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War casualties and the Merchant Navy
After the Battle of Terrigal:
Merchant Navy losses off the New South Wales coast in World War II

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Introduction

On the morning of 9 September 1939, six days after World War II had been declared, two young boys reported seeing a submarine surfaced off Terrigal, a small holiday town on the New South Wales Central Coast. The brand-new destroyer **HMAS Stuart**, which was on anti-submarine patrol off Sydney, sped to the scene and detected what seemed to be a moving submarine.

Naval authorities closed the ports of Newcastle, Sydney and Kembla to outbound traffic. During the night **HMAS Stuart** sent down a series of depth charges. The next morning a submerged object was seen, and navy divers went down to inspect it. They found that the object was a group of rocks with sheer faces four metres high, causing tidal eddies which had given the effect of movement on Stuart's detection gear. This action, which had disturbed the sleepers of Terrigal, has been called 'the Battle of Terrigal' (Gill, 1957:69-70).

But false alarms ceased to be amusing a year or two later, because the Central Coast of New South Wales was the site of several merchant ship sinkings, and more than one lifeboat was to come ashore with shocked and damaged survivors not so far from Terrigal.

Of the 1800-odd shipwrecks off the New South Wales Coast, 19 are the remains of merchant vessels sunk by enemy action in World War II. All but two were sunk by torpedoes or shells from submarines. The other two were blown up by mines. They ranged from a British cargo ship of more than 8000 tons gross tonnage, to a little fishing trawler of 223 tons. More than 150 seamen died in them, from 15-year-old deckhands to master mariners in late middle age. Most had no training for war. Many were pursuing the normal course of their livelihood. When the Japanese swept down in 1942 through Singapore and Darwin and even into Sydney Harbour, they targeted the merchant ships off eastern Australia for submarine attack. Although most ships were 'Defensively Equipped', the guns mounted on them were not very useful against submarines. They had only one or two naval gunnery ratings trained to use them, directing an amateur gun crew drawn from the ship's company (Marcus, 1986: xi).

While 19 vessels were actually sunk off New South Wales, the number of ships attacked, and the deaths and injuries suffered, were far greater. The impact of the war on merchant seamen was little known except to people in the towns along the coast where it happened, and to the families and friends of the men whose lives were so imperilled.

In all, 30 merchant ships were lost by enemy attack in Australian waters, with 654 deaths.

About 200 were Australian merchant seamen (Gill, 1968:557). Because of wartime secrecy, and because it had no institutional structure as the armed services did, and perhaps also because of certain derogatory attitudes to merchant seamen in the community (Fitzpatrick & Cahill, 1981:161-162) **the merchant navy's wartime role and losses were not so much forgotten, as never really recognised.**

But in recent years its story has had belated acknowledgement.

Mine victims

Despite submarine 'sightings' like the one at Terrigal, it was unlikely that German submarines would be found so far from their bases in 1939. But German mines were another matter. In October 1940 the German auxiliary cruiser **Pinguin** with a captured Norwegian tanker, the **Storstad**, laid a number of minefields off the eastern

and southern coasts of Australia. There were four fields between Newcastle and Sydney. Their first victims, and the first merchant ship losses of eastern Australia, were the British cargo ship **Cambridge** off Wilson's Promontory, on November 7, and the day after, the American merchant ship **City of Rayville** off Cape Otway. This was also the first American casualty of World War II, in which the United States was not yet involved (Gill, 1957:271-276).

Then a month later, on 5 December 1940, the first Australian-registered merchant ship to be lost sailed into a mine off Norah Head, not far north of Terrigal. It was a small intrastate motor ship of the North Coast Steam Navigation Company, the **Nimbin**, of 1052 tons gross tonnage (Fig.1). It was on its way from Coffs Harbour back to its home port, Sydney, with a cargo of three-ply timber packed in bundles and a large number of pigs. One third of the ship was blown away and it sank in three minutes. Seven men were killed. The remaining thirteen clung to bundles of plywood which made convenient rafts, while the terrified pigs swam round squealing and trying to get onto the rafts but slipping off. After some hours an air force plane saw the survivors and directed another coastal ship, the **SS Bonalbo**, to pick them up. An ambulance met them and rushed the injured to hospital. The rest, in clothes borrowed from their rescuers on the Bonalbo, 'were sent to their homes in motor cars'.

Most of the **Nimbin's** crew were old employees of the North Coast Steam Navigation Company. Captain Bryanston and the Chief Officer Charles Chapman, who both died, had been with the company for 20 years and 26 years respectively (Sydney Morning Herald 6.12.1940).



Figure 1: The North Coast 'butter boat' **Nimbin** was the first Australian casualty of World War II. (Sydney Heritage Fleet)

The newspaper reported the official statement that the ship had been destroyed by an internal explosion. Despite the loss of the two ships near Melbourne the month before, the Navy did not at first believe there could be a mine so far north, until a minesweeper which was sent to the scene discovered the minefield.

This was systematically cleared over the following months (Fitzpatrick & Cahill, 1981: 119).

But four months later on 26 March 1941, the Red Funnel Company's fishing trawler **Millimul**, of 287 tons, fished up a submerged mine in its trawl not far from where the **Nimbin** had gone down. The mine exploded and the ship sank in a minute. Five of the crew got into a lifeboat and stayed with the wreckage all night in the hope of finding the other seven men, including the captain, whose cries they had heard in the darkness. But in the morning, there was no sign of them, so they rowed and sailed all day toward the coast. After 18 hours they were picked up by the sixty-miler **Mortlake Bank** (Sydney Morning Herald 29.3.1941).

The men and boys in the **Nimbin** and **Millimul**, like many other merchant seamen to be blown abruptly out of their ships in the war, were not military men, but were pursuing the normal course of their work, as they had done for years.



Figure 2: Merchant shipping casualties in Australian and Territorial waters, resulting from enemy action. Distribution of casualties. (Butlin & Schedvin, 1977:241, Australian War Memorial)

Victims of submarines

It is well known that merchant ships are a prime target for destruction in war. A crew member of a German raider in the southern oceans later said that their mission was to destroy merchant ships in the British trade routes, and to avoid engagement with naval ships at all costs. 'Every ounce of petroleum, every grain of wheat, every piece of war equipment that we could stop reaching the enemy would be so much nearer to starving [them] into submission' (McGirr, 1989:26). And trained officers and crews were just as valuable as ships to their governments. In 1942 there was a foreseeable shortage of Australian cargo shipping, after numerous vessels had been requisitioned for both Australian and American naval or military services. Supplies of coal, coke and iron ore to their various points of consumption looked uncertain, while cargo for Western Australia which was dependent on the eastern states for manufactured goods, was accumulating. The Australian government strove to find charter ships and institute shipbuilding programs in the face of impending crisis (Butlin & Schedvin, 1977:215-246). The aim of destroying merchant shipping was evident in the campaign of Japanese submarine attacks off Australia's east coast in 1942 and 1943.

A map of merchant ship casualties of enemy action in World War II (Fig.2) shows the distribution clearly: around Darwin in the 1942 bombings, around New Guinea and the islands where ships were supplying fighting troops, and by far the greatest concentration around the New South Wales coast, where supplies vital for steel and munition production were concentrated. This map comes from the official history of World War II. It is not from Hermon Gill's two volumes on the Navy, but from the volumes on the War Economy by Butlin and

Schedvin, which devotes a large chapter to Shipping as an industry. It does not look at individual ships or events but at large scale statistics and tonnages.

Hermon Gill, on the other hand, does not treat the merchant navy separately, but only in passing as it occurs in the navy's story. His history contains a one-page rundown on the merchant navy, and the only list of merchant ship losses is an incomplete one in a footnote (Gill, 1957:557n). Somehow the merchant navy's story was never officially told.

A map showing east coast casualties (Fig. 3) was first published by the Seamen's Union of Australia in the Seamen's Journal, some time after the end of the war. It shows ships attacked and damaged, as well as sunk. The title, 'War Secrets Revealed' alludes to the fact that with a few exceptions, the names of ships and the locations involved were never given in newspaper reports of wartime casualties. This may partly be why some of the worst tragedies, such as the sinking of some of the iron ore ships, were not better known. A newspaper report of a spate of losses used standard wording of the time: 'the five vessels lost were one large and two small Australian freighters, one medium sized American freighter, one small Norwegian freighter.'¹ Some survivors were brought to an Australian port. But curiously, the names of crew members and even their street addresses were freely given in listing the dead or interviewing survivors (Sydney Morning Herald, 8.5.1943).



Figure 3: Seamen's Union diagram of merchant ship casualties. (Fitzpatrick & Cahill, 1981:117, Maritime Union of Australia)

Despite a few small inaccuracies the map of merchant ship casualties produced by the Seamen's Union of Australia seems to be the first published compilation of its kind. It has been reproduced in several later sources, and was used on a plaque attached to the Seamen's Memorial, erected on the initiative of the then Seamen's Union of Australia with support from BHP Pty Ltd, outside the Australian National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour, Sydney, in 1992.

The map exhibits the broad sequence of losses off the coast. Apart from the two vessels mined in 1940 and 1941 there were really two distinct waves: the first followed or was part of the Japanese sweep south which

began at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and reached Sydney with the midget submarine attack on 31 May 1942. In the small hours of 3 June BHP's **Iron Chieftain** was sunk with 12 dead, the next day Scott Fell's **Iron Crown** was sunk with 38 lives lost, both en route for Whyalla (Gill, 1968:75-76). On 14 June the Panamanian steamer **Guatemala**, struggling to keep up with a convoy to Melbourne, was hit but its 51-man crew were saved (Gill, 1968:78). On 20 July the Greek steamer **George S. Livanos** was sunk off Jervis Bay with all crew saved, and a few hours later the **Coast Farmer** (ironically, built in the US by the Submarine Corporation) was torpedoed in the same position, with one man killed. Two days later the American Liberty ship **William Dawes** was torpedoed off Tathra Head (Gill, 1968:158). A sad loss on 3 August was the little Sydney fishing trawler **Dureenbee**, attacked by a surfaced Japanese submarine with shell and machine gunfire near Moruya, killing three men. The submarine circled the trawler three times before departing. The smashed-up wreck was eventually washed up at Moruya Heads (Gill, 1968:159-160).

After this there was a lull until January and February 1943, when the Union Steamship Company's **SS Kalingo** was torpedoed off Sydney, BHP's **Iron Knight** was picked off in a convoy near Montague Island and the American Liberty ship **Starr King** was sunk off Sydney (Gill, 1968: 251-254). It was said that seamen called the iron ore ships 'death ships' because they sank so quickly. They believed that the Japanese could single them out even in convoys (Fitzpatrick & Cahill, 1981:156). Then from mid-April to mid-June there was a last terrible spate of seven sinkings by Japanese torpedoes, beginning with the ore-laden **Recina** off Gabo Island on 11 April and ending with the **Portmar** on 16 June. It included one of the most shocking sinkings of the war in Australia, that of the **hospital ship Centaur** east of Queensland on May 14 (Gill, 1968:254-259).

There must have been many people afloat in lifeboats around the world at this time. On 7 May, the Sydney Morning Herald noted that a 'shark repeller' had been discovered by the US navy, which 'drives sharks away from men adrift' - apparently a supply meeting a demand.

The final loss off eastern Australia was the American Liberty ship **Robert J. Walker**, torpedoed by a lone German U-boat off Bermagui late on Christmas Eve 1944. The ship was floating holed and rudderless, waiting for help, but another torpedo smashed into it in the small hours of Christmas Day and another at 6 a m, when the 69-man crew finally abandoned the ship which now had huge holes through the hull. All but two men were saved, rescued from boats and rafts early on Boxing Day, two hours after their ship had finally sunk. Ironically, the **commander of the submarine U862** was a former merchant ship officer who had sailed in Australian waters before the war (Gill, 1968:548-553).

Human losses

It is difficult to put a number on Australian merchant mariners killed in World War II. Seamen moved from ship to ship and went all over the world. Australians were present in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic convoys, while many of the merchant seamen killed in Australian waters were of other nationalities: Greek, Chinese, American, Yugoslav, Norwegian and Dutch seamen all served in ships on the Australian coast, many being refugees or caught here, together with their ships, when war was declared. The number of dead in the 19 ships actually sunk off the New South Wales coast was more than 150. But many more merchant ships were damaged by enemy action with loss of life.

For instance, the Adelaide Steamship Company's cargo ship **Allara** is just one example of a ship which suffered a drastic attack, but does not figure in the list of ships lost (Fig. 4). With a cargo of sugar from Cairns, the **Allara** was 40 miles off Newcastle when a torpedo blew most of the stern and the propeller away in the pre-dawn hours of 23 July 1942. Five men were killed and eight injured.

The crew abandoned ship but returned on board when the **Allara** stayed afloat. It was towed into Newcastle (Marcus, 1986:128-130). According to the Seamen's Union, no medical help was given to the wounded until 18 hours after the explosion. The Union later applied pressure to improve the provision of medical aid for injured merchant seamen. (Fitzpatrick & Cahill, 1981:145).



Figure 4: The Allara, when towed into Newcastle. (Australian War Memorial 305777)

The official war history gave the number of dead resulting from submarine attack on the east coast as 467. It gave the number for the 30 ships destroyed by submarines on the entire Australia Station as 654, of whom 200 were Australian (Gill, 1968:557). The published history of the Seamen's Union of Australia, however, gave a figure of 386 Australian merchant seamen dead, from all ships including foreign ships, and from all causes, including deaths among prisoners of war. The authors said that this meant that one in every eight Australian merchant seamen, or 12.5 per cent, had died as a result of wartime sea service (Fitzpatrick & Cahill, 1981:164). But the McGirr Inquiry into the Needs of Australian Mariners, conducted by the Department of Repatriation in 1989, found that five percent of Australian merchant seamen had died, and that this was the same as the casualty rate in the RAN. The report noted that there was no definitive source of statistics about Australian merchant mariners killed in the war, but that the Australian War Memorial had compiled a list of 520 names of Australian merchant mariners who had died, and names were still being added (McGirr, 1989:30-31).

These rates of course only look at deaths. The number of injuries, some very severe, will never be known. And there was another, indirect, layer of casualties from the additional dangers of wartime conditions to merchant seamen. The incidence of collisions and other accidents was greatly increased.

After collisions ships were not allowed to heave to, or use searchlights to find survivors. Under wartime regulations ships had to travel at night with a minimum of lights, and were not allowed to delay outside harbour entrances, but they did not gain more navigational aids to compensate. After the loss of **SS Orungal** on rocks off Barwon Heads in 1940 the master was absolved from blame and the court recommended the addition of equipment which would allow the crew to find the depth of water without reducing speed (Broomham, 1991:129). Again, after a collision in Port Phillip Bay between the **Iron Monarch** laden with coal and a motor vessel **Empire Strength**, in 1943, in which both ships suffered substantial damage, the **Iron Monarch** was held responsible but the master was exonerated from blame. The court recommended that large vessels in the channel should be in charge of a sea pilot whether or not the master held pilotage exemption, because 'the Masters of such vessels are working, during wartime, under great strain and are not to be reasonably expected to be able to withstand the strain at the end of long periods of extraordinary physical effort and anxiety' (Riley, 1992:149).

Defensively equipped

From the start of the war, merchant shipping was controlled by the Shipping Control Board, and ships were defensively armed. Large passenger ships like the **Kanimbla**, **Duntroon**, **Manoora** and **Westralia** were converted as armed cruisers. They continued to be crewed by merchant navy crews, but the guns were operated by Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship gunnery ratings provided from the RAN Reserve. Known as DEMS, this service comprised naval reserve ratings who were assigned to most merchant ships over 1200 tons. One or two DEMS ratings were appointed depending on the size of the ship, and they were assisted by a gunnery crew drawn from the ship's company. There was a three-day gunnery training course for merchant seamen, and an extra payment of sixpence (five cents) per day. Unfortunately, the guns mounted on cargo ships were most useful against air or surface attack from the air, and in some theatres of war they were used to very good effect. But for the submarine attacks off the east coast of Australia they were less useful, despite many instances where submarines were chased off or torpedoes destroyed.

The story of DEMS is basically the story of the merchant navy in World War II. Fortunately, an excellent account was written by a former DEMS rating, Alex Marcus (1986). By compiling the personal stories of as many individuals as he could trace, he incidentally produced one of the few collected sources on the Australian merchant navy in World War II.

Merchant ships were strengthened and fitted with gun platforms, while ships built as part of the wartime shipbuilding programme were better equipped for defence. The **Iron Monarch** (Fig. 5) entered service in 1943, one of two new ore carriers built by BHP at its Whyalla shipyards for its own trades, carrying materials essential in munitions and industrial production. Like BHP's other Chieftain-class vessels, the **Iron Monarch** was eventually fitted with a four-inch (12-pound) and a three-inch gun, for air and surface attacks, three Oerlikon guns, two sets of rockets and a set of fast aerial mines. It had two mounted machine guns, an anti-aircraft kite, and paravanes and degaussing for protection against mines. Rafts were fitted on sloping skids for quick launching - it was these rafts which enabled some of the seamen from the ill-fated **Iron Chieftain** and **Iron Knight** to survive. The Navy wanted BHP to fit their ships with depth charges as well, but BHP thought the vessels already at the limit of what they could take. But depth charges would probably have been more useful than some of the anti-aircraft arms. Like naval ships, the ore carriers were painted grey and did not show their names (Riley, 1992: 49-52).

Convoys

The convoy system with armed escorts was hastily instituted on 8 June 1942, after the midget submarine raid on Sydney and the loss of the **Iron Chieftain** and the **Iron Crown**. Ships of more than 1200 tons and under 12 knots speed were sailed in weekly convoys on the main coastal routes between Brisbane and Melbourne, with at least two anti-submarine escorts and air cover. They had to be able to maintain seven knots. Ships smaller, slower or faster than these sailed independently but had to zigzag in coastal waters, reefs permitting (Gill, 1968:77). It was only four days after the convoys began that the **Guatemala** was torpedoed straggling behind the second convoy from Newcastle to Melbourne. This happened soon after one in the morning off Broken Bay, but the ship's entire complement had time to get away in lifeboats before the ship sank, and were picked up by a naval ship and landed in Sydney (Gill, 1968:78).

A Confidential Mercantile Convoy form filled out by the master of the **Iron Monarch** on 2 April 1943 (Fig. 6) showed that the ship carried a complement of 50 - with 8 gunners in addition, which seems unusual. It had a maintainable speed of 10 knots and was carrying a cargo of ironstone from Whyalla. The form appears to have been filled out as a rough copy, and kept by the master, probably contrary to regulations. The **Iron Monarch** was unscathed on the convoy from Melbourne to Newcastle, but the Yugoslav steamer **Recina**, serving the BHP trades under Shipping Control Board arrangements, and carrying ironstone in the same convoy, was sunk off Gabo Island on 11 April with 22 lives lost (Riley, 1992:53). The convoy system continued until 1944 with some suspensions during apparent lulls between Japanese attacks. It was unwieldy and slowed down cargo movement, and it was no proof against torpedo attack, especially with ships which fell behind. But it does seem to have had the advantage that the crews of torpedoed ships in convoys had more chance of being picked up and saved.

Men of the Merchant Navy

What sort of men were the merchant seamen who had these experiences? Most were ordinary everyday seamen, untrained for war, and unprepared for what befell them - usually an explosion in the middle of the night. There were countless anecdotes of courage, distress and fortitude. Wireless Operator S. F. Stafford went down with the **Iron Chieftain** in the icy waters of a June night while continuing to signal the ship's position to rescuers. Survivors said they owed their rescue to him (Sydney Morning Herald, 6.6.1942). William Reid, master of the fishing trawler **Dureenbee**, shouted desperately to his attackers on the Japanese submarine that he was only a harmless fishing boat, but was answered by shells and bullets which shot the bridge away (Sydney Morning Herald, 5.8.1942). Fifteen-year-old John Bird, a deck boy on the Norwegian cargo ship **Fingal**, was blown out of his bunk and into a hold when a torpedo struck. He came round in the sea, with his shipmates patting his bruised and cut face. A Norwegian steward gave the boy his place on an upturned lifeboat supporting many crew, and he himself spent the next hour swimming about until they were picked up (Sydney Morning Herald, 8.5.1943).

When the **Limerick**, the largest of the ships lost, was sunk off Cape Byron in April 1943, the silvery wake of the torpedo was seen by two crew members about 500 metres off. As was commonly the case the torpedo struck at night, around midnight when most of the crew were asleep. As also often seemed to be the case, there was a card game in progress among some who were not asleep. One of the players, Donald Stewart, rushed to his cabin for a lifejacket. On the way back he scooped up the money lying on the card table and this reminded him that he had 36 pounds in his cabin so he rushed back and got that too, before getting into a lifeboat. This must have been something of a feat, because the ship was struck amidships on the port side and immediately developed such a sharp list to port that many men could not keep their feet and a number dived overboard when the lifeboats jammed. The **Limerick** was travelling in a convoy and all except two of the crew of 72 were picked up by the naval escort, though some spent eight hours in the water blowing the

whistles on their lifejackets to attract attention. The ship took three hours to sink (Sydney Morning Herald, 8.5.1943).

Watching a torpedo rushing towards them, and also seeing an attacking submarine surface and circle round the wreckage, were chilling experiences often reported by survivors. After their ship sank, shocked seamen from the **Iron Chieftain** crouched in their pyjamas on rafts fearing that they would be machine-gunned as the submarine cruised among them, its decks awash, before vanishing into the dark (Sydney Morning Herald, 6.6.1942). Although 12 men from the **Iron Chieftain** were rescued after four or five hours on rafts, another 25 spent two days in a lifeboat before coming ashore at The Entrance, not far from Terrigal.

They were helped ashore by locals and sheltered in the houses with first aid, blankets and cups of tea, while one woman washed all their blackened pyjamas and rinsed off their lifebelts. Police arrived and arranged their accommodation in a guest house (Australian Women's Weekly June 1942:15). The second mate, Phil Brady, in his early 20s, was the only officer. He was so intent on seeing that everyone was looked after that the police 'had to threaten him with violence if he did not go to bed and warm up' (Gill, 1968:75n). Don Burchell, a 17-year-old seaman who had been rescued from one of the rafts and landed in Sydney, recalled in later years that he was given 'a large woman's coat and a pair of boots to wear on the train back to Newcastle' (NSW Heritage Office file, unsourced news cutting). In matters like this, naval personnel had a much different experience.

Recognition

After the war some people argued that merchant seamen were well compensated for their war service by the war risk bonuses which they were awarded, progressively increased by Union action throughout the war. It varied according to destination of the voyage, and length of time with the same employer, rising to 50 per cent. The Deputy President of the Repatriation Commission, Jocelyn McGirr, in her Inquiry into the Needs of Australian Mariners in 1989, concluded that merchant seamen probably ended up about equal to their naval counterparts, when naval allowances, taxation, payment for food and accommodation, and other matters were balanced out. But she pointed out that all merchant seamen, by virtue of their jobs, were always in areas of risk, while members of the army, navy or air force quite often went through part or all of the war at home bases without ever being in a field of combat. And while sea-going members of the navy generally went to sea in vessels designed for warfare, with armour plating and watertight sections, merchant seamen went to sea in ships not designed for warfare. In naval ships whole crews were trained to engage and fight hostile forces, and naval ships had crews up to five times the size of merchant crews, and carried medical staff and facilities. Most merchant ships were coal-fired and were considerably exposed both by day and night because of sparks and smoke trails visible for vast distances, unlike the predominantly oil-fired ships of the navy. (McGirr, 1989:26-27).

The report of the McGirr Inquiry is an excellent source of information on the real conditions of Australian merchant mariners. It was produced in order to examine the position of merchant navy veterans who were not covered by the same pensions Act as naval personnel. Its recommendations improved the position of merchant navy veterans in many respects. This was a process which had started with the award of Merchant Navy War Service medals, and the inclusion of the merchant navy in Anzac Day marches in the mid-1970s. But by the time its recommendations were implemented in 1994, the 15-year-old deck boys would have been in their mid-60s, while a seaman of 50 when the war ended would have been 100.

The often maligned BHP with its dreaded 'death ships' did at least pay formal tribute to the war service of the people who served and died in its ships, with a ceremony presided over by BHP's head, Essington Lewis, who dedicated a plaque at the Newcastle Steelworks in 1950.

This plaque is now part of a memorial to seamen on Newcastle's Foreshore. At least this was much-needed recognition for these men, their families and their shipmates while events were still fresh.

Other small memorials to merchant seamen from individual ships or places exist around Australia, but it was not until 1990 that the Merchant Navy Memorial was set up at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, too late for most of the men whom it commemorates ever to see it.

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Endnote

This paper is drawn from research for the next edition of the Shipwreck Atlas of New South Wales and so (somewhat artificially) focuses only on losses off the New South Wales coast.

However, reference is made to the **Iron Crown** which actually sank south of Gabo Island, off Victoria, because it was part of one of the most devastating attacks off the east coast.

The **Recina**, sunk off Gabo Island, was a borderline case but has been treated as a New South Wales loss.

The 19 ships destroyed off the New South Wales Coast were, chronologically:

Nimbin, 1052 tons, 5.12.1940
Millimul, 287 tons, 26.3.1941
Iron Chieftain, 4700 tons, 3.6.1942
Iron Crown, 3353 tons, 4.6.1942
Guatemala, 5527, 14.6.1942
George S. Livanos, 5482 tons, 20.7.1942
Coast Farmer, 3290 tons, 20.7.1942
William Dawes, 7177 tons, 22.7.42
Dureenbee, 223 tons, 3.8.1942
Kalingo, 2047 tons, 17.1.1943
Iron Knight, 4700 tons, 8.2.1943
Starr King, 7176 tons, 9.2.1943
Recina, 4732 tons, 11.4.1943
Limerick, 8724 tons, 26.4.1943
Lydia M. Childs, 7176 tons, 27.4.1943
Wollongbar, 2240 tons, 28.4.1943
Fingal, 2137 tons, 5.5.1943
Portmar, 5551 tons, 16.6.1943
Robert J. Walker, 7180 tons, 24.12.1944

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