Also from the New England tableland: HMAS Tamworth

There were pretty slim pickings on August's mystery ship.

Was it that the ship was one of the numerically largest class of ship that has served in the Royal Australian Navy?

Was it just that the regular competitors were confused to see an unfamiliar shot of a familiar type of ship? Was it that they were unable to see past the camouflage livery?

Whatever, there were many fewer bids to identify 'Miss August', as I dubbed her, than in previous months.

Regional Manager of Defence Public Affairs in WA, Vic Jeffery – also a long-time naval historian – donated the photo.

As Vic said when he emailed the shot: "It's a good one because it is one of 56 and it is not showing a hull number. And what's more - it is not an RAN photo!"

Harold Goodall, of Buranda (Brisbane), was on the right track when he responded: "Come on guys. You are now making it hard. At a guess, I think your mystery (ship) could be the Bathurst Class, HMAS *Whyalla*."

Good try Harold. You spotted the class through the unfamiliar garb.

Another Queenslander, John Flowers, also found the going a bit hard: "You hate us don't you! I'm handing in my resignation as ship's name researcher. After viewing (almost, obviously not all) photographs of Bathurst Class minesweeper/corvettes, I cannot locate one with the camouflage combination that you have depicted in *Reserve News*. I guess someone with superior resources at their fingertips will come up with the right answer.

"However, you have forced me to become more educated and enlightened on Naval history re the Bathurst class.

"Most interesting and I am now an inspired admirer of them. I will be doing more voluntary reading on these amazing vessels and their ships' companies during WW2.

"I did not appreciate their value when I used to visit the old *Castlemaine* at Cerberus in the '60s, as an ordinary seaman. To me it was just an old ex-WW2 hulk."

Well John, they had a fairly distinguished history – particularly HMAS *Armidale* – after whom the new class of patrol boats currently being commissioned into the RAN has been named. And of course, Ordinary Seaman 'Teddy' Sheean who went down with *Armidale* 1 when she was sunk by an aerial torpedo on December 1, 1942, gives his name to the Collin class submarine, HMAS *Sheean*.

We did have one correct entry for August's mystery ship.

"The mystery ship is HMAS *Tamworth*," says ex-Defence civilian, ex-RANVR cadet and RANR(NS) Reg Bonney. "The image is available on the Australian War Memorial website, ID Number 301488. It is available from them as a black and white print and was taken on 21 January 1943 as the vessel was leaving Fremantle for service in the Mediterranean. The unusual camouflage was the deciding factor."

Congratulations Bill. Notes provided by Vic Jeffery on HMAS *Tamworth* are:

Built at Walkers Ltd., Maryborough under British Admiralty Account.

Laid down	25 August 1941
Launched	14 March 1942
Commissioned	8 August 1942
Paid off	30 April 1946 and transferred to Royal Netherlands Navy on the same day.

Battle Honours:
Pacific 1942-45
Indian Ocean 1943-44

After serving briefly in Australian waters, *Tamworth* joined the British Eastern Fleet at Colombo.
Between 1943 and 1945 she served as a convoy escort in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

In November 1944 she joined the 22nd Minesweeping Flotilla at Trincomalee and in early 1945 proceeded to the US base at Manus and carried out escort duties between Manus and the Philippines.

With other units of the 22 Minesweeping Flotilla, *Tamworth* proceeded to Hong Kong to carry out anti-piracy patrols and minesweeping duties.

On 28 September she reverted to RAN control at Moratai and sailed for Sydney the following day. HMAS *Tamworth* paid-off at Sydney on 30 April 1946 and was immediately transferred to the Royal Netherlands Navy where she was renamed *Tidore*.

In December 1949 she was transferred to Indonesia, when her name was changed to *Pati Unus* and in 1969 was reduced to the role of a floating training ship.

We also had an interesting entry on July's mystery ship which arrived after we'd gone to press: "I'm thinking *Queenborough*. David Holthouse."

Well, that's 100 per cent correct … and probably from someone who served in her. In the latter stages of a distinguished career, RADM David Holthouse served as (then) Chief of Naval Personnel and (I think) Support Commander.

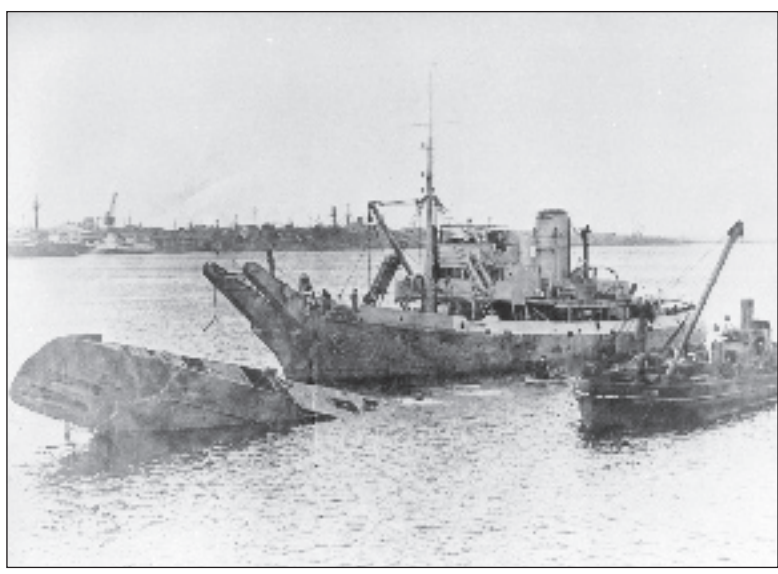
September's challenge is a particularly interesting sort of a ship … quite distinctive some would say.

Identify her.

Extra points awarded for people who can say what she's doing and where.

Above: Miss August - HMAS *Tamworth*.

Below: mystery ship for September.



Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books, Books,

The Battle for Singapore

Like many others, I find the fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942 remains a military disaster of enduring fascination and seemingly unshakeable myth and have a number of books on the matter.

Now, some 60 years after the liberation of the island from the brutalities of the Japanese occupation, this superb new title has appeared to add much to the Singapore debate.

This 470-page book is divided into four well researched and informative parts; The Countdown, The Invasion, The Siege, and The Occupation, to provide a highly detailed picture of those involved and the reasoning behind the decisions made by both sides.

There are a good number of eyewitness accounts of the bravery, panic and self-sacrifice of British and Australian soldiers, including graphic accounts of the *sook ching* – the massacre of thousands of young Chinese men at the hands of Japan's death squads.

Thompson describes the 'revelry by night' mentality and military bungling preceding the outbreak of war in the Pacific; the savage and relentless fighting on the Malayan mainland as the Japanese war machine surged southward, the numbing fall of besieged Singapore and the agonies and atrocities of Japanese occupation.

The fall of Singapore to a numerically inferior Japanese army was one of the darkest days of World War Two and questions as to how it could have happened went unanswered. The author reveals truths which have remained hidden behind 'self-serving lies and distortions' since the liberation of Singapore.

The events some eight months before on June 21, 1941 saw the first cracks in Singapore's defence when Hitler's invasion of Russia on the other side of the world saw the end of the British commander's, LTGEN Percival, chances of receiving the necessary arms and warplanes to defend Malaya vanish.

There were clearly many incredibly stupid decisions made by GEN Percival and his senior officers. A prime example was denying the request to place barbed wire defences on the beaches facing Malaya, of course exactly where the Japanese attack came. Hundreds of tons of barbed wire were still lying in stores depots because the hierarchy did not want to panic the public.

The war in the air was no contest, with the invaders mounting 534 modern aircraft opposed to the 158 inadequate and obsolescent machines the British could put in the air.

When the naval base was abandoned the godowns (warehouses) were packed with enough food to feed an army for several months and in the ordnance stores, 180,000 tons of ammunition ranging from 15-inch armour shells to .303 rifle bullets lined the shelves.

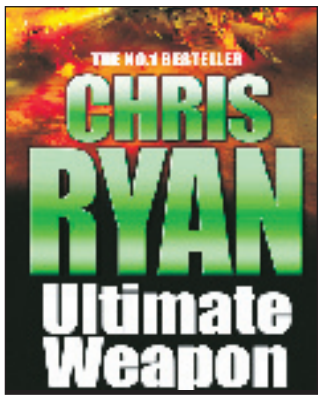
Whilst the giant floating dock which had been towed from England had been scuttled, the giant crane was left in good working order; ship's boilers, building materials, spare parts for seaplanes and shelves of radio equipment were neatly stacked in workshops and storerooms. All signs of a hasty retreat and utter chaos.

There were countless acts of courage and sacrifice and there were many accounts of the enemy being repulsed. When the Japanese sent in their armour at the Bakri crossroads on the mainland they took heavy losses on the road from Muar. Although wounded in the hip, Australian anti-tank gunner Lance-Sergeant Clarrie Thornton incredibly knocked out nine Japanese tanks.

This thought provoking book is a superb addition to the available reading on the fall of Singapore and is highly recommended.

The Battle for Singapore, The True Story of the Greatest Catastrophe of World War II. Peter Thompson, Portrait Books, London, dist. Hachette Livre Australia. soft cover RRP $35.00

- Vic Jeffery,
Regional Manager, Defence Public Affairs (WA)



Ultimate Weapon backfires in credibility

Author Chris Ryan, a former British SAS member, was unknown to me before picking up this offering despite his 24 publications to date.

As mentioned in a recent review of *The Afghan* by Frederick Forsyth, it's hardly surprising the Middle East situation is inspiring a new fiction genre. Ryan has climbed on the bandwagon.

SAS man Jed Bradley is dropped into Baghdad to investigate what might be the ultimate weapon in the hands of Saddam Hussein. Co-incidentally, his young and talented scientist girlfriend, Sarah, has suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

She is the daughter of Ultimate Weapon's other key character, Nick Scott, himself a former SAS man captured and tortured in Iraq during the first Gulf War, now recovering from the triple trauma of his experiences, alcoholism and the death of his wife. Inevitably Scott is drawn into the maelstrom that also involves his estranged daughter and Bradley, of whom he largely disapproves.

To be brutally candid, I found little to warm to in *Ultimate Weapon*. It lacked the edge, sophistication and reality of a Forsyth and read like a ghastly Boys' Own epic to the point of wondering whether the author was provided with a literary adviser by his publishing house.

Consider this scenario: Our hero Nick and his team are in Baghdad, having been warned that their exercise is "off the books"; anonymity, secrecy and success are their watchwords.

There will be no rescue attempt if it fails. Yet, at the first challenge by an Iraqi policeman at a vehicle security checkpoint, our hero peremptorily draws a weapon and blasts the hapless inquisitor to Jana (Islamic paradise). Hardly low-profile stuff.

Some of the descriptive passages seemed irrelevant and some of the situations and their dialogues seemed incongruous. They left me wondering: "Would this happen in real life?"

The metaphors were risible: "… falling apart like a self-assembled bookshelf", "Luton on a wet Tuesday evening was more fun" and "Jed could see fear written into the sweat already starting to trickle down the side of his cheek".

It may have been my reading of the context but one entry mentioned Indonesia and the Khmer Rouge in the same breath and seemed problematic.

Even allowing for the fact that we are dealing with manly military men in tense situations, and florid language would not be foreign in this atmosphere in a real-life scenario, it was overdone.

The use of "sod", "sodding" "kit", "Rupert(s)", "the Firm" and "the Regiment" may also be British military lingua franca but was so excessive as to lose all dramatic effect, daubed liberally through the text like the work of a crazed painter. It seems our heroes are into plenty of pejorative growling, snapping, snarling and hissing rather than cold, calm analytical statements or dispassionate dialogue.

Typographical mistakes, questionable syntax and grammar and misuse of words did not help. "Slithers" of china, rather than slivers, go flying when a cup is broken.

The prolific use of italics was irksome. It seemed to be used as a device for articulating the innermost thoughts of the characters but not solely for this purpose. It was annoying and confusing at times deciding whether the usage represented thought processes or was merely used for dramatic effect.

So keep your kit packed super Rupert and just soldier on for the Regiment and Firm. And the sake of the literary world.

Ultimate Weapon, Chris Ryan, Century (The Random House Group Ltd.), 423pp, RRP $32.95.

– Barry Rollings