



SUBM.008.0091

POSTED: Story #72348: let\_sydney\_witt

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## Story #72348: let\_sydney\_witt

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Re the letter "Do you know this mans?" (POST, 15?12) which mentions the body autopsied by Lawrence Snook, I was pleased to noite that the writes John Samuels referred to "lifebelts" rather than "lifejackets" mentioned in some previous letters on the Sydney.

I heard ain the thge Royal Australian Navy from 1939 - 45 and during that time I never saw or heard of anyone with a lifejacket with a ships name on it. At the time Sydney was sunk I was serving in HMAS Hobart (sister ship toi Sydney) which was on service wiith the Royal Navey Eastern Mediterranean fleet and subsequently with our forces in the Java Sea battles.

Lifejackets were too big for the many small ladders and spaces we had to negotiate when moving around the shoip or when operating in ther confined spaces of gun turrets and transmitting stations etc.

We were all issued with a simple inflatable vest (of rubber), with a plain black knitted cover, and took this with us whatever vessel we served in from time to time. they were officially referred to as "lifebelts" and by the sailors as "Mae Wests". We were not permitted to blow these up until we were actualt in the water, because of the above mentioned space problems. There was no place on this equipment where one could place an identifying name.

Anyway, secuity as to our ships movements prohibited the use of the ship's name on any clothing or equipment. Even sailors' cap tally bore the plain initials "HMAS", andno reference to the name of the vessel or establishment which was the practice in the early days of the war. For this reason I must question the alleged advice of a body with a lifebelt being identified as a "Sydney lifebelt".

Walter Witt

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