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FIRST DECEMBER

HMAS ARMIDALE 80th MEMORIAL

1st December 2022
Armidale NSW 2350

**“REMEMBERING
HMAS ARMIDALE
ASSOCIATION”**

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The World War 2 maritime disaster of the sinking of HMAS Armidale on December 1, 1942 has left an indelible mark in the memories of many relatives and friends of the ship's crew. There were a few lucky survivors following the catastrophic Japanese torpedo attack, but many of the crew sadly perished in unthinkable circumstances.

Two of those relatives – myself (Peter Savill) and Angus Callander, are now active in keeping the Armidale legacy alive, and we have been working towards gathering as many relatives and friends of the Ship's company, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of this event in Armidale, New South Wales on December 1, 2022.

Initially, I put out a brief newsletter to as many contacts as I could muster, but Angus and I are hoping to attract far more in order to make this a truly memorable event. Thus, a second missive to call out to as many people connected to HMAS Armidale as possible.

Here's our stories.

I am Peter Savill and nephew of Stoker Arthur Peter Knight who was killed in action on December 1, 1942.

My interest only peaked in 2017, when my family decided to dedicate a plaque to the memory of Peter [as he was known], in Perth's King's Park Honours Avenue.

This is the tree lined, Lovekin Drive overlooking the West Australian city.

Peter's plaque is placed beside that of Stoker PO Robert Quayle, who died on December 8, 1942.

The date differences posed me with the WHY question.

Not knowing the full story of how and where Peter died, I started my search by asking the family tree historian of our family - my brother David, to point me in the right direction.

We discovered that Peter had joined the RAN in 1939, left Western Australia, and married a Zoe Maria Fenwick in NSW on July 27, 1940 at Wesley Chapel Randwick.

Only two and a half years later, Peter died as result of the bombing and sinking of HMAS Armidale.

Three months later, Zoe took ill with pulmonary tuberculosis, died on April 6, 1943, and was buried at the Roman Catholic Cemetery, in Liverpool NSW. (Section H Number 21.)

It appears that this was a hurried burial with next to no family present, and she lies beneath bare turf – a lonely, non-indicated grave, with no stone or inscription plaque to mark who she was, where she was from or most importantly, whose wife she was.

Meanwhile, our family in Western Australia had no knowledge of the events that happened, so I searched for the title holder of the gravesite, as instructed by the Liverpool Cemetery Staff as I could not do anything without their permission. Finally, after searching archives, census rolls, birth & death registers, local government records and the Sydney, Saturday Morning Herald's RSVP column, I received, among many false hopes, a phone call from Zoe's great niece.

The culmination of my work is that Zoe will now be remembered. On **Saturday 1st December 2018**, family, friends and Naval Association helpers will gather at **Noon** in Liverpool Cemetery, to unveil a plaque over her grave, thus giving her a name and a family for everyone to see, and with the date being significant, we will also say a few words for those who served on the HMAS Armidale .

Now, I would like others of the HMAS Ships' Company relatives to have knowledge of THEIR valued relative's service to Australia, in those past and troubled times. We cannot let their memory fade away.

I believe that there must be many unaware, thus our quest to find these people, and also friends that may want to gather for the 80th Memorial in Armidale NSW in 2022.

If you can be of any assistance in driving this quest in your area, please do so. I am available should you wish to contact me. Kind regards.

Peter Savill

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I am Angus Callander, son of John Callander, one of the three AIF soldiers, along with Lionel Clarke and Matt Telley who were attached to the HMAS Armidale. My father and Matt were members of the 2/8th Battalion, whilst Lionel was a member of the 2/4th Battalion.

At the time these men, who had recently returned from the Middle East and were stationed at Adelaide River, about 70 miles south of Darwin, were ordered in the middle of the night to join the ships company of HMAS Armidale at Darwin.

The soldiers' role in the operation was to provide cover in the event of an attack by Japanese during the transfer of troops at Betano Bay, on the south coast of the island of Timor.

Meeting Peter Savill at the 75th Anniversary of the sinking in Armidale in December 2017, and hearing the story of his uncle, Stoker Arthur Peter Knight reminded me how fortunate my father was to survive the ordeal.

John survived the initial torpedo attack on December 1, but perhaps of even greater good fortune was on Day 5 of the sinking, he was one of 28 men chosen by Lieutenant Lloyd Palmer to go on a whaler, in the forlorn hope of rowing 160 nautical miles to Bathurst Island.

Forty seven men were left on a makeshift raft, while Lieutenant Palmer's whaler departed. Although the chance of survival for both groups was extremely low, history now records that while both the whaler and the raft were some 100 miles apart, they were sighted by 13 Squadron on an RAAF Hudson on Day 8. The men in the whaler were rescued, but sadly the men on the raft were never seen again.

From the discussions about the HMAS Armidale ordeal I had with my father in the later years of his life, he told me the look on the faces of the men left on the raft as they rowed

away in search of Bathurst Island was something he really never recovered from. I imagine this one singular experience haunted him for the rest of his life.

After the ordeal, my father went onto serve in the South West Pacific, with the Occupation Forces in Japan and during the Korean conflict. He married and had six children, twelve grandchildren and at last count eleven great grandchildren.

A legacy afforded to my father, but not to the one hundred or so men killed in action, died of wounds or listed as missing in action (presumed dead).

It is this legacy that I wish, along with Peter, to establish the "Remembering HMAS Armidale Association" with a charter to ensure those that made the supreme sacrifice are never forgotten.

Our first task is to develop a database of as many of the known relatives of all men associated with the Armidale. From this we hope to develop a website and our ultimate aim is to make December 1st each year a day of memory to the men of HMAS Armidale.

2022 represents a significant milestone whereby we hope to generate enough interest to have as many relatives and friends as possible, to attend the eighth anniversary - thus ensuring the story of the Armidale and her brave company lives on and is never forgotten.