



# SASC NEWS

**The Newsletter of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club**

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June 2011

# SYDNEY AMATEUR SAILING CLUB

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Honorary Secretary	Peter Chapman
Executive Secretary	Megan Keogh/Judy Wogowitsch
Racing Secretary	Maggie Stewart

**Cover:**

*Lahara* (Mike Warner) on the way to winning the Kelly Cup during the Club Championship race on 16 April  
(Photo Bob Moore)

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## COMING EVENTS

### SATURDAY 18 JUNE 2011

Winter series point score — race 2

### SATURDAY 25 JUNE 2011

Winter series point score — race 3

### SATURDAY 2 JULY 2011

SASC Annual Prizegiving

### SATURDAY 9 JULY 2011

Winter series point score — race 4

### SATURDAY 23 JULY 2011

Winter series point score — race 5

### SATURDAY 20 AND 27 AUGUST 2011

Safety Audits and fire extinguisher service at the Club

### SATURDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2011

Opening Regatta

### SATURDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2011

Lion Island race

### SATURDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2011

First point score race for 2011–2012 season

**NEED  
THE TENDER?**

**Call Mike, Allan or Denis  
on  
0418 678 690**

Sat: 0900-1800  
Sun: 0900-1700

## **SAFETY REQUIREMENTS 2011–2012 SEASON**

Safety Audits will be required for  
Category 7 certification

**SAFETY AUDITS AND FIRE EXTINGUISHER  
SERVICE AT THE CLUB**

**Saturday 20 and 27 August 2011**



Another season ended with a strongly-contested Club Championship. In typical Amateurs style the last boat home was the eventual winner! Congratulations to *Lahara* and Mike Warner, winner of the Kelly Cup for 2010–11. The cover photograph on this edition of *SASC News*, showing *Lahara's* crew relaxing on the stern deck during the race, makes me wonder what I need to do to win this event. (Maybe make his crew an offer they can't refuse?)

The Bob Brown race to Pittwater is traditionally the end of the racing season. This year, unusually, the rain and wind did not arrive until *after* the race and barbeque were over. This was my first chance to carry out the finisher's duties. Richard Harris (the owner of *Friar Tuck* which is moored at the SASC) offered his new Bavaria 36 *Sticky* as the finish vessel as she is kept at Pittwater. The race was my first opportunity to practise my new radio-operator skills, having not long had a licence. It was also a good opportunity to test out the Bavaria's facilities: the barbecue, the rear swimming deck, the hot water shower, the rubber ducky tender for all the rafted-up vessels *and* the single malt that is stored in its own protected spot. The race results show that no one finished within the time limit, so I guess I failed as a starter/finisher. However, the new radio licence got a good work out logging all competitors in and out or returning home. The winner of the Bob Brown was drawn out of a hat and the race was awarded to Dennis Williams on *Paper Moon*. Bob Lawler was an enthusiastic competitor in the Bob Brown for many years and it was a pleasure to have his widow Laureen on hand to present the traditional bottle of rum to Dennis. Bob's son and daughter-in-law, Mick and Sharon, also joined us for the prize giving and barbecue.

The winter race series has commenced. The first race was blessed with wonderful sunny crisp weather and light winds. Because of the skill of the SASC start team most competitors finished when the course was shortened to take account of the prevailing conditions. A lesson other clubs need to learn, perhaps?

The biggest working bee in living memory involving SASC members (and even a number of non members) took place over the first three weekends of the off season on the "Green Shed". The working bee saved the shed from falling into the Harbour and ensured it is a safe place for members to use. An amazing amount of work was completed and a lot of fun was had by all the participants. A huge amount of planning and preparation work was carried out before the working bee. For example, the electrical installation rules have changed so that improved power board mods were required. My admiration and sincere thanks go to Trevor Cosh for his commitment and leadership in this project, he's an Amateurs Clubman par excellence. My thanks also to all those members who gave up some time to come down to Mosman Bay to lend a hand. The community spirit of the Amateurs is the envy of many other clubs around the Harbour.

*Bill Hogan*

# MOSMAN BOATSHED WORK THANKS EVERYONE

June 2011

I would like to thank all the members and non members who attended the working bee and made it such a success. I could easily have ended up at the Green Shed with 15 tonnes of timber, a few helpers and a lot of egg on my face.

It is a big ask to prevail upon people to give up three weekends at a time when there is no racing and most boat owners would rather be working on their yachts to get them ready for the winter series.

In proposing something on this scale there is always the risk that there would be so few starters that the job could not be completed. The response to my initial email setting out the project and requesting assistance was amazing. Within an hour I had a dozen people putting their hand up and we averaged about 26 people with a peak of about 36 actually in attendance. That is some effort and is evidence of the strength of the Amateurs membership and their commitment to the Club.

The camaraderie that was shown during six days of hard work was nothing short of terrific. I am sure many members now know others in the club far better and that can only be good for everyone.

I hope the enthusiasm continues as we have a number of other projects to undertake such as the maintaining of the club facilities, repairing *Jack Millard* and continuing to bring the Green Shed up to scratch. We will have to tackle these in the same manner during the year, although I hasten to add, there is nothing on the horizon of the scale of the job we have just completed.

Once again — thanks to everyone — you make a great team.

*Trevor Cosh*

Photo Peter Wargent



As close as it could get — the timber arriving



Photo Peter Wargent

Are we actually going to use all this?

Day One — the team at work

Photo John Jeremy





Photo Beverley Schurr

Demolition under way

How did this manage to stay up?

Photo Beverley Schurr





No, its not a MasterChef Challenge — the victualing team at work

How many architects does it take to make a good joint? Two, apparently

Photos John Jeremy







The in-water crew adjusting levels

Are you sure its going to fit?

Photos John Jeremy





The new deck taking shape, but Bruce Dover is still in the water

Drilling for the many hundreds of screws to hold it all in place

Photos John Jeremy





The new deck nearly finished

The completed job — better than new

Photos John Jeremy



# THE MAN FROM MOSMAN BOATSHED

*(In tribute to the Working Bee team — with apologies to  
A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson)*

There was movement at the club house, as the email passed around  
That the mighty Mosman job was underway,  
And the SASC workforce — none is better pound-for-pound —  
Should assemble at the boatshed down the Bay.  
Now this massive undertaking would defeat mere mortal blokes,  
But the Amateurs are made of sterner stuff,  
Fifty members marked their diaries and forgot their treasured boats,  
For they knew this epic project would be tough.

And commanding every detail like a General herding tanks,  
Stood our Coshie in his orange overalls,  
He'd planned this operation to the final joist and plank,  
With neat drawings posted on the clubhouse walls.  
No job's too big for Trevor; no disaster can't be mended,  
He'll always bite off more than he can chew,  
For Trev the vision splendid of a Stilson wrench extended  
Is enough to warm his cockles through and through.

Bruce Dover donned his wetsuit and submerged without a sound,  
Checking rotted piles along the Eastern side,  
“Hey, Bruce mate, while you're down there could you take a look  
around?  
We've dropped a one-inch socket in the tide.”  
Mike de Burca prowled the boatshed in his boiler suit of blue,  
Like the 'expert' in an outback shearing team,  
Keeping tools as sharp as razors while he mixed a batch of glue,  
Or lathered up some bolts with Lanolene.

At lunchtime Dal (that well-known chef) cooked up a stream of  
snags,  
To feed the hungry masses in a trice,  
But culinary duties didn't keep him off the fags,  
(Or stop him giving everyone advice).  
The Commodore assumed the role of Bartender-in-Chief,  
Ensuring that the Esky never drained,  
The prospect of a beer gives any tired man relief,  
And raises hopes of fading strength regained.

The *Cherub* lads set up their shop inside that noisy shed  
Building uprights fit to stand the test of time,  
“Where’s that hammer? Where’s that shifter? Is there any more red  
lead?”

While compressors made a constant angry whine.  
The decking crew knew what to do with Robbo in the lead,  
They clamped and drilled at supersonic rate,  
And got their hardwood acres down at such impressive speed,  
It mattered not that half the screws weren’t straight.

Six days was all it really took to see the whole job done,  
Sore backs and joints the only price to pay,  
If truth be told we all agreed those days were damn good fun,  
And more than one of us was heard to say:  
‘Let’s see the Squadron try this — or the CY bloody C,  
Their members wouldn’t cop it in a fit!  
But down our way we know what mighty works can be achieved  
When the Green Street mob decide to do their bit.’

*David Salter*

## **Sydney Amateur Sailing Club**

# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Members  
will be held in the Clubhouse, 1 Green Street, Cremorne on

Wednesday 3 August 2011 at 8.00 pm.

### **BUSINESS**

1. To adopt the Annual Report, Balance Sheet and accompanying statements for the year ended 31 May 2011.
2. To elect Officers and Directors.
3. To elect Auditors. Crowe Horwath, being eligible, offer themselves for election.
4. To transact any other business which may be brought before a General Meeting of Members.

By order of the Board

*Peter Chapman*

Hon. Secretary

# GAFFERS DAY 2011

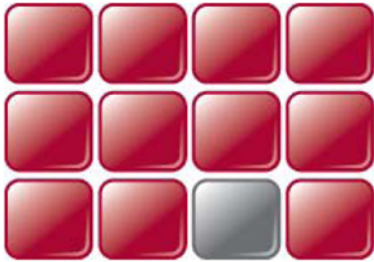
## *A Rally on Sydney Harbour for Classic Yachts and Yachts which Hoist a Spar*

The 2011 Gaffers Day will be held on Sunday 23 October. In keeping with the tradition of this event, fine yachts will be on display at the Club and on the water. It is an event not to be missed.

*Put the date in your diary now and come and join the fun.*

The day will begin with a breakfast on the wharf at the SASC when everyone can inspect the boats on display. There will be the opportunity for those who would like to take part but don't have a classic yacht to join the crew of a competitor. The boats will sail for a start in Athol Bight and return to the Club for a celebration afterwards.

For those who would like to view the event in comfort, the ferry *Proclaim* will sail from Old Cremorne Wharf – complete with food, refreshments and informative commentary.



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The start of the Club Championship race on Saturday 16 April



# CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

June 2011



*Hotspur2 and Supertramp* shortly after the start of the Club Championship race

*Warana* (Fred Bevis), below, won the Brooker Trophy

All photos by John Jeremy





*Clewless?* during the first beat to windward

*Very Tasty* (Chris Sligar) in the pouring rain (below) won the Tara Ipo Trophy

Photos John Jeremy



## SO THERE!

June 2011

The owners of *Cherub*, Peter Scott and Mark Pearse, have both had reports on her conversion to gaff rig published in Scuttlebutt. This has greatly interested me. For more than seventy years yachties have been telling me that gaffers are very inefficient and will not sail to windward. This opinion is almost universal, however until now it has been opinion only.

When *Cherub* had her Bermudan rig and alloy mast *Ranger* was able to beat her more often than not, even though the former is considerably leaner and has had her after deadwood cut away a lot — rig and cut away designed by the legendary Ben Lexcen. *Cherub's* new spars are timber except for the carbon-fibre gaff, timber items by Ian Smith and sails by Ian MacDiarmid. There has been no change at all in the hull, helmsmen or crew.

*Cherub* is about four minutes faster around the course in lighter air and seven or more minutes faster in a fresh breeze. She can point as high as *Ranger* and beats her more often than not on elapsed time. My opinion is that the Bermudan rig is relatively inefficient in fat heavy cruising yachts for several reasons. The *Cherub* experience has converted my opinion into fact.

*Southerly*

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Photo John Jeremy

*Caprice of Huon* before the start. Pity about the cruise boat

# CLASSIC YACHT RALLY

June 2011

The fourth Classic Rally for metre-type yachts organised by the Classic Yacht Association was hosted by the SASC on 30 April. Threatening weather in the morning kept some yachts away and only ten boats took part this year.

The weather also reduced the number of boats coming to the Club for the Concours d'Elegance before the sailing — but *Antara* took the honours.

As usual the start line was set in Athol Bight. The rain kept away but wind in the hour or so before the start was very light and the starters were planning a shortened course unless it improved. Luckily a light easterly came in at just the right time and provided ideal sailing conditions for the classics to display their fine lines.

The race was won by *Erica J* (Les Goodridge) and the competitors retired to the SASC for the usual sausage sizzle and prize giving.

Photo David Salter

*Wathara*, with *Wings* to leeward – *Wathara* began well but faded as the breeze dropped





Photo David Salter

*Erica J, Josephine and Antara at the start*

*Erica J and Josephine seen from Captain Amora*

Photo John Jeremy





Photo David Salter

*Antara* and *Josephine* on the fetch to Obelisk

*Antara* apparently headed to Lord Howe Island (just 430 miles to go, lads!)

Photo David Salter





Photo David Salter

*Josephine* shows the distinctive lines of a true metre boat

*Antara* dicing with *Wings*

Photo David Salter







Photo John Jeremy

*Celeste, Antara and Wings approaching the finish*

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## **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

### **2011–2012 SAILING SEASON**

As has been the practice for the last couple of years, all skippers, or at least one member of their crew, will be required to attend a briefing at the SASC prior to the start of the new season. The briefing will cover the conduct of SASC events, safety issues, Harbour regulations and incident reporting requirements.

Attendance at a briefing will be mandatory. Yachts will not be accepted as entrants in SASC series without evidence that the skipper or at least one of the crew has attended a briefing. Evidence of attendance at a similar pre-season briefing conducted by another Harbour club will, however, be accepted.

It is expected that there will be at least two briefing sessions to provide skippers alternative opportunities to attend. The dates will be well advertised at the Club and to as many members as possible by email.



Photo courtesy Richard Palfreyman

*Endeavour* heads to sea at the start of her round-Australia voyage accompanied by Lasers promoting the Perth 2011 ISAF World Sailing Championships. Three hundred new Lasers for the competition are being built by Performance Sailcraft Ltd on the NSW Central Coast

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## MAY GENERAL MEETING

Some 34 members attended the general Meeting of the Sydney Amateur sailing Club held at the Club on Wednesday 18 May. Thirty seven members sent their apologies.

The Commodore welcomed two new members, Rob Landis and Sally Rice, and presented them with copies of the Club's history *The Amateurs — The Second Century Begins*.

Peter McCorquodale reported on the successful season of sailing noting that there were fifty starters in the Opening Regatta. He thanked Vic Dibben for his generous support with prizes for the event. There were 78 entrants in the main season and the other series conducted were a great success.

In the absence of the Vice Commodore, the Commodore Bill Hogan reported on the boatshed operations and the Rear Commodore reported on clubhouse and social matters.

The main business of the meeting was the consideration of the proposed joining fee and subscriptions for 2011–2012, which were approved by the members present.



## VALE JOHN WARD

June 2011

John Ward, a member of the SASC since 1946, passed away in May. He crewed for his father Wally in SASC races in *Janaway* for some years following the end of World War II — I competed in *Ranger* in the same era. Later John raced at the MHYC in *Janaway* and in time moved to Pittwater from where he did extensive cruising in yachts that he designed himself.

John was made an Honorary Life Member of the Boat Owners' Association a couple of years ago — he was a very good citizen. About three excellent yachts of around forty feet in length were built to his designs. Like Wally he was a quiet reserved man and the yachting fraternity is not very aware of John's design work.

In his day Wally was also an SASC member and a gifted mathematician and his designs were scientifically based. *Janaway*, *Camira* and Graham Nock's *Caress* come to mind as well as the hugely successful Carmen-class ocean racers.

*Southerly*

## VALE AUSTIN GRELLMAN

*Vic Dibben writes:*

SASC Life Member Austin Frederick Werner Grellman passed away recently. He was also a past treasurer of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club.

Austin was a keen sailor and, not long after joining the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club in 1966, was a pointscore winner with a club colleague in a yacht called *Arrowhead*.

Later on he bought a Thunderbird, *Zoe*, and with his wife Judy and children Susie, James and Fiona enjoyed the Club. Austin was a chartered accountant who also had a love, all his life, of antique cars.

Our sympathy goes to his wife Judy and family. The Club was represented at the funeral by Past Commodores Vic Dibben and Laurie Schneider.

*Laurie Schneider writes:*

I first met Austin and Judy about 1970 when they purchased a 26 foot Thunderbird-class sailing yacht. They had previously jointly owned an Arrowhead sailing boat with John Gibson and were members of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club. I also owned and raced a Thunderbird yacht which gave us something in common. About the same time I bought a vintage car and Austin said he had some information about it so my late wife Joan and I visited Austin and Judy to see it. He mentioned that he had two veteran cars and was looking for a person to drive one, a 1913 Crossley, in the upcoming Castrol Bicentennial rally. I offered to drive one — he replied he would talk to Judy about it — and later he accepted my offer. It was a wonderful rally followed by many others and the four of us became very good friends. He joined the SASC in 1966 and became the honorary treasurer in 1970–71. He was also a member of the Vintage Vehicle Club of Australia and became its honorary treasurer.

Austin was a very kind, generous and likeable person.

### HMAS *Manoora* decommissioned in Sydney

After 17 years of dedicated service, the Royal Australian Navy's amphibious transport ship, HMAS *Manoora*, was decommissioned at her homeport, Fleet Base East at Garden Island in Sydney, on Friday 27 May.

Following a time-honoured tradition, the Australian White Ensign was lowered for the last time and handed to Commanding Officer, Commander Stephen Dryden, RAN.

Commander Dryden said that decommissioning the ship was a bitter sweet moment.

"It is always sad to farewell a ship like *Manoora*, which has provided significant amphibious capability to the Australian Defence Force over her many years of service," said Commander Dryden.

"*Manoora* has proven herself to be versatile and resilient, supporting humanitarian aid and disaster missions in the Solomon Islands and East Timor and undertaking active service in the Middle East as part of Operations Slipper and Falconer."

"Her hard work has paved the way for the future of the Navy by providing an understanding of how to carry out amphibious and expeditionary warfare," said Commander Dryden.

"Today it is also important to acknowledge the hard work of the current and former crews who have called *Manoora* home. Their dedication has enabled the platform to respond to situations in war and peace, whenever tasked by Government to do so."

*Manoora* is a helicopter capable amphibious transport ship with a 40 bed hospital, which has seen an army contingent embedded as part of her crew.

HMAS *Manoora* was Flagship of the Australia Day Regatta in 2003 and 2007.

### **SASC ANNUAL PRIZEGIVING**

The annual prizegiving will be held at the SASC Clubhouse,  
1 Green Street, Cremorne on

**Saturday 2 July 2011**

The prizegiving will commence at 1200 sharp and will be  
followed by a 'happy hour' and lunch

**Cost \$50 per head (incl. GST)**

*Put the date in your diary now!*

**Bookings essential — please telephone Megan or Judy on 9953 1433  
no later than Friday 17 June 2011**



RAN Photographs

*HMAS Manoora*

The ship's company of HMAS *Manoora* march off their ship during her decommissioning ceremony on 27 May



## PETTY OFFICER HUMPHRIES AND THE GEORGE MEDAL

The George Medal was established by King George VI in September 1940 primarily to honour civilian acts of courage. However it also served to recognise service personnel for acts of great bravery not conducted in the face of the enemy for which other military awards were not appropriate. When Petty Officer John T. Humphries of the armed merchant cruiser HMS *Kanimbla* was awarded the new medal in early 1942, it was to be the highest decoration awarded to an Australian rating during World War II. Only nine members of the Royal Australian Navy received the George Medal during the conflict; aside from Humphries they were all naval officers [1]. He was decorated for his role in extremely hazardous diving operations whilst undertaking salvage work in Iran during late 1941.

John Humphries was born on 26 October 1903 in Sebastopol, a suburb in the Victorian town of Ballarat. He joined the RAN in July 1918 as a boy seaman in the training ship HMAS *Tingira*, and served through the 1920s in the battlecruiser *Australia*, the sloop *Geranium*, cruisers *Melbourne* and *Sydney*, as well as the destroyers *Anzac* and *Warrego* before discharging as a petty officer in 1928. He then moved to Brisbane and trained as a diver, working on the foundations of the Grey Street Bridge, and later undertook similar work on the Story Bridge where he received high praise for his courage and skill whilst performing this hazardous work. In 1938 he joined the Royal Australian Navy Reserve and conducted periods of training at the Brisbane reserve depot leading up to the outbreak of war. In September 1939 he was called up and drafted to the *Kanimbla* as she prepared for overseas service with the Royal Navy [2].

*Kanimbla* was a 10,985 ton Australian coastal passenger vessel completed in 1936. She was taken over by the British Admiralty upon the outbreak of war and converted to an armed merchant cruiser. Fitted with seven 6-inch low angle and two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns, she was manned almost entirely by men of the RAN Reserve. On 25 August 1941 *Kanimbla* found herself spearheading the capture of the Iranian Persian Gulf port of Bandar Shahpur as Britain and the Soviet Union mounted a joint invasion of the country. This British Empire operation, led by *Kanimbla*'s Commanding Officer, Captain William L.G. Adams, RN, targeted five German and three Italian merchant ships which had been sheltering in neutral Iranian waters. Codenamed BISHOP, the operation was an outstanding success with four of the German and all three Italian merchantmen being captured along with two Iranian gunboats. All of the Axis ships had attempted to scuttle themselves, but determined salvage attempts by the boarding parties saw all but one saved — the German *Weissenfels* sank in deep water.

The Italians at Bandar Shahpur had opted to destroy their ships by setting them alight as best they could, while the Germans had opted for flooding, using demolition charges and by opening sea-water inlet valves. At this point in the war, with Allied merchant shipping losses mounting, mainly to German U-boats in the Atlantic Ocean, the capture of enemy merchantmen to be pressed into British service had assumed considerable importance. The army's capture of Bandar Shahpur had been a secondary consideration to taking the enemy ships intact. The crew of the Hansa Line's freighter *Hohenfels* nearly succeeded in their intent to sink the ship as *Kanimbla*'s Number 1 Boarding Party battled to disarm explosive

charges and isolate seawater inlet valves in the darkened and flooding engine room. This episode saw Engineer Lieutenant Colin Clark, Engine Room Artificer Frank Newman and Leading Stoker James Watson all Mentioned in Despatches. As the engineering section of the boarding party slowly lost their battle against rising waters in the engine room, the remainder on deck managed to raft two of the force's tugs alongside the sinking ship and drive her upon a sandbank at the harbour's edge. In the days after the assault, the captured Axis merchantmen that had remained afloat were either steamed under their own power or towed to the Indian port of Karachi. Meanwhile *Kanimbla's* ship's company set to work in *Hohenfels* on what would be the largest salvage job ever attempted under naval direction to that time, there being no chance of contracting the task out to specialists [3].

*Hohenfels* was a sturdily built 7,900 ton diesel-powered cargo ship completed in 1938. Despite having been trapped in Iran by a British blockade since the beginning of the war with its cargo of 7,500 tons of Ilmenite sand (used for case hardening steel), the ship had been very well maintained. She lay semi-submerged in a precarious position on the edge of a steep bank of apparently hard clay with very deep water under her stern. At high tide the water level rose above her main deck flooding the fore and aft well decks. When her crew had tried to sink the ship, the scuttling charges that had been detonated in the holds were not well sited and did little more damage than loosening a few rivets. A small fire started in the engine room under a fuel tank had been easily extinguished by the Australian sailors. The opening of sea water inlet valves and the throwing of covers into the bilge had been much more successful [4]. Salvaging the ship would require significant diving work to enable her to be patched, pumped out and refloated. The salvage crew was led by *Kanimbla's* engineer, Engineer Commander James McGuffog RANR(S), and they would live aboard *Hohenfels* in foetid conditions until the job was done.

Despite not actually being qualified as a naval diver, Petty Officer Humphries volunteered to assist with the operation. Other divers were involved, but only he and, on an occasion when Humphries was ill, Royal Navy diver Able Seaman C. Pask of the sloop HMS *Falmouth*, was willing to dive in the completely flooded engine room. Conditions for diving were treacherous; the water visibility in the crowded engine room being next to zero thanks to mud, leaking oil fuel and little natural light. Humphries had to descend into the space using traditional naval service diving gear comprising a steel helmet, diving suit, lead boots and belt with a hose to the hand-operated air pump on the surface. The self-contained diving equipment which would have been appropriate for this work was not available. He had

Diving on  
*Hohenfels*



**SASC NEWS** no communications with his attendants whatsoever after reaching the first grating and turning to go down the second ladder. He was under no illusions that if his air supply should become fouled as he made his way through the darkened obstacle course of *Hohenfels*' engine room, no one would know and his survival would be highly unlikely.

The German engineers had managed to open 13 individual valves allowing seawater to flood the engine room. Covers from ballast valve boxes and bilge suction valves for the five holds in the ship had been removed and thrown out of sight in the bilges. Both port and starboard sea water cooling injection valves were jammed open. Number 1 Boarding Party had managed, against the odds, to partially close off four of these flooding points along with securing the watertight door to the shaft tunnel but the majority was going to have to be closed by divers before pumping could be effective. Humphries' descent was down a series of three long ladders to the top platform at the after end of the engine room then forward along the length of the compartment before going down two short ladders on either side to the bottom platform. At least 120 feet of air hose and shot rope was required to be paid out in order to allow Humphries to reach the bowels of the ship. He was the only diver able to make it that far. During each dive, Humphries made his way down the ladders between the two main engines and around the myriad equipment and fittings to locate the valves and covers before replacing and securing them.

Some valves needed to be plugged, while in the case of the main seawater cooling injection valves, plates had to be patched over their access gratings on the outside of the ship's hull. The actual valves in the engine room were in such positions behind machinery as to be inaccessible to a man in full diving gear. In order to fashion plates to cover the approximately two feet by three feet steel gratings, a template of the hull shape was created by Humphries so *Kanimbla*'s shipwrights could manufacture the required steel coverings. In the words of Frank Newman who also assisted in the salvage operations: "Now, this guy had to take all of that gear down, place it down there, and he had to lie with half his face in the mud and ... place [the] plate up, put the hooks through the grating ... through the plate ... [and] have the grommet in between and then the nuts on the outside ... he did that job and it was brilliant [5]."

Working on the barnacle-encrusted hull resulted in severe lacerations to the hands of all the divers which soon became septic. To make matters worse, all the diving suits were now suffering from serious leaks as the oil in the engine room caused them to perish.

Humphries dived within *Hohenfels*' engine room for lengthy periods a total of 12 times, fully aware that he was taking his life in his hands on each occasion, he also dived in the ship's holds to ensure that the bilge lines were firmly sealed in each. Aside from work in *Hohenfels*, Humphries undertook remarkably good work in another German freighter, the *Marienfels*. In his report of the salvage at the end of the operation, Captain Adams said of Humphries' work, "It is almost impossible to imagine, without actually seeing this congested engine-room, the astonishing and daring feats he performed" and "above all else, this personal courage ... is only comparable in my view, with that of those men who work in bomb destruction squads in England [6]."

*Hohenfels* was eventually pumped out and re-floated on 28 September before being manoeuvred alongside *Kanimbla* at Bandar Shahpur's main jetty to commence unloading and



preparations for towing. She finally left the Iranian port on 11 October 1941, arriving in Karachi nine days later. The ship was repaired and employed in assisting the Allied war effort under British and later Dutch control for the duration of hostilities, eventually being broken up in Hong Kong during 1962 [7].

Following the operation, Captain Adams recommended that Humphries be awarded the rating of a Naval Diver by the Australian authorities, while the Commander-in-Chief East Indies, Vice Admiral Geoffrey S. Arbuthnot RN, recommended direct to the Admiralty that he be considered for an immediate award due to his ‘gallant work’ involving ‘a grave risk of death’. Petty Officer Humphries was awarded the George Medal on 17 February 1942, the citation reading “For skill, and undaunted devotion to duty in hazardous diving operations.” He was also rated as Diver 1st Class, backdated to 25 August the previous year, and later drafted ashore to HMAS *Moreton* in Brisbane in December 1942. Humphries left the Navy in May 1946, living the rest of his life in Brisbane until his death at age 83 on 23 August 1987 [8].

*Peter Cannon*

## References

1. Two medals to RAN and seven to RANVR personnel. Of the latter, three subsequently won bars to the medal.
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3. Owen E Griffiths, *Cry Havoc*, LC Publishing Company, Sydney, 1949, p. 4; and NAA: MP1049/5, Item 2026/3/455, Persian Gulf Operations, Report of Proceedings (RoP) of Senior Officer Force ‘B’ from 25th August 1941 to 5 October 1941.
4. NAA: MP1049/5, Item 2026/3/455, Report on Salvage Operations carried out on the British, ex German, Prize ‘HOHENFELS’; and RoP of Senior Officer Force ‘B’ from 10th August 1941 to 25th August 1941.
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8. NAA: MP1049/5, Item 2026/3/455, Minutes from Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station to the Secretary to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, 19 November 1941, and to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 18 November 1941; NAA: A6770, Item Humphries, John Thomas; and Gilbert, *Australian Naval Personalities*, p. 111.

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## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Richard Cranna  
David Hall  
Peter Robinson

We regret to advise the passing of the following Life Members:

Austin Grellman  
Garth Lukins  
John Ward  
John Winn

## SASC SHOP

*(AKA The Office)*

The following items are available in stock:

Racing 'A' Flag	\$10.00
Burgee – Small – 25 cm x 42.5 cm	\$21.00
Burgee – Medium – 30 cm x 54 cm	\$30.00
Burgee – Large – 60 cm x 90 cm	\$60.00
Burgee – X Large – 160 cm x 290 cm	\$132.00
YA Blue Book (2009–2012)	\$37.50
Laminated Course Map	\$5.00
SASC Patch	\$6.00
Club Tie	\$25.00
Tee Shirt	\$25.00
Polo Shirt	\$36.00
Rugby Top	\$49.00
Sweat Shirt	\$40.00

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The next SASC News will be the August 2011 edition. Contributions from members, which are always welcome, should reach the editor by Friday 29 July 2011. Contributions can be in hard copy or sent by email. Photographs are also very welcome.





Photo courtesy John Maclurcan

Classic Rally participant *Josephine* competed in the 1953 Sydney to Hobart yacht race, coming 10th in 4 days, 6 hours and 48 minutes. She is seen here leaving Shell Cove for the start



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