

HMAS SYDNEY II COI
Statutory declaration of Mr Richard Vincent Radcliffe, MID

Commonwealth of Australia

STATUTORY DECLARATION

Statutory Declarations Act 1959

I, Richard Vincent Radcliffe, [REDACTED] retiree, make the following declaration under the Statutory declarations Act, 1959:

1. I was born 3 Nov 1919. I enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve in Jan 1936 and the Royal Australian Navy on 31 Jan 38. My official number is 21825.
2. Annexed to this Statutory Declaration is a copy of my Certificate of Service which lists the ships in which I served. In short, my career included:
 - a. From Jan to Sep 1938, I did initial training at the Flinders Naval Depot at HMAS CERBERUS for recruit training and seaman training. During this time, I did a torpedo course because it involved electrical training and I had done some electrical training in my civilian life;
 - b. on 15 Oct 38, after two weeks in HMAS VOYAGER, I joined HMAS SYDNEY;
 - c. on 27 Feb 41, I left HMAS SYDNEY in Sydney and went to CERBERUS and did the leading torpedo operator's course;
 - d. on Sep 41, I went to Brisbane Naval depot to stand-by HMAS ROCKHAMPTON which was being built and which was commissioned in Jan 42. In ROCKHAMPTON we did convoy duty mainly on the east coast of Australia;

- e. in Jan 43, I transferred to Balmoral Naval Hospital as the Petty Officer in Charge. I manned the anti-aircraft gun when a Japanese aircraft overflew Sydney Harbour;
- f. in April 1943, I joined HMAS NEPAL as its Leading Torpedoman. I served in her until the end of the war. On one occasion, one the torpedo detonators exploded during maintenance which caused one of my mates to lose a hand, another to lose an eye. I carried the second fellow up to the sickbay and slipped in some blood from the first man. This and another event, when *NEPAL almost rolled in huge seas, were extremely traumatic to me and many of my shipmates. I feel as if the trauma of those events has had the effect of reducing my memory of some aspects of my war service;* and
- g. after the war and until my discharge on 30 Jan 50, I served in HMA Ships AUSTRALIA and QUICKMATCH and various shore establishments.

My Service in HMAS SYDNEY

- 3. The Torpedo Department in SYDNEY, like in most warships, was responsible for the electrical system in the ship. We were called torpedomen but our role was more than preparing and manning the torpedos and torpedo tubes. We would also, as part of our duty at sea, be responsible for fixing and maintaining all of the *electrical circuits and appliances throughout the ship.*
- 4. When I first joined SYDNEY, I was a member of the Torpedo Department. Like all newcomers, I was given various introductory jobs which were not to do with torpedos or the electrical system. My first job was as messman to the writers, storeman, stewards and other members of the miscellaneous branch, who were called the square-rigged fellows because of the type of shirt they wore. I would get there meals and then clean up – I was their waiter. That was the case for about *two months.*
- 5. After those two months, I was put onto one of the low-power teams. When on duty, we would be on call to maintain the low-power circuit and the systems that it

powered. Low power electric current was provided in the ship for systems such as the internal telephone system, the gunnery system (powering the Director Control system and the remote control firing of the main guns) and the wireless telegraphy. The types of duties we had can be seen from reading my RAN Trade Certificate which is annexed.

6. I was part of this low-power electricity team until late 1940, when we were still in the Mediterranean. I then changed to one of the torpedo teams working out of the Torpedo Workshop. The Torpedo Workshop was on the deck amidships between both Torpedo Mounts. It was positioned there so that we could take torpedoes out of their tubes and hoist them straight into the workshop. In the Torpedo Workshop, we would obviously maintain and test all aspects of the torpedos and the torpedo tubes. For the tubes, we would check them for such things as their ability to maintain air pressure.
7. My first actions stations position changed a number of times. When first in SYDNEY in Oct 39, at action stations, I was the lifebuoy sentry. This changed in about Jun 40 when I was assigned as the telephone operator in the cabin attached to the main switchboard room. My action stations position change again in Nov 40 when we were in Malta to being part of the Torpedo Party manning the tubes.
8. The two torpedo batteries were abreast of each other and would be manned by two separate teams when the ship went to action stations.
9. As part of coming to action stations, the tubes would be turned outboard. In my experience, I can never remember being at action stations and getting an order for us to stow – that is, turn inboard – our torpedos. We would only ever turn them inboard when we came out of action stations. I can not conceive of an idea for turning inboard the torpedo mounts during action stations.
10. The make-up of the torpedo teams and the side we were on when we went to action stations were often would change about to keep things interesting.



11. At action stations, a Torpedo Gunner's Mate would be in charge of the two crews. Each team would be made up of five men. In each team, a Leading Torpedo Operator would be in the canopy in the middle of the tubes controlling the firing of the tubes. He would be in telephone contact with the bridge and ready to fire the torpedos on the Captain's orders. Another Leading Torpedo Operator would be on the deck behind the tubes, controlling the releasing of safety pins which were fitted to the end of each tube. Then there would be two ratings, each one standing-by two torpedo tubes.

12. The safety pins had been fitted to the tubes on SYDNEY (and I guess ships of similar class) in the late 1930s because there had been a problem with the tubes caused by the firing of the main guns: the percussion from the gunfire used to jar the firing charge in the tubes and negate the pressure build up behind the torpedo, rendering them un-serviceable.

13. The torpedo tubes are stowed fore and aft at cruising stations. At cruising stations, there would be one of the two torpedo teams on duty. These men would usually be working out of the torpedo workshop and maintaining and testing the torpedoes and tubes.

14. Torpedo men, at action stations, would be wearing anti-flash masks and gloves and tin hats (which were always stowed at our action stations position). We also carried our "Mae West" life belts – we did not have to always wear it but had to always had to have it within reach.

15. In November, if we had been on the Australian Station, we would have been in white clothes - number 5 uniforms – white canvas pants or shorts and pull over top. We would wear this at cruising stations and, when we went to action stations, we would wear what ever we had on.

16. Action stations was sounded during the day was by bugle and, by night, a ringing bell sound over the public address system.

17. From memory, under CAPT Collins, there were two main grades of readiness, cruising stations and action stations. Going to and from the Mediterranean, we were pretty relaxed and at Cruising Stations. We would, though, practice going to action stations.
18. Under CAPT Collins, when we went to action station, all of the guns and torpedos were manned with full teams.
19. In the Mediterranean, when we were at sea, we often were at action stations. Also, in the Mediterranean, we had different grades of cruising stations. There were cruising stations where some of the crew (such as seamen and stokers) would be off duty but, when they were off duty, they would still be required to be stationed near some of the guns. This did not apply to the torpedomen. As the seamen branch was broken down into watches, when we were at that state of readiness, there would be a pipe saying, for example, that Red watch relieve White watch.
20. For those of us in the torpedo branch, when we were not at action stations, when we were on duty, we would be working on the torpedos and or doing some electrical repair work in the ship.

Challenges to Unidentified Merchant ships

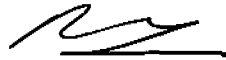
21. I can not recall any specific instance where CAPT Collins had to challenge a merchant ship. Most merchant ships we encountered in the Mediterranean were on convoys. Also, before Nov 40, my action stations position was below deck so I would not have seen any such encounters.
22. After the Mediterranean, I recall going to East Africa. I cannot recall intercepting any ships before then.
23. I recall going to the Seychelles Islands. It looked so beautiful, pristine and so different to the environment that we had just come from. I recall a pipe to the effect that there was a raider in the area and we fuelled up to search for it. I

remember going alongside a tanker-type ship but I did not know whether or not that was for re-fuelling. We were right next to it and we were both stationary. I recall some of us going ashore and we had to walk across the other ship to get to the jetty. We were only there for a couple of days and I do not have a memory of seeing any other ships.

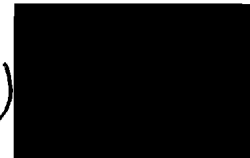
I understand that a person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* and I believe that the statements in this declaration are true in every particular.

Declared at Melbourne on 10th of JUNE 2008

Before me



David Rowatt (Notary Public)



I understand that a person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*, and I believe that the statements in this declaration are true in every particular.

3

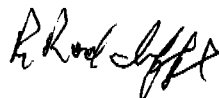
Declared at ⁴ on ⁵ of ⁶

Before me,

7

8

Richard V. Radcliffe



Dated 10-6-08