

## **Trevor McGarvey: Memories**

(12 Feb 1921 – 28 May 2012)

### **The War**

I think most of the males of my generation knew we would be going to war. Twenty years before, my parents' generation had experienced WWI. Australian casualties in that war per capita were the greatest of all combatant nations, including France, Britain and Germany. It is my opinion that is why Australia built so many war memorials, as the little towns and suburbs expressed their grief for people they knew, and why Anzac Day has been kept going so long.

We still had somewhat romantic ideas of war, despite what we were told by returned soldiers. We were all very patriotic. God, King and Country was very much the belief of most people and it did have a binding effect on our nation and, in those days, Empire. As Hitler and Mussolini came to power and started to annex nations and regions, battle lines between nations were drawn up over about eight or nine years.

I always remember 3 September 1939, in the late afternoon, sitting in our lounge room with Mum, Dad and Olwen, hearing Prime Minister Menzies tell us that England and France had declared war on Germany and 'of course' so had we.

Mum and Olwen cried, and Dad, looking very grim, asked me never to ask him to sign me up for overseas service. I never did, although I was able to sign for the Navy before I turned 21.

When war started, some Militia and Reserve units i.e. coastal artillery, Navy and Airforce were immediately mobilised and Government started recruiting the 6th Division A.I.F. Some units went in for a month, out for a month and so on. I was in Remounts, an Army Militia unit. The 2nd Remount Squadron drilled once a week at Merrylands Drill Hall without horses, and some weekend camps at Holdsworthy Permanent Army Remount Depot.

We went into camp for a month in early 1940. I was sent straight into an NCO's course for a month, becoming a Corporal, then we went in full time at Holdsworthy and started to take in conscription call-ups. We used to break and train horses for Light Horse, Horse Transport and Pack Trains. Russia and Germany used vast numbers of horses all through the war but we had the capacity to mechanise and we did.

I was sent to Rutherford in Remount Depot but as horses were less needed by Army we looked like becoming Transport and Pack only. We lived a great life at Rutherford, being in camp at the end of the present airfield in a still existing sheoak forest. We spent days and weeks riding around the Hunter Valley picking up horses that were sold to the Army. When Remounts began to disband I was sent to Dubbo as Horse Transport. The Unit later went to New Guinea as Pack Train and I met some members in Milne Bay. Luckily for me my Navy call up came through and I was sent to Lithgow for Army discharge.

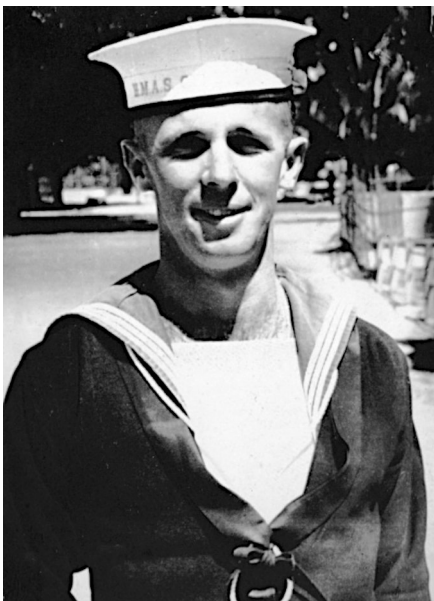
### **HMAS *Cerberus* (June 1942-November 1942)**

On 15 June 1942 commenced nearly four years of the most exciting (but not the best) time of my life. When I joined the Navy, Japan had just entered the war and everything was going against us, both here and overseas, in a most frightening way. We were sent to Flinders Naval Base,

HMAS *Cerberus*, on Westernport near Melbourne for our recruit training. The vast difference between Navy and Army was immediately felt by me in the quick efficient way things ran in the Navy. On arrival at Flinders we were immediately kitted out and everything was made to fit before we left stores. The clothing and gear was very good quality, as were boots and shoes.

Hammocks, comprised of canvas hammock with rope clews, horse-hair mattress and very good quality blanket were issued, and I still consider them the most comfortable bed I have ever used. When I received my commission and had to sleep in a bunk in a heavy sea I often wished I still had my hammock.

Food was plentiful and good, we even had cream with sweets. The training course was concentrated and tough. Wakey, wakey at 6.00 am on a frosty Melbourne morn – shower and shave, then PT on a frost-covered parade ground. Then back for breakfast and change to the rig of the day. Divisions and Flag parade at 8.00 am then march off to classes.



*OS Trevor McGarvey (T. McGarvey)*

We drilled, trained on all classes of guns, torpedoes, sailing, boat pulling (Navy rowing) seamanship and basic signals, plus days at live firing ranges and assault courses. Sport and PT took up dog watches, with night guard duty and occasional outings to the pictures took up nights. Recruits were not allowed into wet canteens.

We also did periods on training ships. I really loved it, especially ship life. Every second weekend we were given leave in Melbourne from 4 pm Friday to 9 pm Sunday, with trains pulling right into the depot. Melbourne leave was terrific, as the city was not as affected as Sydney and Brisbane with troops, and the people were very hospitable: dances, concerts in the Myer pavilion on Sundays and plenty of accommodation for us.

I had friends in Toorak who took me around quite a lot, and the British Traders Insurance Co. branch manager, Andy Yeo, was an old friend who would take me to lunch, etc. A few times I went to Sydney with an old Scout mate, Dave Rowell, but it was a killer as we only had a few hours home before returning – and also against regulations.

When my basic training came to an end I became an Ordinary Seaman, but instead of being drafted to a ship I was selected (not asked) to do an Anti-aircraft Gunners course. This was not a full course but, due to loss by aircraft dive bombing and strafing, more light AA guns were going into ships, and the new Oerlikon cannon was our main object. This fired 120 20mm explosive cannon shells per minute and was very effective against dive bombers. We learned to maintain, strip and load all types of machine guns and small cannon. This included live shooting at drogues towed by aircraft, and camera shooting at actual dive bombers.

When senior recruits finished their courses they were drafted to ships all over the world, but I was sent to HMAS *Penguin* on Middle Head, Sydney. Here I was to wait for a draft to sea, but whilst waiting I was sent to a number of ships as temporary replacement for crew doing a course or sick ashore. I did trips south to Melbourne and Hobart, and went on tugs towing targets for

practice by our coastal batteries and heard my first incoming heavy shells. I also copped guard duties at Depot and Headquarters near Garden Island. Then I was posted to *George Peat*.

### **MV *George Peat* (December 1942-May 1943)**

I had no idea what *George Peat* was and neither did any of the rest of the draft, gathered alongside the truck to transport us to Cockatoo Island on 28 December 1942. The truck was driven by one of the first trainee WRANS, to Cockatoo Dock Wharf, then we went by Naval launch to the island.

It was very busy, with ships under construction and a lot under repair. USS *Chicago* had just been put in dry dock and her dead were being removed from the flooded compartments. She had a huge hole in her forehead section from a torpedo hit in a Solomons battle.

I had several mates from Flinders amongst the crew, and for the first time met 'Birdy' Jenkins, an 'old' man of 40-odd and long-time permanent Navy. He was a foul-mouthed, bad-tempered, tough old alcoholic who had started in the Navy as a Boy Seaman on the old sail-training ship *Tingara* and in all those years, due to bad conduct, had never risen above rank of AB.

Despite all this, and our first dislike of him, he proved in several ships we served on a great shipmate and taught us more than anyone else. He had been in WWI and knew wartime living. He had a favourite pub in every city where they knew him, provided him a room and let him drink his fill until his leave expired.

The job of us young blokes was always to pick him up on the way back to the ship, see him aboard safely, sling his hammock and get him in. Next morning he could get up and go about his duties, no problems. He was kingpin at sea and ruled the mess with a rod of iron, but we never came off watch without a meal waiting and no other ship's department troubled us. The officers and petty officers all seemed to respect him and leave him to do his duties unmolested.

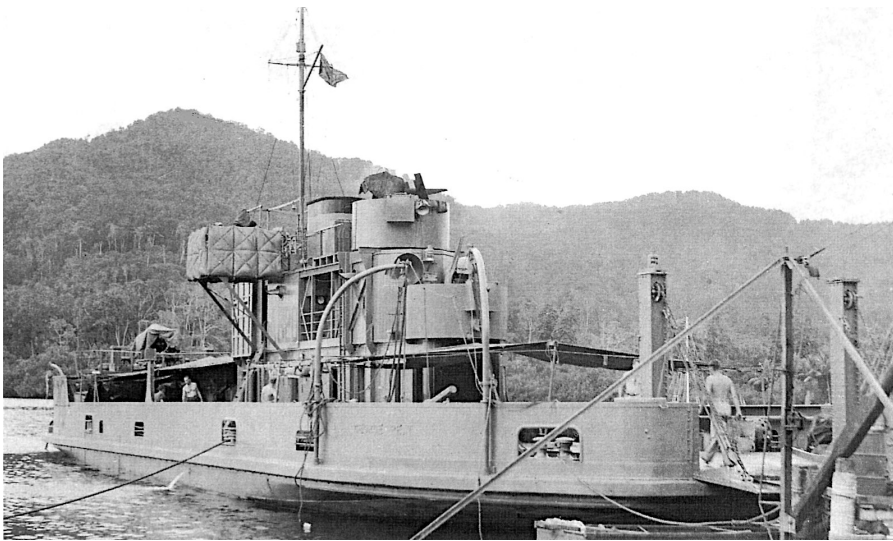
Birdy was the black sheep of his family. He had two sisters, one the headmistress of a select Ladies College and the other the Matron of Brisbane's Greenslopes Army General Hospital. He took us with him to see one of his sisters, so he would arrive sober, and she was Birdy in drag. (Audrey and I visited his grave in his home town of Portland, Victoria years ago, and it faces out to sea.)

We eventually found *George Peat* in a dry dock, very surprised to discover that it was a vehicular ferry which had, with sister ferry *Frances Peat*, been running across the Hawkesbury River, connecting the Pacific Highway. Now the first vehicular bridge north had just been finished and the Army had requisitioned these ferries as landing barges and stores carriers.

We were all astounded when told we were to be passage crew for the Army to take the ferry to New Guinea. As it was double ended, a false steel bow had been placed at one end, gun (Oerlikon) emplacements installed on either end and guns installed. Very few stranger vessels ever put to open sea. *George Peat* appeared clean, and accommodation below the car deck appeared okay, until we got underway and found the forward propeller shaft ran directly underneath.

The propeller raced when clear of water in a seaway and as sea came inboard under the bow ramp we could not have our hatch open. The heat from the asphalt car deck cooked us and we couldn't sleep properly in hammocks as vibration on the blunt bows shook everything.

After trials — during which we found we could not use electric power-assisted steering as they made magnetic compasses go wild — we stored ammunition and berthed alongside a wharf where the Opera House now stands. Mum and Dad came down to visit us the day before we left, late in 1942. They put on a brave face but I don't think slept well from then on.



*MV George Peat, AB20, at Kwiari in New Guinea, July 1943. (Source unknown)*

We sailed through the Heads alone and headed north, both diesels thundering, and started sea watches. Several hours out there was a boom, and soot and flames shot up the smoke stack and the engines ceased. We radioed to base and a tug towed us into Newcastle, where we remained for a week having engines repaired.

The trip from then on was not uneventful. When we left Newcastle we again headed north and for a day or so all went well, then one night at about 11.00 p.m. a Dutch cruiser or destroyer must have picked us up on radar. It left its south-bound convoy and came in on us. We spotted it just before it turned on its searchlight and fired a warning shot. Our signals were correct and captain turned on the navigation lights and generally let them know we were on their side. We only realised later that at night we had the silhouette of a surfaced submarine. We lookouts got very alert looking for both friend and foe from then on.

Coming up to Moreton Bay, we weren't intending to enter Brisbane, when off Great Sandy Island we ran into a nasty electrical and wind storm. We were making heavy weather of it when once again the engines blew up and we started to wallow, beam on to the sea. Night came and we were drifting towards the island and rolling and wallowing very badly.

We had radioed Brisbane, and after 3 or 4 hours the corvette HMAS *Lithgow* arrived and with great seamanship put a line over. By manpower only we dragged their steel minesweeping wire inboard and were towed into Brisbane River. It was dawn by the time we reached the river and a tug took over and took us up to Milling Wharves (where the World Fair was) and our engines were given a thorough overhaul during the next three weeks.

We had an uneventful trip up through Whitsunday Passage to Cairns, and after taking on stores sailed alone, towing a couple of Army small ships to Milne Bay in New Guinea. We arrived just after the battle when the Japanese suffered their first defeat on land and had started to retreat [Ed note: September 1942].

The Bay was bombed frequently from Rabaul and the Japanese Navy entered on some nights and bombarded. We spent daytime in the Bay and then went out and up the coast for the nights. The Army took over and we did one trip around the China Straits and to the northern coast and handed the ship over, now renamed AB20.

We were landed at Milne Bay, a coconut plantation and mostly swamp country, with malaria and dengue fairly rife at the time. We had no eating utensils or dixies, no armaments and lived in native-built huts on sodden ground. It rained constantly, mainly at night. There is a photo in my album of one of the huts. During the couple of weeks there we were taken over the battlefield and I also looked up some of my friends from British Traders Insurance who were in 2/15 Field Artillery.

Some of our crew got malaria and later I developed dengue fever, which I think I contacted at the Bay as well. We received orders one morning to board a Dutch ship *Gorgon* to return to Sydney. When we boarded this ship the Naval Gunnery officer put me on an Oerlikon gun on the port wing of the ship's bridge, and as Japanese planes were about we were closed up on gun, had lunch, beer ration and tea there.

Then after dark all the *George Peat* crew were ordered to transfer to an Australian corvette, HMAS *Katoomba*, for passage to Port Moresby. We transferred by barges with our gear and copped night watches for the trip. I was not feeling well and on arrival was sent to the Naval Hospital at the Naval Depot, on the heights overlooking Ela Beach and probably the most beautiful spot in Moresby.

All the Depot and hospital were private houses converted to our use. There was a Naval doctor, a few SBAs and Fuzzy Wuzzy helpers. I had dengue fever and was, I think, a week in hospital. Our cook from *George Peat* was also in hospital with a tropical ulcer on his leg. Weeks later we all took him down to the wharf and put him on Hospital Ship *Centaur* which was going to Brisbane on 13 April 1943. *Centaur* was sunk by Japanese submarine on its return trip.

[Ed note: *Centaur* sank on 14 May 1943, with the loss of 268 people.]

Port Moresby was building up for the Kokoda Trail battles. Troops and aircraft poured ashore and a Japanese invasion was still thought to be on. Moresby later became a huge base, with airstrips going out for 30 miles to the Owen Stanley mountains.

There was a huge air raid on 12 April 1943. Later I read that the number of enemy planes (about 240) involved was the second highest only to Pearl Harbor, with Darwin being third. However the base was so large and our defences so strong that the damage was nothing like those two. Many Japanese planes were destroyed on the way in, and later on their way back to Rabaul and other island bases.

There were hits below us on a fighter base, further along on a Flying Fortress base and in the harbour, but we stayed in our trenches and watched others get plastered and strafed.

Apparently in Australia a new batch of War Bonds were being issued and the Government played the raid up in large headlines and radio news. Mum and Dad knew by my postal address where I was and were not a little upset and worried. We never thought the raid would be publicised as it was because mostly such things were downplayed.

A few days later we all received a draft to HMAS *Wato* which was undergoing a refit in Brisbane after service in Darwin, where it had made quite a name for itself during the big Japanese raid. *Wato's* name is mentioned on several Darwin Memorials, but we had never heard of her.

[Ed note: *Wato* pulled an oil lighter clear of *Barossa*, and then pulled *Barossa* away from the MV *Neptuna* only moments before *Neptuna* exploded].

We took passage on a brand new corvette on its first voyage, HMAS *Bunbury*, and my brother-in-law, Harry Davies, was the S/Lieut Asdic officer aboard. We convoyed a few merchant ships to Cairns and then went by troop train to Brisbane. The passage across was very rough and we hardly sighted the convoy because of the rain and waves. The train trip took 3 or 4 days to Brisbane as the up traffic had priority. We arrived in Brisbane in tropical gear in winter and until our baggage caught up we froze.

### **HMAS *Wato* (May 1943-December 1943)**

On 10 May we joined *Wato*, which was near the end of refit and had some of her original crew on board. She was an old coal-fired, ocean-going steam tug, built around 1901, and the second oldest Naval ship. Only one was older, HMAS *Caroo*, built in 1898 which at times had to use sails.

*Wato* was armed with an Oerlikon gun, my responsibility, and a few machine guns. She was dirty and impossible to keep clean, as we always seemed to be loading coal into our bunkers. There was nowhere to sleep as the mess deck would only hold four men and we had a crew of over 30.



*HMAS Wato* ([seapower.navy.gov.au](http://seapower.navy.gov.au))

*Wato* was not a ship for fussy people. We slept anywhere we could, which in bad weather meant bathrooms or heads. All meals were eaten on deck. A new captain took over, a Merchant Navy Reserve Officer, Lt Henderson, who was a great captain and human being. He later recommended me for a Commission and we met again when he was a Sydney Harbour Pilot during the Queen's first Australian visit in February 1954.

We stored, ammunitioned, coaled and prepared for sea. *Wato* only had two kerosene refrigerators, so meat lasted a few days after leaving a port and then it was canned food, jungle rations, no bread

ever, and ship's biscuits. Later, in northern New Guinea waters we begged, bartered or stole food, as supply ships never went north of Milne Bay. We were not the only ones who did this.

*Wato* sailed from Brisbane towing a mysterious covered barge and never did find out what it contained. We had almost a holiday cruise up through the Whitsundays to Cairns. We were able to trail fishing lines, as the barge slowed us down, and caught quite a number of large fish which made up for fresh food we could not carry.

*Wato* proved to be a great sea ship: she was heavy, very powerful and, for her age, fast. At Cairns we went alongside the depot ship and provisioned, then went to the coal hulk to load coal. We were about to get a day or so's leave when ordered to go to the rescue of a Yank destroyer escort which had run aground trying to enter the reef at Grafton Passage. This was not an unusual event with the Americans, as their Navy expanded its number of ships at great speed but the quality of officers and crew depreciated at same rate.

We took our mystery barge in tow again, sailed to Cooktown, and picked up some Army personnel, who proved to be Coastwatchers. *Wato* then sailed up inside the reef to Cape York and across the Endeavour Strait to Thursday Island. There we provisioned and coaled etc, and after a short break ashore headed north across the Torres Strait. We sailed through the true Coral Sea,

with magnificent islands everywhere, then on to Merauke in New Guinea, and on to Moresby, where we dropped our barge, then proceeded to Milne Bay.

The next six months was the hardest period of my naval career and where most of the real 'action' took place. The main fleet, US and Australian, stayed off Palm Islands near Cairns to be preserved for any big action. The Army were fighting their way across Kokoda to Gona and Buna and thence westward. Air support came from Moresby and Milne Bay at first, but as troops captured Japanese air strips our air forces, Australian and US, took over.

We were with the Army Small Ships, carrying troops, supplies and ammunition for the Army. The naval vessels mainly consisted of occasional destroyers, corvettes, US Motor torpedo boats, Fairmiles and harbour defence launches, and an amazing number of old ships mounting a few guns, commissioned and called HMAS and expendable.

A book by Iris Nesdale, *Small Ships at War*, gives the stories of these craft. There were a number of yachts belonging to millionaires before the war which were used extensively around the North Coast of New Guinea. Some craft just disappeared: Fate Unknown, but guessed at.

*Wato* coaled ship in main bases and even raided a Japanese ship at Lae for coal. We worked day and night around Milne Bay, towing a huge US Army crane, rescuing stranded or damaged ships, towing barges of supplies or the hull of an old Manly ferry loaded with ammunition up the coast to Oro Bay, Gona, Buna, following the ground forces. We brought out some lightly wounded soldiers and once a few Japanese prisoners.

On the northern coast we seldom travelled at night, as the Japanese Navy came out then, when our aircraft were grounded, and the US PT boats generally shot first and challenged later. We would creep into mangroves in some bay or other and stand watch all night – complete blackout and no noise. Buna was not a bay really, but a coastal beach with US destroyers mounting seaward ship and anti-aircraft guard.

Australian casualties were high. At night the Japanese air force came over from Rabaul and other islands and made generally nuisance raids on airstrips and shipping but we experienced a number of heavier attacks. The Army troops fought an awful slugging match at Gona and Buna through plantations and swamps, and the Japanese fought, as usual, to the death.

Charts of the waters were practically non-existent and a lot of the time we used native pilots who were incredibly good. Even so we frequently ran aground, once at Buna during an air raid. I stayed with *Wato* during the Army drive up the coast, and my last action on her was the landing at Lae (September 1943). Quite a big action, with heavy ships, lots of aircraft and landing ships with their landing barges.

I had requested to do an Anti-Sub Operator's course, as anti-aircraft did not seem to give a great future. After Lae we sailed to Moresby and I was discharged to Moresby depot for transport to Sydney. Captain Henderson on *Wato* was the best skipper I ever sailed with, and unbeknown to me had recommended me for a commission.

### **Asdic Anti-Submarine Training (December 1943-May 1943)**

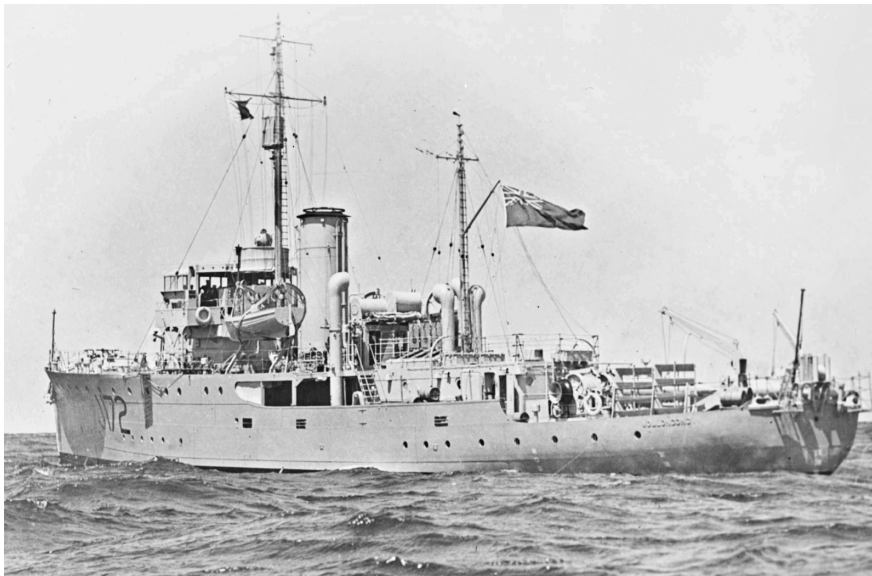
I was only at Moresby depot for a couple of days when I was given passage on HMAS *Bungaree*, a minelayer. *Wato* had not yet sailed so my mates helped me with my gear on board *Bungaree*, but when they saw she was full of mines, they shot off and got clear of a possible loud bang.

*Bungaree* sailed on 31 December 1943, laid a mine field around Moresby, then headed directly south to Sydney. I was given a week's leave, then reported to HMAS *Rushcutter*, the Asdic depot for Australia. I started a six weeks course in Anti-Sub work, which included theory and intensive training on realistic simulators which could actually trace your reactions to using an Asdic set.

We went to sea on training ships and actually used our knowledge searching for and 'attacking' a Dutch submarine, *K9*, which had been badly damaged when Japanese subs entered the Harbour and sank the *Kuttabul* at Garden Island. She was never used in enemy waters again. We would reverse roles on occasions and go in subs whilst our other course members 'attacked' us — lots of fun when not real. I qualified on 27 May 1944.

### **HMAS *Wollongong* (June 1944-September 1944)**

As soon as my course ended I was drafted to the corvette HMAS *Wollongong*, which was completing a refit in Fremantle. She was attached to the British Eastern Fleet and had a great war record. She was the last Navy ship out of Singapore when that base fell to Japanese forces.



HMAS *Wollongong* ([seapower.navy.gov.au/hmas-wollongong-i](http://seapower.navy.gov.au/hmas-wollongong-i))

The refit was almost finished when I reported aboard on 14 June 1944, having made the journey by numerous troop trains from Sydney. The first train was Sydney to Albury, second Albury to Melbourne, third Melbourne to Port Augusta, fourth Port Augusta to Kalgoolie, fifth Kalgoolie to Perth. I can't remember how long it took, but it was quite a long time.

Army blokes were in cattle trucks, but we had old third class carriages mainly and could at least sling our hammocks. The crossing of the Nullabor took several days as we were constantly shunted, and food came from the cookhouse carriage on the train. Being Army, it was either bully beef and biscuits or stew, three times a day served whenever the train pulled up among the spinifex. Toilets were out the window or in the spinifex. (A stark contrast to my trip with Audrey in Indian Pacific a few years ago.)

We had a fortnight in Fremantle before we sailed, and I contacted relatives of a Sydney friend in Perth who were very hospitable. The fortnight was spent in the Asdic depot with our captain, some officers and all Asdic ratings, practising attacks as a ship's team. When the ship was ready for sea we went out beyond Rottnest Island and did 'attacks' on US submarines, who in turn 'attacked' us.

We left Fremantle as one of the escorts of a fast convoy, and oiled and provisioned at sea whilst underway from a tanker and supply ship, a far cry from *Wato*. *Wollongong* quickly worked up and



was a very efficient ship. Our first landfall on this trip was Addu Atoll, a very beautiful island group in the Moluccas. One atoll was a Naval refuelling depot.

An old tanker which had been torpedoed was anchored there permanently, and ships oiled from her while our tanker refuelled her. Later the tanker was torpedoed again by a Japanese sub which surfaced 8-10 miles out, took aim and hit.

We went on to Columbo, where *Wollongong* was based, and did a number of convoys and patrols around the Indian Ocean area and up as far as the Persian Gulf and Indian ports. Columbo was full of sunken ships from a very big Japanese raid. We and the other Aussie corvettes were kept very busy. One morning, shortly after arriving in Columbo, I was piped to report to the First Lieutenant who told me I was to be sent back to Officers' Training School at Flinders Naval Base to study for a commission.

This First Lieutenant was quite a character (the very opposite of our captain, who was an aloof, hard man). The First was a seagoing Merchant Marine Reserve Officer, like Lt. Henderson of *Wato*, but had spent most of his sea time in the South Pacific and New Guinea area. He was a friend of Errol Flynn, then a top film star in Hollywood, and showed us photos of himself and Flynn in the islands to prove it. They operated trading ships and were really a pair of drug dealers. They lived a happy-go-lucky life and brought opium mainly into Cairns, once in a stuffed crocodile. He used to fill in the tedious middle watches whilst on convoys with 'Tales of the Old South Pacific'. Press reports after Flynn died proved his stories true.

My replacement caught up with us and I was put ashore at Columbo into the RN Naval Depot awaiting transport to Australia. They kept me and other Australians busy as temporary crew on RN ships, including cruiser HMS *Caradoc*, and MTBs up and down the Ceylonese (Sri Lanka) coast on submarine patrols.

Another job during our last few weeks: all Australians were mustered and sent to a beautiful beach on a peninsular called Mount Lavinia, which had a lovely first class hotel. There had been a number of drownings at this beach, mainly of UK service men and women unused to surf, and the Army had asked for Navy lifesavers. The RN had nothing but a few Aussie sailors, who according to them, being Australians, must be lifesavers.

We shut up and all went along to be given a large roll of cod line (fishing cord), a funny-looking harness for the rescuer and a life jacket. There were about 10 of us in the draft, mostly country lads who had never surfed, several could not swim at all, not an unusual thing for country folk in those days.

It was a wonderful job so we set about putting on a good show. We drilled the way we'd seen lifesavers do back home, rushed into the water with cod lines attached to luckless swimmers, blew whistles and made folk stay close in and together. The last part must have been the saving grace as no one drowned while we were there. We had a great time, lived well and met a lot of service girls, a sailor's dream.

However, after about 10 days several of us were recalled and sent by rail across the island, via Kandy, to a huge naval base in the North, Trincomalee: a slow and lovely trip. Trincomalee was the RN main base and had many types of ships serviced there.

I was sent to HMS *Maidstone*, a submarine depot ship, and as the mother ship to Far East RN submarines it was a vital vessel. The British and US subs were slowly strangling all of Japan's

supply lines and had sunk the majority of its Mercantile Marine. *Maidstone* was to sail to Fremantle and operate with US subs already stationed there.

We had a large escort when we sailed — a French battleship, four RN heavy cruisers, two small aircraft carriers and six destroyers, plus her own subs not on patrol who were sent out as a distant screen. *Maidstone* itself was a heavily armed anti-aircraft ship literally bristling with guns, and during a practise shoot against our own aircraft all guns blazed away. I was Captain's runner on the bridge and had never heard a racket like it.

### Officer Training (September 1944 – April 1945)

We arrived without problem at Fremantle in wildflower season, and travelled by troop trains to Flinders in Victoria. I had a week before OTS started, and found Birdy Jenkins in the Depot in control of the Seaman's Billiard Room which gave him all the gambling rackets.

The OTS started on 20 September was the toughest six weeks of my life as regards constant strain, tension and discipline. My course, the 15th, was the first which consisted of men all returned from sea and recommended from ships. (Previous courses were from New Entry, education, political or family connections.) They were a great bunch of men and several are still close friends. The school's officers, including one Lt. Dovers, later to be an Admiral, expected great things of 15th Course due to the combined sea and war experience.

All school courses stressed teamwork and drill, and the sports and lectures pushed it. However 15th proved to be a group of individuals. We drilled better than most but individuality was very evident. All courses were under judgement continually and anyone who did not measure up was failed and immediately drafted to sea. We would return at lunch or tea and find folk from other courses 'gone'. No goodbyes to classmates.



Acting Sub Lt McGarvey (T. McGarvey)

The day started at 4.00 a.m. when we 'voluntarily' arose to study by pilot lights until 'Wakey' at 6.00 a.m. There was no other time when we could study signals, morse, Rules of Road etc, except every second weekend during Melbourne leave. We also did night guard duties. Our mess deck was cleared and polished after every meal, and cutlery also polished and laid out in patterns.

We were subject to discipline by senior courses, but they did not try much on us and we virtually ran the school when we became Seniors. After six weeks' intensive schooling we went to an old coal-burning training ship (HMAS *Doomba*) and were sent to sea, Bass Strait, around Tasmania and out into Bight area. Here we did all the usual ship drills, sea boats, fire, action stations and actual firing of all guns from 4-inch to .303 machine guns.

On arrival back at Flinders we were measured for officer's uniforms and went before the final selection Board — quite an experience, with five senior

permanent officers questioning you by yourself. All bar one of our course got through, and I was appointed Acting Sub-Lieutenant on 26 February 1945.

We were sent to Melbourne to get our uniforms and kit, then spent more time at Flinders Wardroom (HMAS *Cerberus*) doing lectures, mainly on Officer of Watch duties and navigation, but also a lot on discipline application and Naval Law. Then we all received drafts to corvettes, except one who got the cruiser *Hobart*, and another to a merchant ship in charge of their guns.

### **HMAS *Castlemaine* (May 1945-December 1945)**

In May I was drafted to HMAS *Castlemaine* and left with a friend, Mick Gleeson-White, to pick our ships up at Darwin. We went in sleepers to Brisbane and then flew by the young QANTAS to Darwin, via outback Queensland town and cattle stations. We left Brisbane in a DC3 at 7.00 a.m. and arrived at 9.00 p.m — quite a trip and sure beat the troop trains. Naval Headquarters at Darwin was what had previously been Government House and luxurious by my standards. It was returned to the Governor after the war.

Mick went straight to his ship but I had to wait a week for *Castlemaine*. At that time *Castlemaine* was attached to a group of ships, with HMAS *Moresby* as senior ship, which were charting and surveying a passage from Thursday Island to the Indian Ocean to allow oil tankers to proceed through there to the Persian Gulf instead of the long trip south of Australia.

The waters were virtually uncharted although it was one of the oldest waterways in history. Pre-war, mostly small craft sailed here but wartime brought large vessels and charts a necessity. When *Castlemaine* arrived for fuel provisions and boiler cleaning, I joined the ship on 28 May and met the officers and crew.

*Castlemaine* had been involved in the Timor run for years and was senior ship in action with Japanese bombers when sister ship HMAS *Armidale* was sunk. Our Captain was Lt. Com. Collins, a Senior RANR(S) (Merchant Captain in peace time) and we were the senior corvette. He was a good, capable captain, kept to himself and took no nonsense.

Our first Lieut. was Bruce Moss RANR, Lt. Keith Johnston RANR, who became a very good mate, was Gunnery Officer, and S/L Lloyd Makin RANR was Asdic Officer. I shared a cabin with Keith and kept watches with him until I gained my Watch Keepers Certificate and took over by myself.



Sub Lt Makin, Lt Mackay, Lt Moss, Lt Johnson, Sub Lt McGarvey (source unknown)

After a month or so, whilst at sea, the Captain took sick suddenly with a burst ulcer and was rushed to Darwin. Bruce Moss took over as captain and we dropped to junior ship. A new Lieutenant Frank Mackay came aboard as First Lieutenant. Frank had been a Bridge Officer on HMAS *Australia* during five Kamikaze attacks. His nerves were shot, but he was a brave man and did a great job.

Bruce Moss was never as good a captain as Collins, but by and large *Castlemaine* was a happy and efficient ship. Survey work was hard, exacting work and a lot of it was plain boring. We would start by anchoring a beacon in the sea at the point of our last survey and all ships, except those on submarine and aircraft defence, would take sun and star sights for several days until the beacon's exact location on earth was established.

*Moresby* would then steam off after attaching a wire to the beacon, go for about ten miles and drop another beacon. We thus had the distance, and all ships would then steam abreast using radar, asdics and depth echo sounders and find if any rocks or shoals were in the surveyed channel. Nearer the coast we would erect trig points.

Work went on 24 hours a day and we rarely got to Darwin and then only for provisions, water and boiler cleaning. We had friends at Naval Headquarters who visited us and took us ashore for tennis and swimming at Berry's Springs, down the track from Darwin.



"Bearded Horrors" (T. McGarvey)

Also, all islands north of Australia were held by the Japanese and although they were becoming isolated from their main bases they were still active. Japanese submarine mine-layers had laid a number of fields in our area and as junior ship we copped extra duties, doing several trips within sight of these islands to see if we generated aircraft response, as this would not be good for the tankers when

survey was complete and they could sail. We twice had this job, which most of us hated.

Then one night just after finishing a watch, I was told to get out charts (I was Assistant Navigator to Frank Mackay) for areas north to Philippines. The Allied Powers were getting ready to invade Japan and all minesweepers that could be gathered were ordered to the Philippines for exercises to sweep the Fleet into Japanese home waters.

### **Towards Hong Kong**

We left our flotilla on 14 August 1945 and headed north past Timor, Aru Island and were in sight of Jap held islands for about 48 hours. We were pretty on edge and our orders requested us report any enemy reaction — if we survived. We sighted the Philippines one evening at Zamboanga Passage — the moon was coming up, a volcano was in action on one side and an air raid on a town on the other — a very colourful scene.

We were heading up western shores of the Philippines when we heard over San Francisco Forces Radio that an "Atomic Bomb" had been dropped on Hiroshima and that this had wiped out the city. The size of the bomb was given as the mass of a tennis ball. We could not believe our ears as, we found out later, no one except the President of the US and Churchill plus scientists involved ever knew of the bomb. Most of us were somewhat horrified that such a thing existed.

We passed Manila and Corregidor and arrived at Subic Bay on 24 August, to hear that Nagasaki had been wiped out by a second bomb. Because of Kamikaze aircraft everyone in the Philippines was tense and damage to some ships very evident.

We found we were now part of the British Pacific Fleet and joined other RAN corvettes in an Aussie Minesweeping Flotilla. HMS *Maidstone* was in Subic Bay and we got very friendly with two of her submarines. This friendship lasted until they left Hong Kong several months later. Also in harbour was our supply ship SS *Mercur*, whose first officer was Jacky Knight an old school and scout mate whom I had bumped into several times during the war.

Jacky invited me and friend to dinner on *Mercur* on our second night at Subic Bay and I took Keith Johnstone along. We had a beautiful meal and were watching the film 'Kings Row' when *Castlemaine* came alongside and requested our presence forthwith. We went down by Jacobs ladder and immediately went to sea with the British Pacific Fleet for exercises.

A cease-fire was signalled next day and peace looked as though it was on way. However aircraft action was still being experienced further north and no one knew if the Japanese military would obey their Emperor.

All BPF ships fuelled, stored and took on extra ammunition, then we were ordered to sea in two groups — a battle fleet with aircraft carriers, battleships etc, and a landing fleet of corvettes (also operating as minesweepers), *Maidstone*, submarines, a couple of cruisers and destroyers.

We sailed in a box formation with *Maidstone* and her brood in the centre, destroyers on either side, cruisers ahead and astern, and us corvettes ahead and either side for submarine detection. The battle fleet was over the horizon but flew planes over us all day and occasionally appeared to see if we still there. The crossing was uneventful, with good weather.

We arrived off Hong Kong on 29 August, but the Japanese had still not officially surrendered. In reply to Admiral Harcourt's signals they denied us entry as they said they had not received orders to surrender. We were sent to sweep an anchorage for our fleet off one of the outer islands, completed by nightfall, and all ships except those on guard anchored for the night.

Next day Admiral Harcourt signalled the Japanese he would enter the harbour, as at that time we thought they would slaughter all their POW's and civilian internees. The Fleet Air Arm flew a plane ashore and took off some Japanese officers who went aboard the Flagship and although they still stated they had no contact with Tokyo they admitted they had intercepted the surrender radio broadcasts.

We weighed anchor at 4.00 am next day and proceeded to sweep the Northern channel entrance — ten Aussie minesweeping corvettes guarded by RN destroyers, on one of which was the Duke of Edinburgh, then only Prince Philip. On the northern shore of the channel was a high hill on top of which was a Japanese fort with large guns (later we had to clear it and found 9 and 12 inch guns). The gun crews were visible but we were not very happy as, although the Air Arm and battleships gave us cover, they could have wiped us out in ten minutes flat.

They signalled us that we were entering mined waters and a few minutes later this proved correct as mines started to be cut by our sweeps. We went up and down for several hours sweeping for contact, magnetic and acoustic mines and made a wide enough channel for *Maidstone*, the cruisers, destroyers and ourselves to enter.

The Fleet Air Arm had been active on the seaward side of island and we heard firing. Later we heard that suicide boats (one is in Canberra War Memorial) had put to sea, but the planes destroyed them. Weeks later we had to go to an offshore island which housed these boats and destroy them. They were powered by two Chev six cylinder engines. We salvaged two engines for one of our PO's whose father owned a couple of Melbourne taxis. We landed them for him months later when paying off.



*Minesweeping off Tamkan Is, evening 29 Aug 1945. HMAS Maidstone and HMCS Prince Robert astern. (T. McGarvey)*

As soon as our flotilla leader signalled a clear channel, *Maidstone* steamed past followed by Canadian cruiser *Prince Robert*, then our flotilla, with us about third. When we began to enter the harbour all we could see was the masts of sunken ships and one lone Japanese destroyer. *Maidstone* went alongside the Naval dockyard and sent Royal Marines onto the dock.

As we were passing firing broke out in the dockyard and men fell. We heard later five were killed as the Japanese fired on them. What a time to be killed! The captain lost his command later over the matter. The Japanese refused to leave the dockyard for several weeks and would fire on anyone using certain roads in the area. However, outside they ignored us: strange people. The Japanese destroyer was herded to one side of harbour by our destroyer, made to anchor, and boarding parties took away their gun's breach blocks and rendered the engines unusable.

Our orders, with other corvettes, were to steam up harbour and anchor, covering certain areas with our guns. Onshore we could see hundreds of Europeans in Victoria Harbour and uniforms in Kowloon. Later we found that civilians were interned at Stanley on Hong Kong island, while service personnel were were in camps in Kowloon.

(I have a book in my library, *An End to Tears*, written by a war correspondent friend Rus Clark whom I met in Hong Kong and later found lived at back of Harry and Olwen. This describes in detail those weeks of the British return.)

The British Traders Insurance Co. head office was in Hong Kong and my captain wanted to find out about a Scottish nurse who had been interned, the daughter of a friend, so he asked me to go ashore and try to get information. I think it was the second day we were there I landed at the dockyard and was told I would have to crawl along a low wall to the dockyard, or be shot by the Japanese in overlooking buildings.

I naturally complied, and on going out of the gates found myself in a mass of Chinese, some Japanese and a few internees, who had left Stanley for the day. By a great stroke of luck, the first internee I approached was a Merchant Marine officer who was trying to meet someone from the Navy. I told him my orders and, as I was armed, he said he would get me to Stanley.

At that time I had no idea where or what Stanley was, but had only asked to find where internees had been gaoled. The Japanese were still firmly in control there, and as our fleet had been put together in such a hurry, we had no extra supplies, water, fuel or troops to take over: we were only there to stop the slaughter of our people.

The officer took me to a place where Japanese lorries were (fuelled by charcoal burners) and was able to get a Japanese officer to take a truck with a driver and Japanese troops to go to Stanley. We needed armed guards because piracy and banditry by the Chinese was out of control – that was the only way they could survive.

It was quite a long journey to Stanley, and when I first sighted it I realised it was a building we had seen from sea. The verandahs were strewn with National flags of various internees, although heavens knows where they had hidden them.

The Japanese camp commandant had just committed harakiri (suicide) which had brought many internees to the camp office, so I had very little trouble finding out that our BT people had mostly survived, although I did not actually meet them until a few days later. They took me to the Australian women's quarters and got hold of the Captain's Scottish friend. I was the first Aussie in the camp, or so the ladies told me.

My letters home and to the BT office set out in detail my experiences then. I have forgotten so much, so I will just say we swept mines, carried internees and POW's, chased pirates with our submarine friends and spent many weeks up and down the coast. I will detail a few events. The nasty parts I didn't write home for Mum, was that the Chinese fought amongst themselves and for days we saw them shooting one another and on a number of mornings found they hanged people from a gallows right opposite our anchorage. We had no way of stopping this.

The British Traders general manager, RNR Lt Commander Cobb, had been a POW. Lt Commander Cobb had started as an RN midshipman and trained with the then Duke of York, later King George VI, and was in same gun turret during Battle of Jutland. He lived on *Castlemaine* and through him I met and got to know the other staff and their families. My letter to our Australian head office and their cable to London was the first London had heard of the survival of their people. It is in the file.

BT staff Mr and Mrs Mason became good friends. They refused repatriation and with Mr Cobb restarted the company in the company's offices. The Japanese had not opened the strong room and all the records were intact. I made several trips ashore to this office which was right on the waterfront in our own building. The Mason's son-in-law had been executed by the Japanese a few weeks before surrender.

Gradually supply ships, tankers, hospital ships and troop ships started to arrive and we were detailed to move people from the POW cages and Stanley to repatriation ships, mostly aircraft carriers which had dumped their aircraft. One afternoon we went as usual to Stanley and had the people who were leaving next day for repatriation on board for a party.



XXXX Communication Branch with "Knuckles" (T. McGarvey)

We small ships would transport them around the island and shallows to the bigger ships. As usual the party for us and them was great — men women and children eating and singing. This lot however had an Irishman and his family. He had been a police sergeant in Hong Kong and been interned for three years. He was a great personality with a lovely singing voice and led the whole concert.

When we were taking them ashore about 10 pm, for their last night in Stanley I was duty in boats and after getting everyone in motor boat and whaler gave order to head off. The Irishman started singing "Maori Farewell", a very popular wartime song. Everyone, including our crew, joined in and carried on until they landed.

Next morning we pulled away from ship early to go to Stanley wharf and saw everyone on the wharf, but something seemed wrong as no one was waving.

When we arrived alongside we found most folk in tears, as our Irish friend had apparently decided to take a swim before leaving and had

dived in. On approaching the wharf steps he was virtually torn in half by a shark (I now think it was a white pointer although they were unknown to us then) and he lay dead on the wharf, surrounded by family and friends. Schedules *had* to be met so I arranged for his family to stay, and herded all others and the little gear they had into the boats. The trip around was very sad. I do not think any event could have been so sad, especially then when after three years captivity to die with home and liberty at hand.

Doctors had little to do on ships, because as non-combatants they could not legally assist ship's routine so frequently were looking for something to fill in time. The doctor on our mother ship made contact with some British Army nurses at Hong Kong hospital, a beautiful hospital which, after the Japanese were evicted, had been put into use for civilian and service personnel.

Our doctor arranged for an ambulance for transport, and said he would take us all to a nightclub. It had a band and dance floor and we took our own drinks. The nurses were generally older than myself and other officers but this was the first social evening for any of us, as we had been at sea and they were from the Burmese campaign.



However one nurse with whom I was dancing asked if I thought the 'Lido' was somewhat strange. Plenty of servicemen and only Chinese girls. We noticed that they seemed to pair up quickly and disappear, and then the penny dropped: we had taken our own girls to a brothel. The others thought it a great joke and we all had a great time.

One afternoon we were clearing a bay of an underwater boom with mines attached, when our chummy ship *Strahan* went past, flat out chasing a pirate junk. There was a loud boom and all we could see was a huge eruption of spray. We thought *Strahan* had bought the farm but when spray subsided there she was still afloat. She had casualties which we took over and then to hospital and *Wagga* towed her in. *Strahan* spent next month or more in dock.

The main surrender was signed on 2 September in Tokyo on board USS *Missouri*, but after that there were many such ceremonies around the Pacific and Philippines. Admiral of the Fleet Sir Bruce Fraser came down eventually from Japan to sign the treaty at Hong Kong for the Colony and that portion of China. This meant that after signing the Japanese troops went to designated places, handed in all arms and military equipment and awaited transport home, which then took up to twelve months.

Fraser arrive in his flagship *Duke of York* and I was lucky enough to be present at the Peace Ceremony on 16 September 1945 (better described by Rus Clark in *End of Tears*). A very impressive and emotional event. There were over 400 major ships in harbour to fire the 21 gun salute and dozens of planes filled the air. Later there was a big parade which we viewed from the verandah of the Cricket Club, as guests of Lady Edwina Mountbatten. She was a very gracious and charming woman who circulated and talked to all present. The drill and marching of all services was something worth seeing.

About two days later we received a signal from Admiral Fraser requesting our (the *Castlemaine* officers) company on board the flagship for drinks and light refreshments. Lloyd Makin's father was the then Minister for Navy of the Commonwealth Government and had done all in his power to help the RN establish itself in our oceans again, and Fraser and the RN showed their gratitude whenever possible. When Fraser heard that Lloyd was in his fleet he sent this invitation. Our flotilla officers were amazed as we were still junior ship.

The Admiral's barge, which seemed nearly as big as *Castlemaine*, collected and bore us to the giant HMS *Duke of York* (9-16 inch guns). We were met at the ladder by Fraser's Flag Lieutenant and Mossy was piped aboard (an honour given, or which should be given to any Navy Commanding Officer) which somewhat startled him, as Aussie corvettes rarely gave a pipe unless it was for a senior officer. The Flag Lieutenant took us right aft to the Admiral's quarters (the ship was huge). He had the whole aft section for himself and staff.

As we came to the door, the Admiral came out with an RN Lieutenant whom he introduced, Prince Phillip of Greece. We knew of him although I can't remember why, but at that time he was not even rumoured to be eyeing off Princess Elizabeth. We all chatted for a while, he headed off and we went into the cabin. The Admiral told us that Philip was 1st Lieutenant of the destroyer taking him to Canton next day to sign a peace treaty with the Japanese Army and we would have the (doubtful) honour of minesweeping the Canton River to make his journey safe.

He then asked us to sign his visitor's book, which was presented to us by his Flag Lieutenant, and we all signed. Remember Fraser was quite a hero — he had handled the British Pacific Fleet

magnificently and earlier in the Atlantic war had commanded the ships which sank to German battleship *Scharnhorst*. He therefore had had many visitors, and the signatures the Flag showed us were the King and Queen, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, Churchill, Eisenhower, Montgomery, Roosevelt and on and on. He then had ours.

The evening was relaxed, with beer and food flowing, and we listened to the many stories this great man had to tell. He asked us for an Australian flag to join the flags draped around his quarters of the nations of ships serving under him. We gave that to his barge Midshipman when we returned to *Castlemaine*.



*The Surveying Party (T. McGarvey)*

So many points for months/years of service, extra for overseas service and double for married men. This left us single men way behind. Drafts for discharge began to arrive but only after a relief arrived to take a person's place.

The minesweeping of Asian waters was causing a lot of resentment amongst the Australians, as Hong Kong was England's problem, and the shallow waters needed wooden ships not steel corvettes — *Strahan* had tripped an American Magnetic mine.

We were sweeping in a place called Bias Bay and mines were popping up all around from lead ships. We were hauling in sweeps to reverse course when someone spotted we had a mine snagged by its cable on our sweep. Before we could do anything it exploded close in and wrecked our port boiler. After several weeks in port we were advised we would be returning to Australia with *Strahan* to be paid off.

Before leaving, we called on our Hong Kong friends, mainly Mr. Cobb and the Masons, most others had taken repatriation. They had, especially the women, settled back into colonial living, with lovely homes (that had been held by Japanese officers) and servants.

### **Leaving Hong Kong (October 1945)**

It was well into typhoon season when we left on 14 October 1945, and that day a large typhoon built up to the north. Twelve hours out, in the China Sea, we got caught in its edge. We had experienced a typhoon whilst in harbour and that was pretty frightening, but at sea it was awful. I cannot remember how long we were in it. We made little headway and had no idea where we were as we never sighted sun or stars. The seas were huge, no food could be cooked and we were mostly off colour, some very seasick.

We were kept very busy minesweeping, pirate patrol and worked up Chinese coast to Amoy on these jobs. When the peace was announced a big change occurred in all forces and our ship was similarly affected. Everyone wanted out before we were killed or wounded by mines or pirates, as a number of Marines and others had been.

Discharges were finally announced as being on a points

Life lines were rigged and the Captain and First Lieutenant never left the bridge. It was dangerous to try and lie down in a bunk. We wedged ourselves in the wardroom and tried to sleep when off watch. They were the roughest seas I have ever seen.

Eventually we found Subic Bay and returned via Morotai, Thursday Island, Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. We were given a yacht *Coongooloo* from coastal patrol to tow from Thursday Island and had a wonderful slow trip down the Barrier Reef.

We left the *Coongooloo* at Brisbane and picked up another called *Lauriana* (owned and captained by Bob Arnott of Arnott's biscuits. It is still afloat on Sydney Harbour). Bob and his crew were great blokes and due to bad weather we had to spend 2 or 3 days in Port Stephens together. They would not have survived a tow in those conditions.

We reached Sydney and I had two days at home, then we sailed for Melbourne into a howling southerly. Mum and Dad went to the Gap to see us pass and really saw a corvette taking it green over the bows.

### Leaving *Castlemaine* (December 1945)

On arriving in Melbourne on 16 November 1945, we were berthed up river in walking distance of the city and began paying off, which means unloading ammunition, movable guns, stores etc.



*Castlemaine* preparing for decommissioning, South Wharf (State Library of Victoria, Allan C. Green collection H91.108/2702)

John Riddell turned up one day — he had hopped a train from Sydney. He was due to be demobbed and was avoiding a girl who was talking marriage. We held a 'paying off' party, inviting girls from our Brighton Town hall dancing days, and awaited drafts. Bruce Moss, Frank Mackay and Keith Johnston all received demob notices and went their ways. Both Bruce and Frank died early in their 30's or early 40's and I never saw them again.

Keith Johnston and I kept in contact. He visited me, and later me and Audrey, and we had several great times with him and his wife Jo. He died in his late 50's from cancer. I wish he had survived for retirement, as we were really great mates.

Just when Lloyd Makin and I were due for draft (young and single so delayed demob) his father turned up and in mid-December 1945 we said goodbye to *Castlemaine*, got into a Commonwealth car and off we went to Canberra. I stayed with the Makins in their Government owned house, met his family and circulated around as Mrs. Makin showed off her Navy son.

I met a lot of folk in politics at that time and heard stories re the Governor General, the Duke of Gloucester, apparently an alcoholic and woman chaser. Not liked by Canberra folk at all.

I went home on three weeks leave and found Johnny discharged. He had arranged to help a neighbour's English son-in-law start an earth moving business in the Hunter Valley by taking a bulldozer on a trailer up the Putty Road to Singleton.

The road was all dirt and very primitive. We spent 3 nights and 4 days making the trip, as the army surplus trailer and truck were far too light for the bulldozer. We went through storms, burst tyres, running out of petrol and lack of food and water. Bulldozers had not been seen in the country and quite often people gathered to watch our progress as word got around.

Our host, an ex Major in the British SAS, was really someone to be with. He ran out of clothes so travelled in blue pyjamas with jump boots. When approaching Singleton we were met by a police car who wanted 'McGarvey'. Apparently an urgent draft had arrived at home and Dad had notified the police of my approximate whereabouts. They drove me to the station where I was put on the express to Sydney.

### **HMAS *Quiberon* (January 1946-March 1946)**

I reported by phone to the Naval Depot and was told to be at Mascot that afternoon, 6 January 1946, on draft to a destroyer HMAS *Quiberon* which was up in Halmahera (an Indonesian island). At Mascot I was sent to the RAAF area and directed to a Liberator bomber, which was flying forthwith to Brisbane. I had to sit on the floor in the centre area near the bomb bay, clutching my suitcase.



HMAS *Quiberon* ([seapower.navy.gov.au/hmas-quiberon](http://seapower.navy.gov.au/hmas-quiberon))

Approaching Brisbane we ran into bad weather and had to put down on the RAAF airstrip. The Liberator ran onto soft ground, its nose wheels sank and the tail went up, jamming us against the bulkhead in an untidy heap.

I grabbed my bag and headed off. I was sent via RAAF from Brisbane to Darwin to Halmahera, where I found *Quiberon* was already on her way to Australia.

I joined her at Cairns and sailed to Sydney, after torpedo practise in Hervey Bay near Frazer Island. I was the only Reserve Officer on board and *Quiberon* was back to peacetime routine, all polish and discipline, and I was very unhappy. She was doing a refit at Cockatoo Island and I copped the duty, as all the other officers, except the First Lieutenant, went on leave. I had friends and family on for meals and Dad brought a few of his mates from work for dinner and drinks one night, which helped a bit. *Quiberon* was to sail to Japan for occupation duties and I did not want to go.

I put in a request to the captain for discharge but it was refused. Two days before we were to sail we were to be towed to Garden Island for fuel and stores, and along comes *Wato* — now a civilian tug! *Wato* towed us to Garden Island, which proved to be my last official Naval voyage. Next day a relief arrived and on 23 March 1946 I was sent on leave, pending discharge.

Lloyd Makin contacted me to say he was getting early discharge, as his father had been appointed the First Ambassador to the United States, and he was going with his parents and doing studies at a US university. He was on leave also and arranged a tour of Tasmania through his father's secretary and off we went.

We had a great time, but found halfway through that Navy again wanted us back, this time for discharge, but they didn't catch us until we got back to Launceston. I was officially discharged on 8 April 1946, and thus ended my wartime adventures.

### **Post-War Life (from son David McGarvey)**

Trevor married Audrey Patricia (nee Ward) on 15 July 1955. He gave himself a number of years to adjust to civilian life after the war before settling down, with lots of adventures with friends during those years.

Audrey and Trevor had three children – David Morris, Beth, Ian Ward. They lived at Epping NSW (north western Sydney), where Trevor had grown up since he was four. Trevor was very family focussed and he and Audrey gave the three of us children a great foundation in life, with scouts, sport, sailing, and family holidays.

After the children left home they moved to East Blaxland (lower Blue Mountains). Trevor worked in insurance all his life, usually in smaller companies of which there were a lot more back then. He led the team in his final working years to introduce computers to the company – one of the first in Australia to do so. Back then it was punch cards!

Trevor retired at around 62. He and Audrey loved road trips, and there were few sealed roads on the east coast they hadn't driven on. They moved to a retirement village at Richmond for their final years. Audrey died in 2010 aged 85, and Trevor in 2012, at 91.

[Ed note: Trevor died on 28 May 2012, exactly 67 years to the day he joined *Castlemaine*.]