

AMC/LSI Association of Australia

Armed Merchant Cruiser / Landing Ship Infantry

ABN 64 106 175 155
E: amclsivic@gmail.com
www.amclsi.navyvic.net



President Chris Harvey
2 Clyde St Oakleigh Vic 3166
M: 0412 390 686

AB Anita Hogan RAN Rtd
Veterans Welfare officer

Patron:- Hiram Ristrom & George Hinton

Vice President Max Tozer
M: 0413 753 473

AB Anita Hogan, Captain Hay RAN , STO Steve Gooch



On the 2nd August VVC member Anita Hogan RAN Rtd and Welfare officer of AMC/LSI Association of Vic attended a Quilts of Valour presentation in QLD, to honour a WW2 veteran, who served on HMAS Kanimbla STO Stephen Gooch RAN Rtd.

Captain Hay represented the deputy Chief of Navy and STO Steve Gooch RAN Rtd was also awarded HMAS Kanimbla's Philippines Presidential Citation, 76 years after the end of WW2, by Captain Hay RAN. We also honoured a South African Navy 'Swan' who I surprised with medals she earned, but lost long ago.

During this presentation his shipmate and fellow Victorian Veteran and President of HMAS Kanimbla Association of Victoria L/S Harold Hiram Ristrom RAN Rtd watched on, via a live video link.

Well done Steve and thank you for your service to Australia, I would like to thank Peter Dutton MP, Desmond Woods, Captain Hay, Wayne Eastgate and DCN for my surprise personal letter and thank you all for your outstanding effort in supporting our community.

Presentation Organise by **Anita Hogan**.



Wreath Laying Ceremony



Sunday 12 December, 11am Shrine of Remembrance Sanctuary.

Once again the time is approaching for our annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of Remembrance where we hold a ceremony dedicated to mark the anniversary of the first major amphibious operation by an Australian landing ship. On 15 December 1943, HMAS Westralia helped land troops at Arawa, New Britain, as part of the US 7th Fleet. We will paid tribute to those who served on HMAS Kanimbla, Westralia, Manoora & Assault at the Shrine of Remembrance, Sunday 12 December, 11am in the Sanctuary.

Because of Covid-19 Restrictions; Please RSVP to Chris 0412 390 686 or Max 0413 753 473 and we will contact you should any details change prior to the event. Lunch will be held at Bentleigh RSL 12.30 PM.

Mission Statement

To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to
HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT

Armed Merchant Cruisers & Landing Ships Infantry

What is an Armed Merchant Cruiser, and when and why does it become necessary to convert a vessel designed and constructed for peaceful trade and passenger travel into a weapon of war?. To answer this question we need to go back to mid to late 1800's England when the Lords of the Admiralty realizing that the Royal Navy didn't have enough fighting ships (Battle Ships, Cruisers and Destroyers), to adequately defend itself against the ever increasing threat of war against Germany, and that the urgent need to establish a navy of enormous and powerful proportions could only be assisted with the utilization of the magnificent fleet of British Merchant Ships, possessing the valuable elements of warlike efficiency, high speed coal endurance strength of structure and sea worthiness."

At this time merchant ships and passenger liners were heavily involved in lucrative trade around the world and the demand to build new and bigger ships had never been higher. Suddenly war was declared and the so called "war to end all wars" had begun forcing the Admiralty to expand its merchant cruiser fleet. The usefulness of the limited number of vessels had by now been proven as they had been utilized in a number of minor conflicts and they had demonstrated the power of inflicting swiftly and secretly, fatal blows upon ships of war. The vast amount of merchant shipping was built and owned privately can be requisitioned by a government to be converted into "Men of War", and many ship owners were shocked to find a letter on their desks from the Admiralty directing them to immediately offload all passengers and cargo at the nearest port and proceed directly to British ship yards to be converted into vessel under the command of the Royal Navy, these ships only to be returned to the owners at the end of hostilities. Governments from many different nations were then faced with the problem of not only conversion but arming and manning many more ships in time for war and this to be done as cheaply as possible, this was managed somewhat poorly with ships ill prepared for heavy seas, and often armed with antiquated weapons for example cannons installed without protective shielding designed for land use some dating back to the Boer war.

The ships largely operated in Arctic waters with crews of mixed experience, some were regular members of the Royal Navy others were navy reservists made up of men from many different backgrounds, some, like fishermen even had experience of the sea and all its dangers. To bring a ship of this calibre to be truly as a "Man of War" with a company of in-experienced sailors and failing equipment operating in deadly waters forces the writer toward admiration for the officers and crew who through dedication managed to turn suicide missions involving escort duties, troop transport and U-bout destruction into efficient and successful operations, sadly many men made the ultimate sacrifice. At the conclusion of the First World War the importance of Armed Merchant Cruisers was well established.

The statement "War To End All Wars" turned out to be a falsehood, when the Second World War was well underway with the defeat of the Nazis in Europe the vital role Armed Merchant Cruisers played in the Atlantic Ocean convoy escorts, D-day invasion and the subsequent supply of arms and personnel was never to be underestimated. Now all eyes were turned toward the South Pacific and the fear of a Japanese invasion. At this time the importance of troop transport in vast numbers to strategic areas of Asia was understood to be of vital importance if we were to meet this threat, hence. The Armed Merchant Cruiser's role in this conflict was to be expanded to Landing Ship Infantry. A specialized form of warfare demanding a high standard of skill and training of troops for Amphibious Assault Operation on foreign beaches using landing craft deployed from ships, became an urgent priority.

Three of these ships Kanimbla, Manoora and Westralia were designed and built with extra steel strengthening for possible gun placement was added, these ships were requisitioned by the Admiralty and made ready for war service and commissioned into the R.A.N. Thus began the extensive recruitment and training of hundreds of sailors at HMAS Assault located at Port Stephens NSW, to enable the training of Army and Navy Commando's in the successful Combined Amphibious landing Operation at Arawe, Hollandia, Morotai, the return to the Philippines. Leyte-Panaon, Lingayen, Tarakan, Brunel Bay and Balikpapan with high praise toward the vital contribution Australia and her RAN ships played in these operations. Our father and Grandfathers who served on these ships never really told us much of what they went through for the freedom we enjoy and take for granted today.

We Must Never Forget.

Story by Max Tozer V/President

Mission Statement

To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to
HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT

HMAS Manoora chase and intercept of MV ROMOLO

One of the first shots fired in WWII by the Royal Australian Navy was from H.M.A.S. MANOORA did result in the sinking of the Italian merchant ship M.V. ROMOLO on the 12th June 1940 in the Coral Sea.

On the 30th May 1940, M.V. Romolo was berthed in Brisbane waiting on passengers to board. On the 31st May her Captain, Ettore Gavino was ready to depart his ship at 2100hrs, but was delayed by Australian officials claiming a directive from Canberra: an inspection of the ship was required Captain Gavino was notified that authorities were searching for *"a package which the Allies did not wish to reach Germany."*

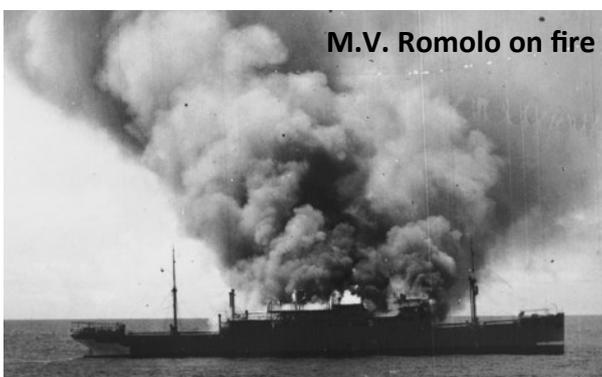
On Wednesday, 5th June, 1940, information was received that M.V. Romolo was sailing from Brisbane and H.M.A.S. Manoora an armed merchant cruiser was ordered to shadow her, M.V. Romolo had a Torres Strait pilot on board and was supposed to be going to Macassar via Thursday Island, so H.M.A.S. Manoora proceeded northwards, always keeping the masts of the Italian ship in sight.

On Thursday, 6th June 1940, at 1940hrs Captain Gavino received orders from Trieste to seek refuge in neutral waters, he called a conference of the Chief Engineer and 1st Officer and decided to alter ships course at 21hrs and sail without lights. HMAS Manoora held a northerly course until the night of the 6th June, when M.V. Romolo extinguished her steaming lights. The following morning on the 7th June, the weather being squally and visibility low, there was no sight of the Italian vessel until there was a break in the weather, and M.V. Romolo was sighted about four miles away on HMAS Manoora's starboard quarter. She made several quick alterations of course, but finally on seeing that Manoora intended to keep her company, she settled to an easterly course.

On Sunday 9th June, orders were received to disembark the Torres Strait pilot (an Australian) from M.V. Romolo. Captain Gavino signed Captain R. Lloyd Harry's (the Torres Straits pilot) book, and disembarked the pilot at 1415hrs, the pilot came onboard HMAS Manoora which set course for Thursday Island at 15 knots. Captain Harry said, that as far as he knew, M.V. Romolo was proceeding to Yokohama. The order to proceed to Thursday Island was cancelled and, as hostilities with Italy had commenced, HMAS Manoora was ordered to seize M.V. Romolo. Acting on the assumption that the enemy ship was going to Yokohama, a N.E course was set by HMAS Manoora and although aircraft from Port Moresby were co-operating in the search, it was not until 1100hrs on the 12th June, that M.V. Romolo was sighted on the starboard bow.

HMAS Manoora increased her speed to maximum and altered course to close on M.V. Romolo. Visibility, however, visibility was limited with the exception of scattered rain squalls, and the enemy had ample time to make preparations for scuttling before HMAS Manoora could get within gun range. Before midday M.V. Romolo sighted a ship on the S.W horizon and identified her as the Australian war ship, Manoora Captain Gavino gave full instructions for the abandoning and sinking of his ship. Her boats were lowered on the "blind" side and while she was temporarily hidden in a rain squall, her passengers and crew abandoned ship. Captain Gavino had taken every precaution to ensure that the ship would not fall into enemy hands.

At 1215hrs HMAS Manoora sent the following signal: *"Stop immediately or I fire on you"* Captain Gavino



M.V. Romolo on fire

consequently, stopped the ship, hoisted the Italian flag and sent out an S.O.S. It was observed immediately after, that M.V. Romolo was on fire and by the time HMAS Manoora reached her, she was burning fiercely and there was no hope of boarding her and of saving the ship or cargo. The crew and passengers, numbering 130, were picked up and the four lifeboats hoisted onboard Manoora. [Turn over page](#)

Mission Statement

To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to
HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT

Meanwhile, seven shots of 6in, one of armour piercing and six H.E. were fired into M.V. Romolo, to hasten her sinking. She eventually went down by the stern, burning fiercely up to the last, 220 miles South West of Island of Nauru. Everybody was picked up. Four boats were hoisted aboard and the remaining two were smashed to pieces. HMAS Manoora then set out to answer the **SOS** from a American freighter which had ran an ground on a reef. "We thanked God for the Australian Navy," said an officer of the American freighter, "For when the merchant cruiser (HMAS Manoora) came alongside we had been on the reef for two days and nights. We ran up on to the reef in a blinding rain squall, and the old ship had been grinding her hull day and night as we waited there for help to come. Everyone was watching as the cruiser came up, stood off deep water, and slipped her motor pinnace over the side. We were darned impressed by the way your navy went about things"

A Passenger's Story

Madam Aida S. Senac, originally a Tasmanian and now a naturalized French woman after her marriage and had lived in France for the past 30 years, was the only non-Italian aboard the Romolo. She told how, about noon on June 12, a steward ran into her cabin and told her to put on a life-belt. She had no time to collect her clothes, letter of credit, or valuables, for she was immediately put into a boat and lowered over the side. "I found out afterwards that fires had already been lit in the engine-room, and that the Captain had been ordered by the Fascists to destroy his ship rather than surrender it and cargo. He seemed to be deeply grieved and remained on the bridge until the last person had left the ship. It was a rather frightening thing to find myself in the bottom of an open boat with nothing around but the circle of the horizon, for I could not see the Australian war ship then, and behind us was the great liner with black smoke already belching out of the engine-room.

When we had been taken aboard the rescue ship (HMAS Manoora) it was rather a terrifying sight to see our liner being slowly incinerated. The Australian cruiser shivered as her guns crews sent shells screaming at almost point blank range into the deserted Italian ship.

The firing of this salvo represented the first time during the war that a unit of the Australian Navy had been in action against an enemy craft. It represented also the final phase of a chase carried out over a period of a week though heavy weather during which the enemy liner had been prevented from reaching a neutral port with a cargo of contraband.

On the 18th June 1940, 114 Italian crew from M.V. Romolo were arrested in Townsville under Warrant to be interned at the Interment Camp, Gaythorne. The three woman who were part of the crew were not arrested: Maria Cebin and Guilia Panzeletti worked as stewardesses, Elena Giovenale worked as a nurse.

Myrtleford, Australia . 5 November 1943. Italian officer prisoners of war, M.V. Romolo



Mission Statement

**To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to
HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT**

The Italian Captain

Ettore Gavino presented his chronometer to Commander Spurgeon of HMAS Manoora, asking him to accept it in recognition of the courteous and honourable treatment he and officers had been given.

Sources: National Archives of Australia, QLD Herald, West Australia Post, Sydney Morning, Melb Herald and Sun. **CH**

MOON OVERBOARD

by AB Kelvin Smibert NBC RAN Rtd

Able seaman R. R. (Ray) Moon S7044, there was another Moon from Adelaide as I recall, but my Ray

Moon was born in Sydney 21/10/1924, he was 5ft 8inch with dark hair and blue eye's, he train at HMAS Cerberus NES from 21/09/1942 to 15/10/1942, HMAS Penguin from Oct to December 1942, HMAS Assault for Infantry boat training from Dec 1942 to March 1943 and drafted to HMAS Manoora for sea duty March 1943.

When HMAS Manoora was on the way to landing operations at Hollandia New Guinea,

and when we were , as I recall, in the strait between New Guinea and New Britain (where the current can be up to 8 knots) Ray went from the seaman's mess after dinner, it was very dark night, to throw his dinner scraps over the stern of the ship and finished up throwing himself as well. He wasn't missed until his messmates wondered where he'd got to. At 0100 a CRY went out **MAN OVERBOARD**.

Source: from TAKEN by STORM ; Duty Officers sprang into activity. The Captain was informed and in a matter of seconds he was on the bridge directing the necessary operations for the attempted recovery of the unfortunate man. A marker buoy was drop over the stern to guide rescuing vessel should one be detailed, and hastily worded messages passed between MANOORA and the flag ship of the task force.

Inquiries revealed that Able Seaman Ray Moon, evidently suffering from a bout of sleep-walking had ventured too near the safety rail and the roll of the ship had flung him over the side. Signal from flag ship during the morning informing the captain that a destroyer bringing up the rear had rescued AB Ray Moon , he owed his life to the alert look-out on Y-gun who had heard his cries for help.

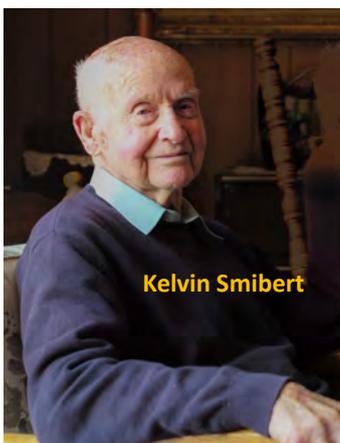
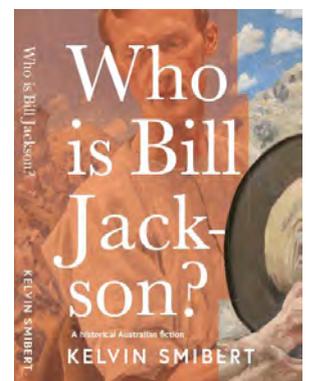
Source: Kelvin Smibert; Ray Moon must have been accident prone, because at Tarakan, in the middle watch or such, he had to relieve a watchkeeper at the end of a floating pontoon jetty. The watchkeeper thought he heard something and went back to a right angle bend in the pontoon and found Ray had failed to see the bend and had gone overboard, smacking his head on a steel bolt, and was floating!!!

Story by AB Kelvin Smibert, Navy Beach Commando RAN Rtd.

Kelvin has published a novel this year, \$30 from Amazon &. Booktopia.

Who is Bill Jackson by Kelvin Smibert

A young woman wants to write her family story. She is shown a box of papers just discovered by her Grandmother. It open up details of the full life of her migrant great-grandfather, a figure she barely knew existed, who lived in both Hamilton and Geelong, before residing in Mount Gambler. An engaging, easy to fiction based on true events from 1901 onwards.



Mission Statement

To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT



We wish you a "Very Happy Birthday" from the committee and member's of AMC/LSI Association of Vic.

July: Jim Davison, Frank Barrille, Dixie Lee, Don Eglinton, Jack Auston, John Hooper,

August: Rag Baggs, Ron Kleinig.

September: Tom Fowler, Cecil Browning, Les Barton, David Nelson, Bill Baird.

October: Reg May, Sam Aitchison, Ken Kemp, Frank McGovern

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

We wish to thank & acknowledge the following generous donations received from our members.

If you wish to donate to AMC/LSI Association of Vic, you can send a cheque to :- **The Treasurer, 2 Clyde Street, Oakleigh Vic 3166** or Transfer funds to Westpac Bank.

BSB No 033 070
Account No 42 2541 and name please.

AB John Hooper of S.A. HMAS Westralia, for the Association funds.

AB Ted Hollingworth 97 **VALE** President Minesweepers 25 Oct 2021

We regret the passing of the following Veterans or their wives. Our sincere condolences go to their family, friends and shipmates.

AB Thomas Walter CLARK, age 95, HMAS Kanimbla.
 AB Reginald Allen DORWARD, 7 June 2021 age 96 Port Lincoln, HMAS Kanimbla.
 AB Allan Booth, 22 July 2021, age 96 Vic, Navy Beach Commando, HMAS Assault, HMAS Kanimbla.
 Cook (S) Noel Nielsen 16 Aug 2021, HMAS Kanimbla age 96.
 SBA Graham Knight, 6 August 2021, Tas, HMAS Westralia, age 97.
 AB Graham Robinson 27/08/21, President Manoora

Desmond Elton Shinkfield former President of HMAS Australia II Association of Australia has passed the bar 20/10/2021 age 96, Nth Ringwood Vic. Des was a junior officer on HMAS Australia 11 during the Kamikaze attacks in the Philippines 1944/45, 8 in Gun Director.

In his later years publish his family history and the Lucky Ship (HMAS





Burial at Sea

If you wish to have your ASHES committed to the sea by the Royal Australian Navy (serving or ex-Navy members only) make your wishes known to family beforehand, and families may request to commit the ASHES of their Family Navy Member to sea, by contacting CPO Anita van Der Meer (MSO) Defence Community Organisation, Locked Bag 7005, Liverpool N.S.W. 1871, or send an e-mail to LEUT Jimmy Fitzgerald Building 478 HMAS Cerberus Vic 3920, Phone 0429 770 071, email james.fitzgerald1@defence.gov.au

MERCHANDISE

Caps from \$25 each + P & H
 To order phone **Max Tozer 03 9782 8353** or e-mail amclsivc@gmail.com
 New Kanimbla Caps \$ 30 + P & H
 Pin Badges P&H \$25
 Westralia \$ 25 + P & H



30mm





AMC/LSI
Pocket
Badge
\$15 + P&H \$1.50



Max Tozer Vice President & Merchandise Manager 03 9782 8353

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: This newsletter has been a collaboration of team work from the AMC/LSI Association of Vic Committee Carol Zeuschner, Mac Hay, Max Tozer, Hiram Ristrom and Chris Harvey.

Mission Statement
 To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to
HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT