and spent up big time. At the time of writing this report the November swap meet is only one week away. We have a lot of sellers not attending this time due to ill health etc. but they have been replaced by new people and the number of selling tables borders on a record for November. Our Facebook advertising is telling us that even more people look like attending and we are on the threshold of having a thousand people liking and following our Facebook page. All in all, another great November swap meet is assured.



We have our three-way rifle shoot at West Coast Field and Service Rifle Club on 6th December for the first time in several years, and a record number of participants from our Society. It kicks off at 12noon with a BBQ and shooting from 1.00pm. Our annual function/dinner is of course at our RSL home on Saturday 16th January. This is entirely at no charge for members and only a small charge for partners so please come along and enjoy the company of your fellow members. In February we are looking at hiring a Palace Cinema theatre for another movie. The last showing was indeed a fabulous outing enjoyed by everyone.

Please note that your letter of authority to transport firearms on your collectors' licence to club sanctioned events ends after this December meeting. For newer members or members not already included please let me know if you wish to be added to the 2021 letter of authority by the end of December this year (full name and Collectors licence number are required) at which time I will be applying to WA Police Firearms Licencing for a new authority. Hopefully, we will have it to hand for our February meeting.

Not forgetting our monthly letters for the "Show and Tell" next year they will be as follows:

February: "A": Ammunition, Afghan, Arms, Armistice, Aircraft, Armourer, Arisaka, Amphibious, Ambulance, Air Force, Arsenal, Altimeter, Attack, Acoustic, Agent, Action, Aerial, American, Antenna, Aviation, Ash tray, Anti-tank, and AIF.

And "B": Bayonet, Badges, Big Game, Button, Bullet, Bow, Belt, Bandolier, Bear, Binocular, Bottle, Buckle, Brass, Barrel, Bolt, BSA, Bowie, Brunswick, Brown Bess, Ballistic, Balloon, Barricade, Battery, Billet, Biological, Blast, Boat, Bomb, Booby Trap.

March will be "C": Cadet, Cleaning, Calendar, Cross, Cap, calliper, Clip, Canada, Cup, Clasp, Cannon, Compass, Cavalry, China, Colt, Combat, Commando, Conversion, Certificate, Comet, Cache, Camera, Camouflage, Campaign, Capsule, Carrier, Case, Chain, Chart, Corps.

And "D": Dagger, Drill, Drum, Decapper, Dirk, Derringer, Dunkirk, Double barrel, Duelling, Dutch, Deactivated, Disposal, Doctor, D-Day, Dead, Deception, Disarm, Detonate, Dummy, Duty. Members of course can bring along whatever they wish, the letters as such are as usual just to stimulate a thought process.

Kind regards



EDITORS NOTES

Well the meetings are getting back to normal and the items for the Show and Tell section is also picking up, so we hope this will all continue for the rest of the year and into next, now that we are opening the borders. So lets keep participating in the meetings and come along.

The committee are in the process of setting outings for the new year and first up should be a movie afternoon like the one earlier this year, so keep tuned. It will either be a new military movie (if any are out then) or one of our choice that looks interesting. Later in the year we hope to do the tunnels, the SAS and back to Merredin & Nungarin, as those that went on it raved about it.

The Annual Dinner function is coming up in January, so get your forms in early if you wish to go, so that we can plan for numbers with the caterers. It's always a good feed and chance to just chat to other members without the formal events of our normal meetings. So come along if you can.

The 3 Way Shoot is on the weekend of the 6th of December (after the meeting on the 2nd) and you should have your name down by now if you wish to participate. It is for Shooter Licenced service rifles – NO Collectable firearms allowed – if you have them and if not the range club will have some for use with just the cost of the ammunition to have with you (the shoot is 22 rounds). Visitors are allowed to come along to watch if they wish.

As usual our Guest Speaker organizer Lindsay is always after speakers, for next year now. So if you have a topic in mind [or want Lindsay to set you to something], then give him an email at: smithlindsay@bigpond.com or a call on 0408 092 585 and get your name down.

Till the next time Happy collecting.

William



COMING EVENTS PENDING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

6th December: 3 Way Shoot at the Chidlow Rifle range. Chidlow Rd, Sawyers Valley. (Chidlow Rd runs off Great Eastern Hwy). BBQ lunch at 12 noon with shoot to start at about 1:00pm. See flyer included in this magazine for details.

16th January: Annual Dinner at the Cannington RSL, from 5:30pm pre-dinner drinks for 6:30pm to eat.

3rd February: Society meeting at the Cannington RSL, 7:30pm.

21st February: Movie afternoon at Palace Cinema, Raine Square. Arrive 1:00pm for movie at 2:00pm, meeting in reserved area for drinks/choc-tops etc. Movie to be announced.

3rd March: Society meeting at the Cannington RSL, 7:30pm.

[**Note:** speakers are arranged for the year but may be subject to change, if you wish to do a monthly talk, contact Lindsay at: smithlindsay@bigpond.com].



Welcome to New Members

The WAA&AS Committee extends a warm welcome to the following members who have recently joined our ranks

STEPHEN PINDER

ADAM MARIE

BEN FILLERY

MITCHELL THOMPSON

FROM OUR GUEST SPEAKER ORGANISER LINDSAY SMITH

This year 2020 is almost over and 2021 will soon be upon us.

It is now time to thank all members who have given their time as speakers at our meetings, both in the research and the evening presentations, a very big thank you.

Usually I have approached members personally and asked for their help in giving a talk and always people have come forward, some-times with a little persuasion, but mostly with enthusiasm to share a story that you might find amusing or educational.

This task over many years has fallen on a small dedicated and informative group of people. This is a request to all members, many hundreds of members in fact, who I know have a lot of knowledge or it may be a member who is less informed but perhaps would be prepared to do further research and share their findings with like-minded people.

The topic may be a story of a relative who may have returned from the battle field or one that did not return, a visit to a museum at home or abroad, medals, battles of which there are many, on land, at sea, and in the air, your favourite firearm, ship or aircraft. There are many topics and great stories to be told, you may have one?

The presentations are not meant to be elaborate or even long, maybe we can link your short story with somebody else's. Whenever a presentation is given it is only a small insight into the subject, it is hoped this may encourage you to read up on the topic perhaps further.

Why not give it a thought, your input would be most welcome.

If you are interested, please don't hesitate to give me a call on 0408 092 585 or email at: smithlindsay@bigpond.com

MY FATHER-IN-LAW'S RECORDED HISTORY FROM THE AWM COLLECTION

By Lindsay Smith

In the collection of the Australian War Memorial, lies a treasure trove of sound and photo archives from our military personnel. One of those sound archives is by my father-in-law John (Jack) Bowbear Hawkes, a Private in the 2/28 Battalion, who fought in North Africa and became a POW at El Alamein. Please check out the web site to hear his story from childhood in Kalgoorlie to his return from captivity and the war: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C87899>



*From your committee of management I
wish you and you families a merry and safe
Xmas and a happy New Year*

PRESENTATION OF TROPHY FOR BEST DISPLAY AT ANNUAL FAIR

William Gillingham was the winner of the George Trotter Trophy for the best display of Militaria at the Western Australia Arms and Armour (Inc.) Arms and Militaria Fair 2020.



At the October meeting Certificates of Appreciation were presented to all who took part in the displays.

Back Row L to R: Don Smith, Lindsay Smith, Gus Gintzburger, Kingsley Hight, Peter Doyle, Duncan Clarke, Brett McMahon, and Bob wise.

Front Row L to R: Bruce Fagan, Geoff Smith, William Gillingham.

Missing: Mark Costello and Stephen Dear, who were presented with their certificates at the November meeting.



GUEST SPEAKER – OCTOBER

BATTLE OF THE DENMARK STRAIT



Guest Speaker Les Emery

The Denmark Strait is a body of water between Greenland and Iceland, some 1,400 kilometres NNW of Scotland, which on 24 May 1941 saw some of the largest ships of the British and German navies pitched against each other. On that day, the British lost their battlecruiser *HMS Hood* and in subsequent days the Germans saw their prized battleship *Bismarck* sink beneath the waves.

The participants in this action on the British side were:-

HMS Prince of Wales, a King George V-class battleship, commissioned on 19 January 1941. She was damaged by a German attack whilst in dry-dock during her fit-out in August 1940.

Displacement: 43,780 tons

Length: 745 feet.

Armament (guns) (1941); 10x 14-inch, 16 x 5.25-inch, 32 x 2 pounder

HMS Hood was the last of the Admiral-class battlecruisers built for the Royal Navy, being commissioned on 15 May 1920.

Displacement: 46.680 tons

Length: 860 feet

Armament (guns); 4 x (twin) 15-inch, 7 x 4-inch, 3 x 2 pounder

In 1923-24 the *Hood* was part of a squadron that undertook a 38,000-mile world cruise, calling into Fremantle and Albany in March 1924.

HMS Suffolk, a County-class heavy cruiser with a displacement of 9,750 tons.

HMS Norfolk, a County-class heavy cruiser with a displacement of 10,035 tons.

In addition, a contingent of six destroyers sailed with these vessels, however on the night before this engagement they were detached to search the Denmark Strait for the *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen*.

On the German side two ships were involved.

Bismarck, a Bismarck-class battleship commissioned on 24 August 1940.

Displacement: 41,000 tons

Length: 792 feet

Armament (guns); 8 x 15-inch, 12 x 5.9-inch, 16 x 4.1-inch, 16 x 1.5 inch

Prinz Eugen, an Admiral Hipper-class heavy cruiser, commissioned on 1 August 1940.

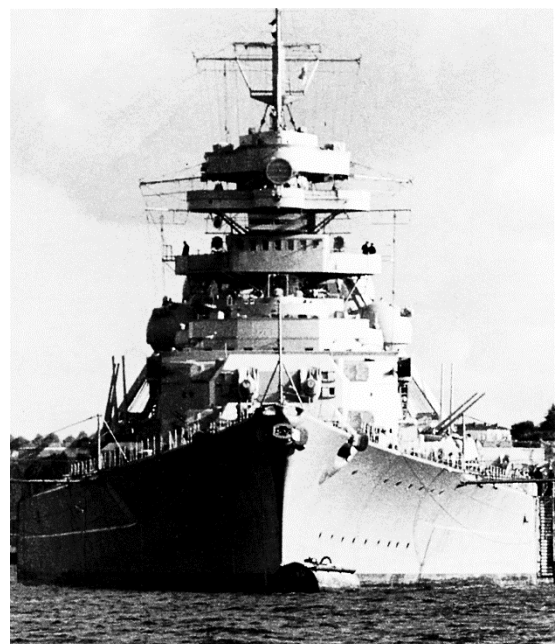
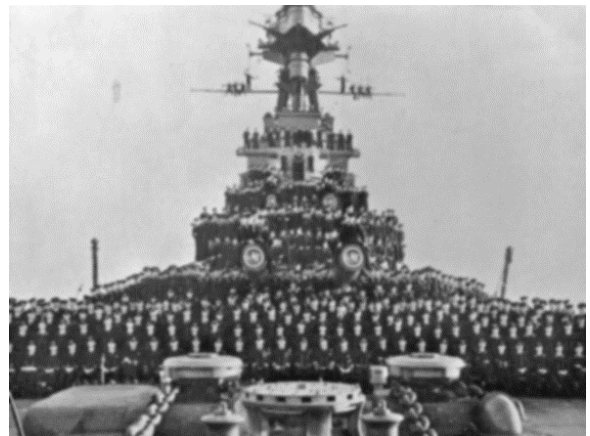
Displacement: 18,710 tons

Length: 697 feet

Armament (guns); 8 x 8-inch, 12 x 4.1-inch, 12 x 1.5-inch

Prinz Eugen became a war prize of the USA on 13 December 1945.

THE LEAD UP: In April 1941, the German Kriegsmarine intended to send the recently completed battleship *Bismarck* into the Atlantic Ocean to raid the convoys carrying supplies from North America to Britain.



The operation was intended to complement the U-boat attacks on British supply lines during the Battle of the Atlantic. The number of major warships available to the Germans were limited; *Bismarck's* sister ship *Tirpitz* was not yet operational, *Scharnhorst* was in need of repair, and *Gneisenau* had suffered torpedo damage while in Brest, France. Heavy cruisers *Admiral Hipper* and *Admiral Scheer*, were both under refit in Germany. Admiral Günther Lütjens, the fleet commander who was to command German forces during the planned operation, sought to delay the operation until repairs to *Scharnhorst* were completed or *Tirpitz* could join *Bismarck*, but the Naval High Command instructed Lütjens to begin the operation as soon as possible to keep pressure on Britain's supply lines. As a result, the only vessel available to support *Bismarck* was the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*.

The British Royal Navy learned of *Bismarck's* sortie after the Swedish cruiser *Gotland* spotted the vessels passing through the western Baltic Sea on 20 May; *Gotland's* report was passed to the British naval attaché in Stockholm, who forwarded it to the Admiralty. Now aware that major German warships were at sea with the intention to break into the Atlantic, the Royal Navy began to despatch vessels to patrol the likely routes, including the heavy cruisers *HMS Norfolk* and *Suffolk* to cover the Denmark Strait. Another group, consisting of the battleship *Prince of Wales*, the battlecruiser *Hood* and a screen of six destroyers under the command of Vice-Admiral Lancelot Holland (on *Hood*), cruised to the south of Iceland to intercept the Germans once they were detected. *Norfolk* and *Suffolk* spotted *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen* on the evening of 23rd May; *Suffolk* was fitted with radar that allowed them to shadow the Germans through the night whilst remaining out of German gun range.

Prince of Wales was similar to *Bismarck* in size and power, although she had not yet been properly 'shaken down', and her crew was inexperienced, She still had mechanical problems, especially with her main armament, so she sailed with shipyard workers still aboard to complete this work.

For 20 years after her commissioning in 1920, *Hood* was the largest and heaviest warship in the world. Combining eight massive 15-inch naval guns with a top speed greater than any battleship on the sea, *Hood* was the pride of the Royal Navy, and embodied the world dominance of British naval power. Despite this, *Hood* had one conspicuous flaw as compared to the super-dreadnought battleships she served alongside: much of her bulk was dedicated to extra engine power instead of comprehensive armour coverage. This was in accordance with the earlier theory that "speed is armour". While her 12-inch belt armour was considered sufficient against most ships fire that she was likely to encounter, her 3 inches of deck armour left her vulnerable to plunging fire at long range. At the time of her commissioning in 1920, naval gunnery was severely inaccurate at the ranges necessary to produce plunging fire, and *Hood's* greater speed and manoeuvrability was seen as an acceptable trade-off. However, as the accuracy of naval gunfire increased in the inter-war period *Hood* was eventually scheduled to receive an upgrade in 1939 that would have doubled her deck armour to 6 inches, but the outbreak of the Second World War meant that the upgrade never took place. She thus went to war at a marked disadvantage against the new German capital ships.

Holland's battle plan was to have *Hood* and *Prince of Wales* engage *Bismarck* while *Suffolk* and *Norfolk* engaged *Prinz Eugen*. He signalled this to Captain John C. Leach of *Prince of Wales* but did not radio Admiral William Wake-Walker who, as Commander of the 1st Cruiser Squadron directed *Suffolk* and *Norfolk*, for fear of disclosing his location. Instead, he observed radio silence. Holland hoped to meet the enemy at approximately 02:00. Sunset in this latitude was at 01:51; *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen* would be silhouetted against the sun's afterglow while *Hood* and *Prince of Wales* could approach rapidly, unseen in the darkness, to a range close enough not to endanger *Hood* with plunging fire from *Bismarck*. The Germans would not expect an attack from this quarter, giving the British the advantage of surprise.

The plan's success depended on *Suffolk's* continually unbroken contact with the German ships. However, *Suffolk* lost contact from 00:28 for 90 minutes, Holland neither sighted the German ships nor received any further news from *Norfolk* or *Suffolk*. Reluctantly, Holland ordered *Hood* and *Prince of Wales* to turn south-southwest and detached his destroyers to continue searching to the north. Before contact was re-established, the two squadrons missed each other narrowly. Had the German ships not altered course to the west at 01:41 to follow the line of the Greenland icepack, the British would have intercepted them much earlier than they did. The British destroyers were just 10 miles to the southeast when the Germans made this course change.

Just before 03:00, *Suffolk* regained contact with *Bismarck*. The *Hood* and *Prince of Wales* were 35 miles away, slightly ahead of the Germans. Holland signalled to steer toward the Germans and increased speed

to 28 knots. *Suffolk's* loss of contact had placed the British at a disadvantage. Instead of the swiftly closing head-on approach as Holland had envisioned, he would have to converge at a wider angle, much more slowly. This would leave *Hood* vulnerable to *Bismarck's* plunging shells for a much longer period. The situation worsened further when, at 03:20, *Suffolk* reported that the Germans had made a further course alteration to the west, placing the German and British squadrons almost abeam of each other.

At 05:35, lookouts on *Prince of Wales* spotted the German ships 17 miles away. The Germans, already alerted to the British presence through their hydrophonic equipment, picked up the smoke and masts of the British ships 10 minutes later. At this point, Holland had the option of joining *Suffolk* in shadowing *Bismarck* and waiting for Tovey to arrive with *King George V* and other ships to attack, or to order his squadron into action. He chose the latter at 05:37. The rough seas in the Strait kept the destroyers' role to a minimum and the cruisers *Norfolk* and *Suffolk* would be too far behind the German force to reach the battle.

OPENING MOVES: *Hood* opened fire at 05:52 at a distance of approximately 26,500 yards. Holland had ordered firing to begin on the leading ship, *Prinz Eugen*, believing from her position that she was *Bismarck*.

Holland soon amended his order and directed both ships to engage the rear ship, *Bismarck*. Holland was a gunnery expert; he was well aware of the danger posed by *Hood's* weak horizontal protection and wanted to reduce the range as quickly as possible.

At a shorter range, the trajectory of *Bismarck's* shells would be flatter, and they would be more likely to hit the sides of the ship or glance off the top deck, rather than penetrate *Hood's* thin deck armour. Holland closed the range at an angle that placed the German ships too far forward of the beam, which meant that only 10 of the 18 British heavy guns could train and presented the Germans with a bigger target than necessary. One of *Prince of Wales's* forward guns became unserviceable after the first salvo, leaving only 9 still firing. *Suffolk* and *Norfolk* tried to engage *Bismarck* during the action, but both were out of range and had an insufficient speed advantage over *Bismarck* to rapidly close that range.

Prince of Wales struck her target first. She would ultimately hit *Bismarck* three times. One shell struck the commander's boat and put the seaplane catapult amidships out of action. The second shell passed through the bow from one side to the other without exploding. The third struck the hull underwater and burst inside the ship, flooding a generator room, and damaging the bulkhead to an adjoining boiler room, partially flooding it.

The Germans held their fire until 05:55, when both German ships fired on *Hood*. A shell hit *Hood's* boat deck, starting a sizable fire in the 4-inch ammunition store, but this fire did not spread to other areas of the ship or cause the later explosion. It is possible that *Hood* was struck again at the base of her bridge and in her foretop radar director.

SINKING OF HOOD: At 06:00, Holland ordered his force to turn once again to port to ensure that the aft main guns on both *Hood* and *Prince of Wales* could bear on the German ships. During the turn, a salvo from *Bismarck*, fired from about 9 miles was seen by men aboard *Prince of Wales* to straddle *Hood* abreast her mainmast. This straddle meant that some of the salvos fell to port, some to starboard and some precisely aligned over the centre of the main deck of *Hood*. It is likely that one 15-inch shell struck somewhere between *Hood's* mainmast and "X" turret aft of the mast. A huge pillar of flame shot upward "like a giant blowtorch" in the vicinity of the mainmast. This was followed by an explosion that destroyed a large portion of the ship from amidships clear to the rear of "Y" turret, blowing both after turrets into the sea. The ship broke in two and the stern fell away and sank. One survivor claimed that *Hood* heeled to 30 degrees at which point "we knew she just wasn't coming back". The bow rose clear of the water, pointed upward, pivoted about, and sank shortly after the stern. "A" turret fired a salvo while in this upright position by the doomed gun crew just before the bow section sank. *Hood* sank in about three minutes with 1,415 members of the crew. Only three of her crew survived to be rescued two



HMS Hood, 24th May 1941. Minutes later, she was struck by a shell from the *Bismarck*, destroying her and killing all but 3 of her 1,418 crew

hours later by the destroyer *HMS Electra*. Vice Admiral Holland stayed at his post onboard the *Hood* and was amongst those lost.

An Admiralty investigation later concluded that the most likely explanation for the loss of *Hood* was a penetration of her magazines by a 15-inch shell from *Bismarck*, causing the explosion. It has been suggested from examination of the wreckage, found in 2001, that the magazine explosion in the 4-inch armament near the mainmast caused the vertical blast of flame seen there, and this in turn ignited the magazines of the aft 15-inch guns that caused the explosion that wrecked the stern. This explosion might have travelled through the starboard fuel tanks, igniting the fuel oil there, setting off the forward magazines and completing the destruction of the ship. There have been a number of theories as to the actual sequence of events however I do not intend to discuss these at this time.

At this stage, the *Prince of Wales* was steering towards the sinking *Hood* however her commanding officer, Captain Leach, ordered an emergency turn away from *Hood's* wreckage. This violent change of course disrupted her aim and put her in a position that made it easier for the Germans to target her. She resumed her previous course but was now under the concentrated fire of both German ships. *Prince of Wales* was struck four times by *Bismarck* and three times by *Prinz Eugen*. One shell passed through her upper superstructure killing or wounding several crewmen, whilst pieces of another shell struck her radar office aft, killing the crewmen within.

An 8-inch shell from *Prinz Eugen* found its way to the propelling charge/round manipulation chamber below the aft 5.25-inch gun turrets, and a 15-inch shell from *Bismarck* hit underwater below the armour belt, penetrating about 13 feet into the ship's hull, about 25 feet below the waterline, but was stopped by the anti-torpedo bulkhead. Fortunately for *Prince of Wales*, neither shell exploded, but she still suffered minor flooding and the loss of some fuel oil.

Captain Leach decided that continuing the action would risk losing *Prince of Wales* without inflicting further damage on the enemy. He therefore ordered the ship to make smoke and withdraw, pending a more favourable opportunity. The ship retired from the battle around 06:10, thirteen of her crew had been killed and nine were wounded. The timing of *Prince of Wales's* withdrawal was fortunate for her, as she had come into torpedo range of *Prinz Eugen* and turned away as the German cruiser was about to fire.

BREAKING OFF THE ACTION: On *Bismarck* there was tremendous elation at the sinking of *Hood*. There was also a keen expectation that they would close on *Prince of Wales* and possibly finish her off. Lindemann requested that Lütjens allow *Bismarck* to do just that, but Lütjens refused to allow Lindemann to give chase on the orders from the German Naval Commander, Admiral Erich Raeder, to avoid unnecessary combat with the Royal Navy, especially when it could lead to further damage. He broke off combat instead of pursuing *Prince of Wales* and ordered a course due west. *Bismarck* had fired 93 of her 353 armour piercing shells during the engagement.

AFTERMATH: Holland's death led to responsibility for *Prince of Wales* falling to Admiral William Wake-Walker on *Norfolk*. With this command came the responsibility of coping with *Bismarck* until enough British warships could concentrate and destroy her. His choice was either to renew the action with *Bismarck* or ensure that she be intercepted and brought to action by other heavy units. Wake-Walker chose the latter course, continuing to shadow the German ships. Further offensive action, he concluded, would cause more damage to *Prince of Wales* than to *Bismarck* and endanger his cruisers, plus he knew that Admiral Tovey was on his way.

He ordered *Prince of Wales* to follow *Norfolk* at her best speed, so that *Norfolk* and *Suffolk* could fall back on her if attacked. At 07:57 *Suffolk* reported that *Bismarck* had reduced speed and appeared damaged. Since *Bismarck* receiving the first hit in the forecastle, all six of the ship's damage control teams had worked to repair the damage, particularly to the damage to the No. 2 boiler room and the need to fill holes with hammocks and collision matting. This work failed to stop the ingress of seawater and the No 2 boiler room was shut down, causing a drop in speed to 28 knots.

As well as taking on seawater, *Bismarck* was leaking fuel oil, the carpet of oil was broad enough to cover both sides of the ship's wake, was all colours of the rainbow and gave off a strong smell – all of which helped disclose *Bismarck's* location. The damage to *Bismarck's* forward fuel tanks, combined with a missed opportunity to refuel at Bergen earlier in the voyage, left less than 3,000 tons of fuel remaining, not enough to operate effectively against the Atlantic convoys.

The element of surprise, which was considered essential for the operation's success had most definitely been lost; the German ships continued to be shadowed by Wake-Walker's squadron. Lütjens concluded that he needed to abort *Bismarck's* mission and head toward a convenient dockyard for repairs. The question was which dockyard to head to, the nearest friendly ports were Bergen and Trondheim in Norway, a little over 1,000 miles away. Steaming in that direction meant a return passage north or south of Iceland, with the enemy's air forces now fully alerted to their presence and the possibility of other heavy units between them and Scapa Flow.

Instead Lütjens ordered *Bismarck* to head for the French port of Saint-Nazaire, although the French coast was 600 miles further away than Bergen, Saint-Nazaire held the potential of longer nights and wider seas in which to shake off *Bismarck's* 'shadowers', plus the possibility of luring them across a line of U-boats. It would leave *Bismarck* poised on the edge of the British trade routes once the damage was repaired. Lütjens detached the undamaged *Prinz Eugen* to continue raiding on her own. The cruiser went further south into the Atlantic, where she refuelled from a tanker at sea. Later she suffered engine trouble, abandoned her commerce-raiding mission without having sunk any merchant ships, and returned to Brest.

GERMAN REACTION: After the engagement, Lütjens reported, "Battlecruiser, probably *Hood*, sunk. Another battleship turned away damaged. Two heavy cruisers maintain contact." At 08:01, he transmitted a damage report and his intentions, which were to detach *Prinz Eugen* for commerce-raiding and to make for Saint-Nazaire for repairs.

News of Lütjens' decision was received with shock in Berlin, whilst satisfied with Lütjens' success, it was tempered by news of *Bismarck's* damage and the decision to head for France. When Hitler received the news of *Hood's* sinking, he berated those present for not continuing the engagement to sink the *Prince of Wales* as well. The news of *Hood's* destruction was seized upon more enthusiastically by Propaganda Minister Goebbels, that evening it was broadcast to the nation. The German public, already enjoying the news of Luftwaffe victories over the Royal Navy off Crete, received the news of *Hood's* sinking euphorically.

BRITISH REACTION: The British public were shocked that one of their most iconic warships had been destroyed so suddenly, with such a tragic loss of life. Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered all warships in the area to join the pursuit of *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen*.

Moves were subsequently made to court-martial Wake-Walker and Captain John Leach of *Prince of Wales*. The view was taken that they were wrong not to have continued the battle with *Bismarck* after *Hood* had been sunk. John Tovey, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet was appalled at this criticism. A row ensued between Tovey and his superior, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, Tovey stated that the two officers had acted correctly, ensuring that the German ships were tracked and not endangering their ships needlessly. Furthermore, *Prince of Wales's* main guns had repeatedly malfunctioned and she could not have matched *Bismarck*. Tovey threatened to resign his position and appear at any court-martial as 'defendant's friend' and a defence witness, and no more was heard of the proposal.

The British convened two enquiries, both of which concluded that a 15-inch shell from *Bismarck* caused the explosion of *Hood's* aft ammunition magazines. This led to refitting some of the older British warships with increased protection for their ammunition magazines and some other related improvements.

SINKING THE BISMARCK: With the weather worsening after the detachment of the *Prinz Eugen* the *Bismarck* turned to face Wake-Walker's formation, forcing *Suffolk* to turn away at high speed. *Prince of Wales* fired twelve salvos at *Bismarck*, which responded with nine salvos, none of which hit. The action diverted British attention and permitted *Prinz Eugen* to slip away.

Although *Bismarck* had been damaged in the engagement and forced to reduce speed, she was still capable of reaching 28 knots, the maximum speed of Tovey's *King George V*. Unless *Bismarck* could be slowed, the British would be unable to prevent her from reaching Saint-Nazaire. Shortly before 16:00 on 25 May, Tovey detached the aircraft carrier *Victorious* and four light cruisers to shape a course that would position her to launch her torpedo bombers.

As the chase entered open waters, Wake-Walker's ships were compelled to zig-zag to avoid German U-boats that might be in the area. The Royal Navy search became frantic, as many of the British ships were low on fuel. *Victorious* and her escorting cruisers were sent west, Wake-Walker's ships continued to the south and west, and Tovey continued to steam toward the mid-Atlantic. Force-H with the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* steaming up from Gibraltar was still at least a day away. Unaware that he had shaken off Wake-

Walker, Lütjens sent long radio messages to Naval Group West headquarters in Paris. The signals were intercepted by the British, from which bearings were determined. They were wrongly plotted onboard *King George V*, leading Tovey to believe that *Bismarck* was heading back to Germany through the Iceland-Faroe Islands gap, which kept his fleet on the wrong course for seven hours, but by the time the mistake had been discovered, *Bismarck* had put a sizeable gap between herself and the British ships.

British codebreakers were able to decipher some of the German signals, including an order to the Luftwaffe to provide support for *Bismarck* making for Brest. At 10:30 on 26 May, a Catalina of the US Navy located her, some 790 miles northwest of Brest. At her current speed, she would have been close enough to reach the protection of U-boats and the Luftwaffe in less than a day. Most British forces were not close enough to stop her.

Victorious launched nine of her Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers and two Fulmar fighters. The Swordfish flew through foul weather and attacked *Bismarck* in the face of tremendous fire from her anti-aircraft guns, scoring a hit to the armoured belt with a torpedo. The *Victorious* took no further part in the chase.

The only possibility for the Royal Navy was *Ark Royal*, with Force H, *Ark Royal's* Swordfish were already searching nearby when the Catalina found her. Soon after several of these bombers also located the battleship, about 60 miles away from *Ark Royal*. Somerville ordered an attack as soon as the Swordfish returned to refuel and were rearmed with torpedoes.

The second attack comprised fifteen aircraft and was launched at 19:10. At 20:47, the torpedo bombers began their attack descent through the clouds. The *Bismarck* began to turn violently as her anti-aircraft batteries engaged the bombers, one torpedo hit amidships on the port side, just below the bottom edge of the main armour belt. The second torpedo struck *Bismarck* in her stern on the port side, near the rudder shafts. The crew eventually managed to repair the starboard rudder, but the port rudder remained jammed. At 21:15, Lütjens reported that the ship was no longer manoeuvrable.

With the port rudder jammed, *Bismarck* was now steaming in a large circle, unable to escape from Tovey's forces. Though fuel shortages had reduced the number of ships available to the British, the battleships *King George V* and *Rodney* were still available, along with the heavy cruisers *Dorsetshire* and *Norfolk*. Lütjens signalled headquarters at 21:40 on the 26th: "Ship unmanoeuvrable. We will fight to the last shell. Long live the Führer." The mood of the crew became increasingly depressed, especially as messages from the naval command reached the ship. Intended to boost morale, the messages only highlighted the desperate situation in which the crew found themselves. Throughout the night and into the morning, destroyers harried *Bismarck*, illuminating her with star shells and firing dozens of torpedoes, none of which hit.

After daybreak on 27 May, *King George V* led the attack. *Rodney* followed off her port quarter; Tovey intended to steam directly at *Bismarck* until he was about 8 miles away. At that point, he would turn south to put his ships parallel to his target. At 08:43, lookouts on *King George V* spotted her, some 25,000 yards away. Four minutes later, *Rodney's* two forward turrets, comprising six 16-inch guns, opened fire, then *King George V's* 14-inch guns began firing. *Bismarck* returned fire at 08:50 with her forward guns; with her second salvo, she straddled *Rodney*. Thereafter *Bismarck's* ability to aim her guns deteriorated as the ship, unable to steer, moved erratically in the heavy seas.

Norfolk and *Dorsetshire* closed and began firing with their 8-inch guns. At 09:02, a 16-inch shell from *Rodney* struck *Bismarck's* forward superstructure killing hundreds of men and severely damaging the two forward turrets. A second shell from this salvo struck the forward main battery. One of *Bismarck's* shells exploded 20 feet off *Rodney's* bow and damaged her starboard torpedo tube. With the bridge personnel no longer responding, the executive officer Commander Hans Oels took command of the ship. He decided at around 09:30 to abandon and scuttle the ship to prevent *Bismarck* being boarded by the British, and to allow the crew to abandon ship so as to reduce casualties. Oels ordered the men below decks to abandon ship; he instructed the engine room crews to open the ship's watertight doors and to prepare scuttling charges. By 10:00, Tovey's two battleships had fired over 700 main battery shells, many at close range. *Rodney* closed to 3,000 yards, point-blank range for guns of that size, and continued to fire. Tovey would not cease-fire until the Germans struck their ensigns or it became clear they were abandoning ship.

Overall, the four British ships fired more than 2,800 shells at *Bismarck*, and scored more than 400 hits, but were unable to sink *Bismarck* by gunfire. The heavy gunfire at virtually point-blank range devastated the superstructure and the sections of the hull that were above the waterline, and it caused very heavy

casualties, but it contributed little to the eventual sinking of the ship. *Rodney* fired two torpedoes from her port-side tube and claimed one hit. The scuttling charges detonated around 10:20. By 10:35, the ship had assumed a heavy port list, capsizing slowly and sinking by the stern and disappearing beneath the surface at 10:40. Around 400 men were now in the water; *Dorsetshire* and the destroyer *Maori* moved in and lowered ropes to pull the survivors aboard. At 11:40, *Dorsetshire*'s captain ordered the rescue effort abandoned after lookouts spotted what they thought was a U-boat. *Dorsetshire* had rescued 85 men and *Maori* had picked up 25 by the time they left the scene. A U-boat later reached the survivors and found three men, and a German trawler rescued another two. One of the men picked up by the British died of his wounds the following day. Out of a crew of over 2,200 men, only 114 survived.

WRECK OF HOOD: In 2001, British broadcaster Channel 4 engaged shipwreck hunter David Mearns and his company, Blue Water Recoveries, to locate the wreck of *Hood*. In 2008 Mearns would also lead the successful search for the *HMAS Sydney* and the German auxiliary cruiser *Kormoran* off the Western Australian coast. This was the first time anyone had attempted to locate *Hood*'s resting place although Mearns had spent the previous six years privately researching the fate of *Hood* with the goal of finding her. Mearns and the search team began scanning a 2,100 km² search box for *Hood*; completely covering the area was estimated to take six days, in the 39th hour of the search the *Hood* was located. The wreck lies on the seabed in pieces at a depth of about 2,800 metres. In 2002, the site was officially designated a war grave by the British government, as such it remains a protected place.

In 2012, the British Government gave permission for Mearns to return to the *Hood* to retrieve one of her two ship's bells which were lying in a small open debris field some way from the wreck herself. After conservation work the bell was put on display at the Portsmouth Naval Museum on 24 May 2016 in the presence of The Princess Royal.



WRECK OF THE BISMARCK: The wreck of *Bismarck* was discovered on 8 June 1989 by Dr Robert Ballard, the oceanographer responsible for finding RMS *Titanic*. *Bismarck* was found to be resting on its keel at a depth of approximately 4,791 metres about 650 km west of Brest. As she sank the ship had struck an extinct underwater volcano, which rose some 1,000 metres above the surrounding plain, causing the *Bismarck* to slide down the mountain, coming to a stop about two-thirds down. Ballard's survey found eight holes in the hull, one on the starboard side and seven on the port side, all above the waterline. Ballard's submersibles recorded no sign of a shell penetration through the main or side armour and it is likely that shells penetrated the deck armour only. Huge dents showed that many of the 14-inch shells fired by *King George V* bounced off the German belt armour.



Naval historians have noted that the British battleships were shooting at very close range; the flat trajectory of the shells made it difficult to hit the relatively narrow target represented by the belt armour above the waterline, as shells that fell short would either ricochet up into the superstructure or explode on striking the water. Ballard noted that he found no evidence of the internal implosions that occur when a hull that is not fully flooded sinks, suggesting that *Bismarck*'s compartments were flooded when the ship sank, supporting the scuttling theory. It was concluded that the direct cause of sinking was scuttling, as claimed by German survivors. Despite sometimes differing viewpoints, experts generally agree though that *Bismarck* would have eventually foundered if the Germans had not scuttled her first.

FATE OF THE PRINCE OF WALES: The *Prince of Wales* herself did not survive 1941. On 25th October 1941 she and her destroyer escort left home waters bound for Singapore. She was sunk as a result of Japanese aerial bombing and torpedoes with 327 fatalities, 110 km off the coast of Kuantan, in what is now Malaysia.

FATE OF THE PRINZ EUGEN: The *Prinz Eugen* was one of only a few major German naval vessels to survive the war in serviceable condition. On 13 December 1945, *Prinz Eugen* was awarded as a 'war prize' to the United States. They did not particularly want the cruiser but did want to prevent the Soviet Union from acquiring it. The cruiser was commissioned into the US Navy as the USS *Prinz Eugen*. A composite American-German crew took the ship to Boston, where the ship's technology underwent extensive examination by the US Navy. The ship was then allocated to the fleet of target ships to test the effects of nuclear weapons on warships of various types. The ship survived two atomic bomb blasts during 1946 tests at the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific. She suffered no significant structural damage from the explosions but was thoroughly contaminated with radioactive fallout. The ship was towed to the Kwajalein Atoll in the central Pacific, where a small leak went unrepaired due to the radiation danger. Late in 1946 the *Prinz Eugen* capsized and sank in shallow water; she had been decommissioned by the US Navy on 29th August 1946.

Although there is far more written on the Battle of the Denmark Strait, the sinking of the *Hood* and subsequent sinking of the *Bismarck*, the ships that participated, their fates and rediscoveries, I have attempted here to give a broad outline of a WWII naval action, which caused both the British and German navies to lose prize ships from their fleets.

A film clip of the battle to the sound of Johnny Horton singing "Sink the Bismark" completed Les's talk.

No. 8 RIFLE SIGHT

I would like to share a unique sight which is on my No. 8 Rifle, based on a No5 action and appears to be factory drilled for a side mounted target sight. The rear sight fitted to the rifle isn't a standard No. 8 rear sight. This rifle seems to be fitted with an experimental adjustable rear sight.

I have tried to research this sight but there is very little information available. The only true reference I have found is a picture of this particular sight, fitted to a match model of the trial No. 8 rifles on page 297 in Ian Skennerton's book, "*The Lee-Enfield: A Century of Lee-Metford and Lee-Enfield Rifles and Carbines*".

Unfortunately, the windage screw for this sight is broken. I would like to remake this screw, but to do this I need some basic dimensions from another example. I feel like this is a long shot. Some people have estimated that there may be a very small number of these sights since they are essentially a discarded trial sight.

Would there happen to be any members with information on these sights?

Contact: pjgrigson@outlook.com





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to all WAA&AS Members

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SHOW AND TELL OCTOBER



Monthly winner: Maurice Borg: British & German Naval uniforms as were worn in the *Hood vs Bismarck* engagement.



Peter Doyle: 1 – Pattern 37 RAF belt, holster & pouch, Mills 1940. 2 – German Spreewerke P-38 pistol with holster.



Mark Costello: US, Torrington made shotgun cartridge roll over tool, for paper cartridges.



Gus Gintzburger: French Berthier 1907/15 rifle, modified by Turkish Government for the Turkish Forestry Guards.



Barry Lathwell collection: 1 – Rendered International Harvester M1 Garand rifle, made 1945. 2 – Rendered Johnston Auto rifle made for Dutch contract 1941.



Ray: Webley Mk. 6 revolver, Australian marked, with scarce Prideaux speed loader.



Bob Wise: 1 – DoD marked metal petrol can. 2 – P-41 helmet shell with original owners' details inside. 3 – Australian Service medal 1939/45 to marked recipient.



Jason: WWI Presentation British Naval Officers sword from HMS Faulknor 1916.



Les Emery: 1 – Webley Mk. 5 revolver, Qld Govt. marked and only made for a few years. 2 – German P-98/05 Butcher sawback bayonet.



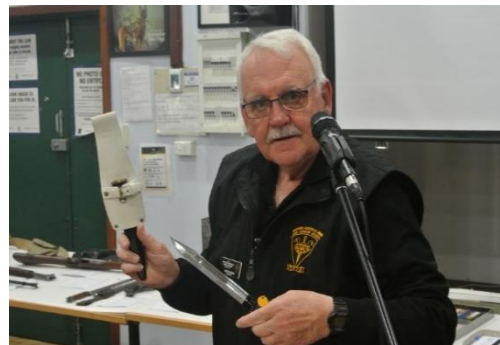
Graham Donley: Replica medals – Naval small gold medal 1794-1815 & Army gold cross 1808-14.



William Gillingham: 4x Indonesian Kris short sword/knives.



Geoff Crowhurst: 2x Souvenir French coins from Fort Eben-Emael & Battery Todt rail gun & 1x VOC 1871 silver coin



Geoff Smith: British, Canadian & Australian SLR Parade bayonets,.



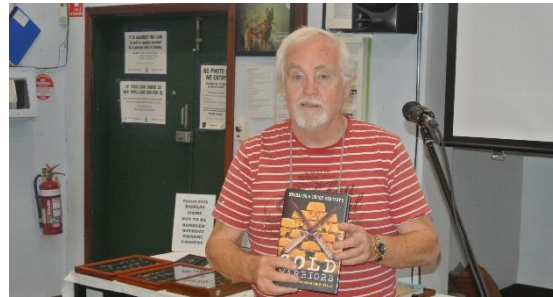
SHOW AND TELL - NOVEMBER



Monthly winner: Bruce Porter: Set of 3 display frames of Sweetheart Badges from Australia and overseas.



C Hernan: Lithgow/Slazenger rifle from 303 parts, in 0.22Hornet.



Kingsley Highet: Book "Gold Warriors" on missing WWII Japanese gold.



C Ferraz: 2 x Western Australian marked 0.303 cal rifles – Lee Speed from BSA & MLE from the Goldfields regiment.



Bob Wise: 1 – RLC stable belt, Officers pattern with leather buckles. 2 – Wooden tray with Army Service Corps. badge (also book on them "Convoys up the Track").



Gregg Baird: 1 – Deactivated SLR rifle & tech brochure. 2 – Duomatic shotshell reloader.





Les Emery: Napoleonic Wars ID tag from a British Dragoon, made from a 1797 Cartwheel Penny.



Peter Doyle: 1 – USA 'Global War on Terror' medal. 2 – S&W Hammerless Safety revolver 5th Model in 0.38 cal.



Geoff Crowhurst: Soviet RGD 33 hand grenade from WWII.



William Gillingham: 1 – Iver Johnson M1900 revolver in 0.38 cal. 2 – Italian Bodeo 'Lightened' revolver in 10.35 mm with original canvas holster.



Geoff Smith: British Pattern 1853 Cavalry sword issued to Victorian Volunteer Artillery.

THE LAST OF THE U-BOATS IS SCUTTLED

by Sharon Adams

In 1983, Wilhelm Bauer (U-2540) was restored to its original Second World War configuration and is the only floating example of a Type XXI U-boat and is now on display at the Maritime Museum in Bremerhaven, Germany.



On Feb. 12, 1946, *U-3514* was sunk off the coast of Northern Ireland in Operation Deadlight, meant to ensure elimination of the German submarine fleet after the war. The sub was sunk at 10:04 a.m. by ship guns and depth charges, the last of 116 scuttled by the Royal Navy.

In anticipation of the end of the war in early May 1945, German U-boat captains began scuttling their own boats, preventing an estimated 200 from falling into the hands of the Allies. On May 4, the German Navy ordered all U-boats to go to ports in Norway. On May 8, there were 156 still afloat. Their fate was sealed by an agreement among the Allies that sinking the vessels was more economic than scrapping them. The boats were gathered at Lisahall, Northern Ireland, and Loch Ryan in Scotland, but a great number (some sources say up to half) sank en route, victims of bad weather, deterioration, or both.

Despite Britain's determination that all U-boats should be sunk to eliminate the threat to postwar merchant shipping, some did survive. The United States, Soviet Union and Britain retained 10 each for research, and several were subsequently raised and/or salvaged and put to naval use, including one by the peacetime German navy, which kept it afloat until 1982 before putting it on display. Only four U-boats remain on public display today, says the website militaryhistorynow.com. Parts of *U-534* are on display at a waterfront park on the Mersey River in Liverpool, England; *U-505* is on display at the Chicago Museum of Science and Technology; *U-2540* is at the German Maritime Museum in Bremerhaven, Germany; and *U-995* is a museum ship at the Laboe Naval Memorial near Kiel, Germany.



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KNOW YOUR LIFE MEMBER

GEORGE GOLDIE

George Roy Goldie was born in Melbourne on 6th October 1921. On 18th September 1941 he enlisted in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force and on 3rd May 1942 VX89167 Signalmán Goldie embarked for 5th Military District (Western Australia). He was later to serve in the South West Pacific Area with the 4th Australian Beach Signals Section but in Western Australia he met and married Nellie which meant that he became a Sandgroper for the rest of his life.

George Goldie is now 99 years young, and while he does not drive at night, he continues to drive his restored Jeep in ANZAC Day Parades. This means that he is not able to attend our Association meetings, but he is usually seen at our Swap Meets and Militaria Fairs, often wearing his original World War 2 uniform.

Although now well retired, after World War 2 George spent much of his working life as an officer in the Australian Taxation Department and at the time of his retirement, George was an Executive Officer in the ATO. He holds the qualification of Certified Practising Accountant (CPA) which goes some way to explain why he was such a successful Treasurer for our Society.

George joined our Society in about 1974 due to his interest in the Lee Enfield rifle. At the time he was President of the Transportation Rifle Club. He was Club champion for many years and when this Club disbanded, he joined the West Coast Field and Service Rifle Club where he continues to shoot.



During his long membership and service to our Society George has served as a Committee member for 3 years and was Treasurer from 1985 to 1992 and 1995 to 1996. He has been guest speaker on a number of occasions on a variety of subjects. While still able to drive at nights he was a regular attender at our monthly meetings. George regularly took part in the monthly show and tell and in 2008, the last year recorded on the shield, George was the winner of the annual competition. In 1991 his home was used for our Association annual social.

George's good work and dedication was recognised in 2002 when he was elected as a Life Member of the Western Australia Arms and Armour Society. He is also a Life Member of the Royal Australian Signals Association of W A. His interests continue to be in collecting firearms and he also specialises in repairing and rebuilding SMLEs. George is a licensed firearms repairer (unlimited) and a licensed firearms dealer. George, as Secretary of the Australian National Flag Association, had a direct hand in the bringing to public attention the fact that the late Annie Whistler Dorrington had been one of the six equal winners of the 1901 competition to select the design of the beautiful Australian National flag. Until 1999 the late Mrs Dorrington had been buried in an unmarked grave in Karrakatta Cemetery which the Australian National Flag Association remedied with a Memorial Grave that was dedicated on 20th April 1999.

I HAVE THE ANSWER

I've finally worked out the story of the hotel quarantine bungle in Victoria.
There were four people responsible named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.
There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.
Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.
Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job.
Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it.
It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.
I'm glad I cleared that up for you all

HOW CITROËN SABOTAGED NAZI TRUCKS IN WORLD WAR II



Over the course of a long and rich history the French manufacturer has built more or less anything and everything motoring related including, in the world's darkest hour, Nazi trucks.

When the Germans occupied France in 1940, they started sweeping the large factories, shutting down those that weren't useful, while forcing the rest to build equipment for them. Between 1941 and 1944, Citroen produced 3,700 Type 23 trucks, 6,000 Type 32U trucks and 15,300 Type 45 trucks for the Wehrmacht. Pierre-Jules Boulanger, Citroen president at the time, refused to meet Dr. Ferdinand Porsche or communicate with the German authorities except through intermediaries, and organised a "go slow" on production of trucks for the Wehrmacht, many of which were sabotaged at the factory, by putting the notch on the oil dipstick in the wrong place, resulting in engine seizure...

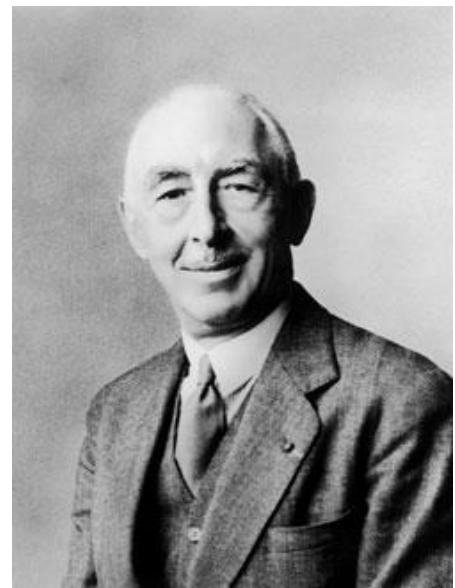


It was such a fantastic act of sabotage: subtle, extremely cheap to implement, and there was no way to see anything amiss was happening as the trucks were being built, and it delivered its blow away from the site of the sabotage, when it would cause the most inconvenience and trouble.

Boulanger was a key figure for the French manufacturer, and he contributed greatly to the evolution of Citroën. He was good at disrupting the Nazis, but he was also a great innovator and creator.

In 1936, Boulanger began working on an idea for a new car called the TPV, short of "Très Petite Voiture" which literally means "very small car" in French. He wanted to build a car that could be driven by anyone and carry anything, and it had to be cheap to run. The project later developed into what we know today as the 2CV, which was first built in 1948.


Pierre-Jules Boulanger was tragically killed in a car crash in 1950.



Pierre-Jules Boulanger

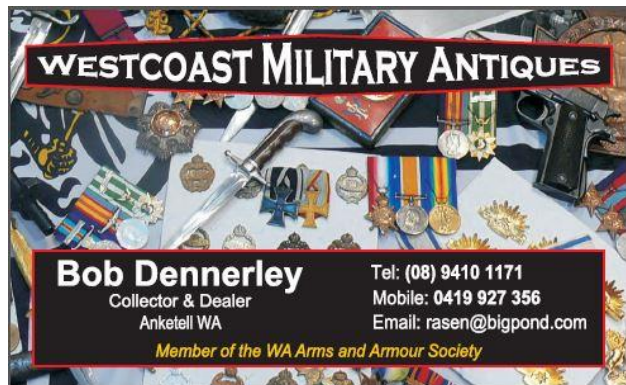
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