



CALL THE HANDS



OCCASIONAL PAPER 7

Issue No. 8

May 2017

HMAS VAMPIRE MEMORIAL ADDRESS 9 APRIL 2017

On 9 April 1942, HMAS VAMPIRE (I) was sunk by Japanese bombers in the vicinity of Batticaloa, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) with the loss of eight lives. This action was commemorated in a ceremony on Garden Island in Sydney to mark the 75th anniversary of VAMPIRE's loss. The following keynote address was prepared by the Naval Historical Society of Australia and delivered by Captain Paul Martin, OAM, RAN Retd at the invitation of the Royal Australian Navy.

VAMPIRE was one of the Royal Navy *V and W* class of destroyers which were transferred to the RAN in 1933. The other vessels transferred included VENDETTA, VOYAGER and WATERHEN.

VAMPIRE was built in Cowes, Isle of Wight, England and launched in 1917. She served with the Grand Fleet during World War I and when transferred she was commissioned as HMAS VAMPIRE.

During the 1930s she carried out routine duties including being training destroyer attached to Flinders Naval Depot, now HMAS CERBERUS.

On the outbreak of World War II she was despatched to Fremantle, then to Singapore and later to the Mediterranean. There she became part of the "Scrap Iron Flotilla" which was under the command of Commander Hector Waller, RAN.

VAMPIRE saw extensive action in the Mediterranean theatre being involved in many and various actions. The actions included support to Suda Bay in Crete; support to the 6th Division in the capture of Tobruk and later as part of the "Tobruk Ferry Service" and later many convoy escort duties where she withstood many air attacks.

By mid 1941 the almost constant action and service were beginning to take its toll on the ship. Her speed had been reduced and an extensive refit was necessary. She was withdrawn from service in the Mediterranean and arrived in Singapore in June 1941 for a much needed refit. The period allowed for extensive changes to her AA armament. The four 4-inch gun mountings remained. During the refit period LCDR J.A.T. Walsh, RAN was relieved in command by CMDR W.A.T. Moran, RAN.

During the refit Japanese forces began their invasion of South-East Asia and a new war scenario was about to begin for VAMIRE.

On 10 December 1941, VAMPIRE was part of the destroyer escort screen for HM Ships PRINCE of WALES and REPULSE when the Battleship and Battle Cruiser were sunk off the east coast of Malaya by Japanese aircraft. VAMPIRE rescued 225 men and later landed them in Singapore.

VAMPIRE was later part of the RAN's first offensive action against the Japanese when, with HMS THANET, she set out to attack a concentration of enemy transports landing on the east coast of Malaya. HMS THANET was sunk and VAMPIRE managed to score shell hits on a destroyer before escaping under the cover of darkness.

In February 1942 she was undertaking convoy duties and was attached to the East Indies Station based at Trincomalee in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka.

Japanese air raids were now expected in the East Indies area and the first raid occurred on 9 April 1942,

VAMPIRE had been assigned as escort to the small aircraft carrier, HMS HERMES. Both ships had sailed earlier and at the time of the Japanese attack on Trincomalee both ships were to the South. When the raid ended they altered course to the North to return to Trincomalee. During this passage they were sighted by search aircraft from one of the Japanese ships.

A force of bombers and fighters were launched from the Japanese force to attack HERMES and VAMPIRE. The waves of dive bombers quickly scored hits and HERMES capsized and sank. The bombers then made for VAMPIRE. Two near misses shook the ship badly and she was then stopped by a direct hit in the boiler room. Four hits followed in quick succession and CMDR Moran ordered "Abandon Ship". According to post-war Japanese reports, VAMPIRE was attacked with 16 250 kilo bombs, a number of them being direct hits.

Commander Moran, who was last seen on the bridge, was lost and seven other sailors lost their lives. VAMPIRE sank about 1100 on 9 April 1942.

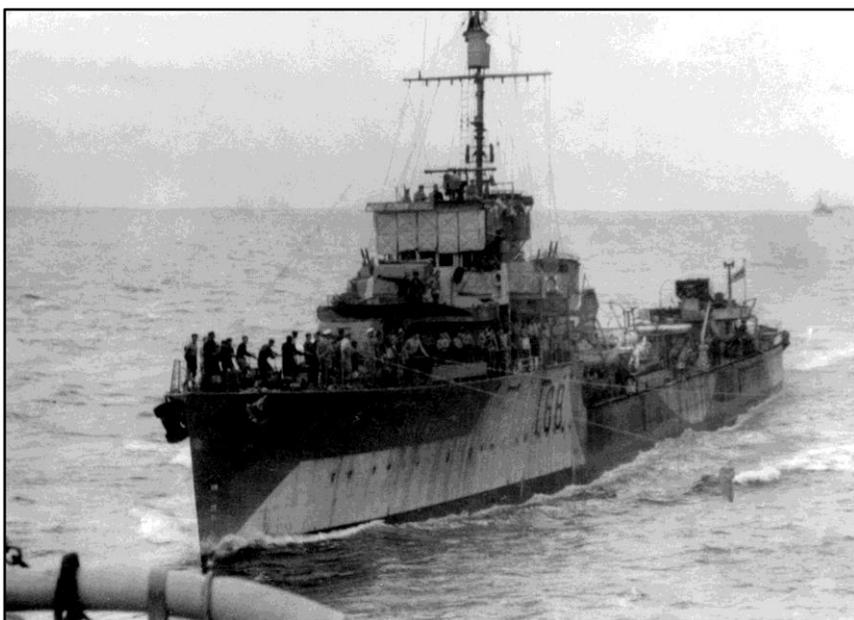
The 590 survivors of VAMPIRE and HERMES were rescued by the merchant ship VITA and were landed in Colombo.

Today we remember and commemorate the loss of HMAS VAMPIRE and pay tribute to those of her ship's company who lost their lives.

We remember:

Commander W.A.T. Moran, RAN
CPO Stoker R.E. Lord
PO Stoker J.V.A. Carey
PO Stoker R.A.H. McDonald
Stoker G.H. Williams
Stoker J.H. Hill
Signalman A.S. Shaw, Royal Navy

May they rest in peace



HMAS VAMPIRE (1) with camouflage scheme 1940