

BROADSIDE

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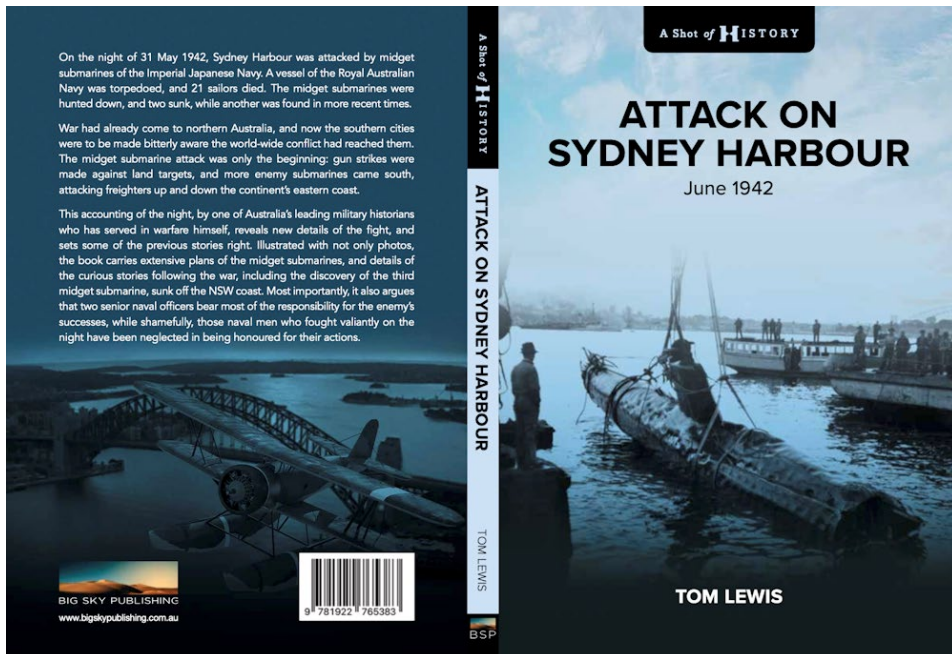
MAY 2026 -- Volume 16 Edition 5

Editorial



The mystery sword of the Japanese midget submarine raiders

By Tom Lewis



A Japanese World War II sword from one of the midget submarines that attacked Sydney Harbour in 1942 may be concealed in an Australian home. Or is it the case that a sword on display in the Australian War Memorial for 80 years has been mis-labelled?

On the Sunday night of 31 May 1942, Sydney Harbour was attacked by three midget submarines of the Imperial Japanese Navy. They had been launched by five large fleet submarines from outside the port. In the raid, the accommodation vessel HMAS *Kuttabul* of the Royal Australian Navy was sunk by a torpedo impacting nearby, and 21 sailors died.

In a night of, chaos, indecision, incompetence, but much bravery, the midget submarines were counter-attacked. Two, commanded respectively by Lieutenants Chuma and Matsuo, were sunk, while



Lieutenant Keshi Chuma
Commanding Officer of M27

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Events Calendar

(see [Calendar](#) for full details)

NOTE:



For information on all Shrine ceremonies:

Phone: 03 9661 8100 or,

Email: ceremonies@shrine.org.au

31 May – 11:00 – Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service Shrine – WWII Forecourt

06 Jun – 11:00 – Normandy Veterans Association – D Day – Shrine – WWII Forecourt

14 Jun – 11:00 – N Class Destroyer Service – Shrine – Sanctuary

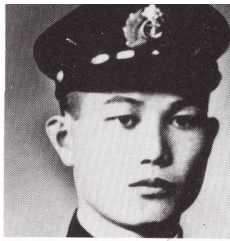
22 Jun - 19:00 - Naval Historical Society meeting - Clayton RSL

24 Jun - Defence Force School of Music concert - Simpson Barracks

28 Jun - RAN Recruits wreath laying - Sanctuary – Shrine

30 Jun - 13:00 - HMAS Waterhen commemorative service - Sanctuary - Shrine

another – Sub-Lieutenant Ban’s – was found outside the harbour in 2006. Chuma’s had become entangled in the protective boom net stretched partly across the harbour main channel on the way in. When attacking vessels of the Navy were encountered, it was blown up and sunk by its own crew members.



Lieutenant Keiu Matsuo
Commanding Officer of M22

Matsuo’s was depth-charged several times by RAN small ships, and eventually it was cornered in Taylors Bay. Its crew shot themselves. Neither boat managed to fire its torpedoes against a target, due to the efforts of the small ships attacking them.

War had already come to northern Australia, and now the southern cities were to be made bitterly aware the world-wide conflict had reached them. The midget submarine attack was only the beginning: gun strikes were made against land targets, and more enemy submarines came south, attacking freighters up and down the continent’s eastern coast.

Realising this, and in possession of the two midget submarines raised from the harbour floor, a government decision was made to commence a land tour of southern states with a midget submarine on a truck. This, it was hoped, would raise money for military charities, encourage the purchase of war bonds, and raise awareness of the impacts of the war.



A curious public inspect what looks to be the forward section of the Chuma midget.

One curious effect of the tour was the subsequent distribution around the country of a myriad of souvenirs from the submarines. These included lead models, about 20 centimetres in length, made from the ballast of the two raised boats. Thousands were sold during the

05 Jul - 10:30 - Reserve Forces Day - WWII Forecourt - Shrine

06 Jul - 11:00 - FESR Wreath Laying - Sanctuary - Shrine

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Headlines

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VIDEOS.....

- 📺 *Weaving Indigenous Culture into Navy*
- 📺 *Patricia Cam Plaque Unveil*
- 📺 *NT Defence Week at HMAS Coonawarra*
- 📺 *Royal Australian Navy - Families Week 2026*

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NEWS shorts.....

The Australian Government has announced it has secured the first vessel in its Maritime Strategic Fleet, the ANL Kokoda. The ANL Kokoda, a large cargo ship, will be the first to participate in the Strategic Fleet Pilot Program, as Australia continues to work with industry to procure additional vessels for Australia’s maritime capacity.

Those passionate about technology and maintaining computer systems are aware of the jokes that go with it. But communications specialist Able Seaman Michael Cunningham wears this moniker like a badge of honour. “It’s cool to be a nerd. Especially in this day and age,” he said.

When Commander Andrew Littlejohn paints a picture, technical aspects like colour theory and perspective are his focus to develop skill, more so than an underlying message. “What I prefer to do is more representational. I’m not

midget submarine tour. They may still be occasionally found on eBay.

Other souvenirs were taken informally from the wrecks.

Perhaps the most important – and certainly the most iconic – such relic was a sword taken into the battle by one of the commanders of the two-man midget vessels. Taking such a weapon along on a combat mission was not unusual for Japanese officers. Not only did it show patriotism, but also their determination to fight to the end.

As is more widely known, Japanese Army soldiers carried swords in battle. Thousands were captured; sometimes copied for souvenir-selling, and surrendered *en masse* at the end of the war. For members of aircrews and ships however, the weapon was more symbolic than useful, more for propaganda and psychological reasons. While fighter pilots have been occasionally photographed with swords it is unlikely, as military historian Michael Claringbould has emphasised, that they took them into their cramped cockpits where they would have actually proved an impediment.

Bombers, as Dr Peter Williams recorded in an interview with an aircrew member, may have been different though:

As we lined up for our bombing run two British Hurricanes dived in among us from the cloud over my head. I saw their tracer bullets like a thin red line that went through between our bombers. Then I saw a big explosion in front of me. One of our bombers exploded, disappearing instantly. Seven men dead in a moment. The commander of the bomber was Staff Sergeant Furukoshi, who I used to fly paired with in China. He'd taught me a lot about bombing missions in those battles. Furukoshi was always carrying a Buddhist scripture and a sword while in the air, by way of being prepared for his death. I am sure that the way he died was something he had always wished for. I very much envied him for the way he died.

Naval personnel had more room for such items to be taken to war. For example, the first five vessel midget submarine attack in the Pearl Harbor raid saw one submarine crewman captured. On board his two-man submarine, washed up on a beach, was found his sword – it's now in the US Naval Academy Museum at Annapolis.

Some six months later it was Sydney's turn. What is labelled as the sword of Lieutenant Chuma of the Imperial Japanese Navy has been

trying to push a narrative or get things out," he said.

How does a 23-year-old sweet potato farmer from North Queensland's Atherton tablelands end up on an Anzac-class frigate in the middle of the South China Sea? For communications specialist Able Seaman Matthew Faber, it was the dedication and guidance of a high school teacher that inspired him to serve.

Healthcare professionals are not immune to the psychological toll of trauma. This was a key message discussed by Captain Ian Young during his lecture at the 94th Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Annual Scientific Congress in early May. "Surgeons and health professionals in general think they are immune because they deal with trauma or blood, guts and gore," he said.

The family of Victoria Cross hero Cameron Baird has thanked Australians after the Albanese government reversed its decision to remove their travel allowance following backlash from the veteran community.

Growing up in Williamstown, Victoria, Lieutenant Ryan Hanaphy remembers the pride and excitement of seeing Anzac-class frigates built in his hometown. That excitement quickly turned to concern when he learned the ship would embark on a near six-month regional presence deployment across East and South-East Asia, meaning he would likely miss his daughter's birth.

Australia's serving personnel and veterans are paying up to \$130,000 extra on their home loans because the government restricts a key housing scheme to just three lenders, with a new seven-year deal set to entrench the arrangement until 2033.

displayed in the Australian War Memorial for many decades. It is a traditional “samurai” sword, rather than the Western naval hilt model used in most navies, including Japan’s in WWII. This may be the sword shown in a photograph of two naval personnel, perhaps Warrant Officer Anderson of HMAS *Lolita*, one of the attacking RAN vessels, and an unidentified lieutenant commander, who are inspecting a sword and a pistol. The photograph was likely taken in the days following the attack, after the submarines had been craned out of the harbour; inspection and disassembly had begun; and the building into a recognisable composite model of one submarine had begun by engineering personnel tasked with readying a touring submarine.



The sword was officially offered to the AWM in July 1942 by the then-Prime Minister, John Curtin. It would be presumed that the provenance of this weapon would have been proved properly for the Prime Minister; ie: the sword was definitely traced back to the Chuma submarine recovered at the boom net. However, there are other sources that reference a sword being carried by Matsuo – eg: within the Taylors Bay submarine:

Lew Lind, a prolific author and historian, says he personally inspected, in late 1943, the items retrieved from the midgets, which included: “two pistols, a ceremonial sword believed to have been presented to Matsuo by his family, a German Leica camera and several embroidered scarves”. These items have been presented to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Lind is perhaps the source others have followed for the other mentions of the sword in this list. Many authors and historians have made comments on it, linking the sword with Matsuo but never Chuma. For example,

- ⚓ Hugh Clarke in *Fire 1!* says Matsuo took “a dagger” with him
- ⚓ Steven Carruthers in *Australia under Siege* says that Matsuo took “a new ceremonial sword inscribed with his name” with him.
- ⚓ Peggy Warner and Sadao Seno in *The Coffin Boats* say Matsuo’s sword was wrapped in a “red brocade bag”

ASC announced more than 60 businesses have progressed through a national qualification program to support the build of Virginia Class submarines. The milestone, announced at the Indian Ocean Defence & Security Conference (IODS) in Perth this week, highlights Western Australia’s growing role in AUKUS and ASC’s work to uplift local suppliers to compete in the US submarine supply chain.

Australia’s Chief of Navy says China stirred “anger” in New Zealand when it sent a powerful naval flotilla into the Tasman Sea last year, as well as building political support in Australia for increased defence spending.

South Korea will build a new class of nuclear-powered attack boats to counter North Korea’s growing missile submarine threat, Seoul announced Tuesday.

The People’s Liberation Army Navy’s Liaoning Carrier Strike Group is operating in the Philippine Sea east of Luzon, Japan’s Joint Staff Office said Tuesday.

Tamworth isn’t just famous for country music. It’s also known as the birthplace of highly skilled specialist sailors. This includes Electronics Technician Petty Officer Joshua Guy, who is at the vanguard of driving innovation and implementing emerging technology at sea.

The Australian Defence College in Canberra hosted 130 personnel from Navy, Army and Air Force for the Chief of the Defence Force Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Leadership Forum for three days in April.

- David Jenkins in *Battle Surface!* suggests Matsuo was armed with a “sword presented to him by his father, still wrapped in the red brocade bag made from his mother’s wedding dress” (Earlier however he says crewman Tsuzuku in the same boat carried “a ceremonial sword”)
- The film *One Thousand Spears of the Kikuchi Clan*, made in Japan, released in 1944, was centred around the sword Matsuo took with him on his final voyage. In the film Matsuo is presented with a sword by his father. In a published essay, his brother wrote that “Matsuo had been presented with a Kikuchi sword by his father before the mission.”



So, the Chuma sword, on exhibition now, is an enigma. When originally recovered, it was taken apart, as documented in an AWM publication and in their online catalogue. What is displayed now is a handle/hilt attached to a scabbard. Above that is a naked sword blade, with the tang (a continuation of the blade to go up inside the handle) matching the scabbard dimensions. If – unlikely – there are two blades there, with another in the scabbard, then we have two weapons. Or is

the blade displayed apart, and therefore we have one? The signage is inconclusive – it suggests one sword. However, the AWM, in communication with the author, have said they only possess one, and it is Lieutenant Chuman’s [sic].

Whether there were two swords within the midget submarines recovered from Sydney Harbour is uncertain. It is further of interest in that all of the suggestions of a sword are a) singular, and b) Matsuo’s. There does not seem to have ever been a source that says there were indeed two Japanese weapons found. Notably Lind, who actually inspected the items, as cited above, only mentions one.

Further, the possibility that the original gift from the Prime Minister to the War Memorial was a mix-up cannot be discounted. For a sword to be recovered from the Chuma submarine would be difficult. The demolition explosion smashed the boat open primarily at the mid-section where a sword would have been stored. The loose items within would have been scattered across a debris field on the seabed

*A proud child of two nations,
faithful in the service of one. HMAS
Toowoomba Assistant Weapons
Engineering Officer Sub-Lieutenant
Samuel Mendiola Urzua beams with
pride when speaking of his Mexican
heritage. “I’m proud to be Mexican.
It’s something my parents have
fought hard to instil in us.*

*Operation Epic Fury may have
strengthened the case for directed
energy weapons, but the U.S. Navy’s
dream of putting “a laser on every
ship” may take significantly longer
than expected to realize.*

*AI-powered “decision support tools”
are helping the U.S. Navy hang on
to more of its highest-priority sailors
– with the help of commanders
authorized to persuade and offer
flexibility incentives.*

*For 85 years, the name Toowoomba
has been synonymous with
Australia’s presence in the Indo-
Pacific. Flying under the motto
‘Fearless’ and the ‘wattle and violet’
Purple Pony livery of the
Queensland city for which she’s
named, the vessel has been patrolling
Australia’s northern approaches
since 1941.*

*Operating far from home in a
complex maritime environment
demands sharp skills, disciplined
teamwork and absolute trust
between partners.*

*The Maritime Geospatial Warfare
Unit (MGWU) has completed a
comprehensive force generation
(FORGEN) activity, bringing
together personnel from the unit’s
outstations in Cairns, Sydney and
Nowra.*

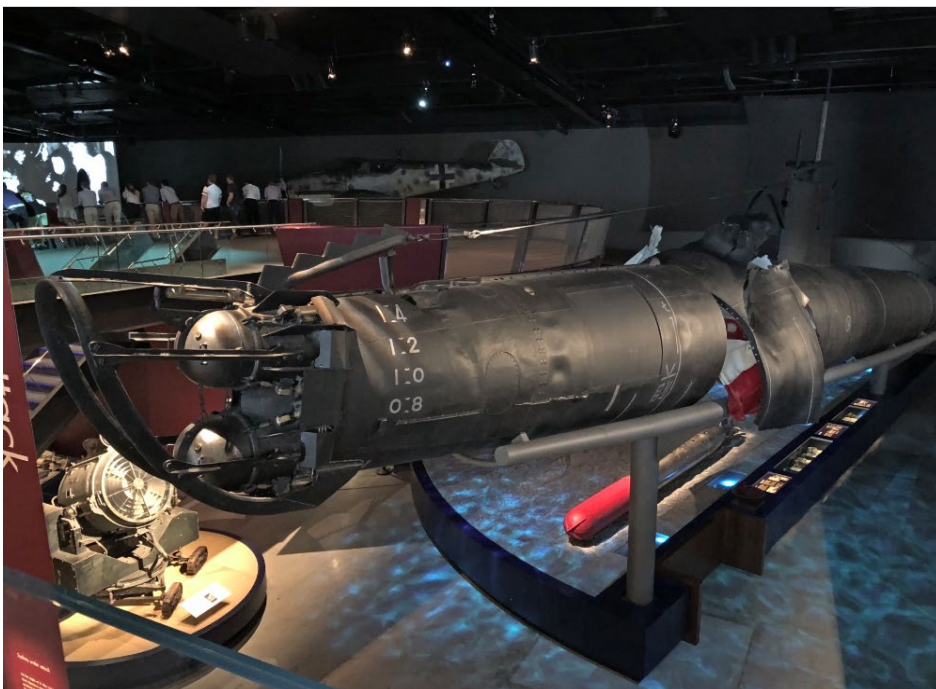
*Port Kembla has reportedly been
identified as the preferred east coast
base for Australia’s proposed nuclear
submarine fleet, according to
documents allegedly created by the*

near the wreck, which by now was open to the sea. The divers in 1942 were tasked with recovering the wreck of the midget, not gathering up loose items from the surrounding sand in mid-winter cold and dim conditions. It would be more the case that nearby loose items were not recovered.

In summary, there does not seem to be any evidence Lieutenant Chuma took a sword with him in his last combat action. There seems to be alternatively evidence that Matsuo did. The two strongest pieces for this conclusion are first that it was actually sighted and connected to his submarine by someone there at the time – Lew Lind. Additionally, Matsuo’s family say he took a sword to sea with him.

The Chuma sword in the AWM therefore is actually likely to be the Matsuo sword. If this is not the case, and Chuma can be connected to the weapon, then it must be the case that Lind made a mistake, and the Matsuo family did too. Matsuo, it may then be surmised, did not take a sword to sea. If in fact he did, then somewhere in Australia the sword of Matsuo may be found.

In these cases, the simplest answer is usually the correct one. I suggest in closing that the AWM sword has been mislabelled; that it came from the Taylor Bay submarine of Lieutenant Matsuo, rather than that of Lieutenant Chuma, and that only one sword was captured from the midget submarine attack of Sydney Harbour in 1942.



The composite midget submarine now on display in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. (Navy)

NSW cabinet office and premier's department.

Three action-packed weeks in the fjords saw the British and Norwegian navies enhance missile, fast-boat and drone tactics.

85 years on from an unwinnable battle, today we remember the immense sacrifice of those who served in the Battle of Crete.

With more than a century of cooperation, Australia and Canada are continuing their strong partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

*Operation Get Alice Home
If you've ever wondered who would make the perfect wedding planner, look no further – it's a former Navy stoker.*

The Government is enhancing Australia's fleet of Collins class submarines, through a life of type extension that will reduce risk, enhance capability and maximise availability for the Royal Australian Navy.

The discovery of a Chinese undersea monitoring device in a strategic Indonesian waterway last month came as little surprise to maritime defence experts. However, some argue it has real implications for Australia's defence strategy.

American aerospace company PteroDynamics has secured a contract to supply Transwing VTOL unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for the Royal Australian Navy's autonomous maritime distributed logistics capabilities.

About 50 Darwinites and visitors, including a contingent of the United States Marine Rotational Force – Darwin, gathered to remember the hundreds of sailors, officers and

Dr Tom Lewis OAM is a military historian, and retired naval officer. He is also the author of *Eagles over Darwin*: "how the USAAF flew the sole air defence for northern Australia for much of 1942"; *Atomic Salvation*, "how the A-Bombs saved the lives of 30 million people"; and *Teddy Sheean VC*, which won the 2021 Commodore Sam Bateman Book Prize from the Australian Naval Institute. His work *Attack on Sydney Harbour*, from which this article was drawn, was released by Big Sky. Recent works are *The Secret Submarine*, the story of the I-178 sunk off Sydney in 1943 by two RAAF bombers; *Cyclone Warriors*, the armed forces in Cyclone Tracy, and *Australia's Coastal War*, the story of the enemy submarine, surface, and air attacks around the country in WWII.

Yours Aye!
NVN Team

OUR MAY HERO



Commander Karl Erik OOM, OBE, US Legion of Merit, US Bronze Star

Karl Erik OOM was born on 27 May 1904 at Chatswood, Sydney, fourth child of Gustaf Peter Ludwig August Oom, a draftsman from Sweden, and his English-born wife May Isabel.

His career took him from Sydney to Jervis Bay when he joined the RAN in 1918. Then to England to complete courses, back to Australia for some sea-time then to the Antarctic with Sir Douglas Mawson, back to Britain for sea-time, then Australia for five years. Again, with the RN at sea in 1939, he went on to command his own ship HMS *Gleaner* in WW2 through treacherous, freezing waters across the North Sea and the eastern Atlantic. Back to Australia to command HMAS *Whyalla* to produce reliable charts for allied offensives in Papua and New Guinea. He went on to command Task Group 70.5 in the Pacific Islands during the major battles in the Admiralty Islands, Morotai, Leyte Gulf, Lingayen Gulf, Zamboanga, Tarakan, Brunei Bay and Balikpapan. Following the war, he was back in the Antarctic commanding HMAS *Wyatt Earp* conducting Antarctic surveys.

Collectively, the many honours he received during his career, show that Oom was regarded as one of Australia's leading wartime hydrographers, with contributions valued at both military and scientific levels.

Continue reading about this month's exceptional hero.....

<https://navyvic.net/heroes/oom.html>

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airmen who died in the Battle of the Coral Sea in 1942.

While the crew of HMAS Ballarat work hard to follow the ship's motto 'Defend the Flag', many of them take time to continue creative pursuits.

Musician Petty Officer Nadene Starkie has returned to Albany nearly 40 years after joining the town's local Navy Cadet unit.

Despite being thousands of miles from the war in Ukraine, Russia's strategic submarine base at Rybachiy in the Pacific is now showing signs of heightened defenses.

Growing up in Ipswich, Queensland, Commander Anthony Russell always had a strong sense of service, joining Navy in 2014 to give back to Australia, after completing his initial nursing qualifications.

Inquiry into military sexual violence a time for Defence to reckon with past, but only if it removes victims' gag orders.

For the first time, Defence and the Australian Submarine Agency (ASA) have worked together as a unified Australian presence at a major international defence trade event.

When seeking out an unseen enemy, it's always better to hunt in a pack. This is why the 41st iteration of Exercise Balikatan included the largest multinational anti-submarine warfare exercise ever hosted by the Philippines.

Fighting and winning in the cyber domain is critical in today's military conflicts, and defending the cyber battlespace was a key component of Exercise Balikatan.

The New Zealand government has announced that work is progressing



If you know of any of our Navy family who has crossed the bar and don't appear on our list below or Memorial Wall on our website, please don't hesitate to contact the webmaster at: webmaster@navyvic.net. If possible, list their Rank, Name, Number, the date of their passing and their age. Thank you.

- † POMTP H. Nyeboer, 29 May 2026. Aged 76.
- † POCD K. Barnes, R66766, May 2026.
- † CDRE P.G.V. Dechaineux, 26 May 2026.
- † CPOAC A.W. Hoswell, R52202, 26 May 2026. Aged 88.
- † LCDR R.K. Robb, 25 May 2026.
- † LSETSM D. Parker, 24 May 2026.
- † CAPT M.J. Astbury, 21 May 2026. Aged 91.
- † LCDR R.M. Jones, O2176, May 2026. Aged 83.
- † LWRWTR A.T. McDermott, W117025, 19 May 2026. Aged 71.
- † NS1 R.M. Dutton, R42917, May 2026. Aged 76.
- † ME J.N. Riddock, R65256, 18 May 2026. Aged 77.
- † CPO A.J.L. Coleman, 18 May 2026. Aged 34.
- † ABUC A.R. Khan, R57680, 17 May 2026. Aged 82.
- † POCOX B.J. Shaw, R52234, 16 May 2026. Aged 86.
- † ABFC D.J. Haines, R56738, 12 May 2026. Aged 84.
- † ABATA A.C. Capper, 11 May 2026. Aged 62.
- † LEUT M.McG. Barratt, 07 May 2026. Aged 94.
- † CMDR R.V. Morrith, 03 May 2026. Aged 92.
- † CPOMTH R.M. Dutton, R42917, 02 May 2026. Aged 76.
- † CMDR P.J. Cooke-Russell, 29 April 2026. Aged 87.
- † ABWM K.G. Donnelly, R55767, 27 April 2026. Aged 91.

All of the above names now appear on the special [Memorial Wall](#) of our website.

Lest We Forget

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to replace the Royal New Zealand Navy's ageing frigates as part of broader efforts to strengthen New Zealand's Defence capability.

Four nations, four warships and three of the most sophisticated airborne antisubmarine warfare platforms working as one.

France on Wednesday deployed its carrier strike group to the Red Sea as part of planning for a potential mission to secure the Strait of Hormuz, urging Washington and Tehran to consider the proposal given the global economic impact of their competing blockades.

Two Collins-class submarines have slipped between the Bellarine and Mornington peninsulas into Port Phillip for concurrent port visits in Melbourne and Geelong.

Remembering a wartime tragedy in the Top End.

'The crew of the ship - Indigenous and non-Indigenous sailors and officers - suffered together and died together'

Expressions of Interest are now open for individuals who want to contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and families of veterans by joining the Open Arms National Advisory Committee.

Visit our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page for more news articles not included in this newsletter.



Creswell Commemorative Lunch

Guest Speaker:

Captain Andrew Mackinnon CSC, RAN Rtd.

President Naval Historical Society of Australia (Victoria Chapter)

TOPIC: "The Father of the Navy"

Master of Ceremonies Captain Rob Glanvill RAN, Rtd.

Monday 20th July 2026

Box Hill RSL Upton Room 12pm

26/28 Nelson Road, Box Hill

2 course lunch with drinks at the bar

To book your place

\$35 per person

Naval Association of Australia

BSB 633 000 Account 132655515

Reference: Your Name

To register your attendance and all

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CAPT. Andrew Mackinnon
CSC, RAN Rtd.
President, Naval Historical
Society of Australia
(Victoria Chapter)



CAPT. Rob Glanvill
RAN Rtd.
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