

# Corevette Veteran's Club

1<sup>st</sup> April 2013

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## The Australian Corvette

*"The corvettes were handy and reliable, and in addition to minesweeping, patrol and escort work they were employed on an endless variety of tasks including the carrying of troops and stores, participation in bombardments and assault landings, surveying and towing operations. In short they were maids-of-all-work."*

John Bastock, Australian Ships of War

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) plans to develop a modular class of 20 offshore combatant vessels (OCV); the aim being to rationalise the RAN's existing fleet of patrol boats, mine countermeasures vessels and hydrographic and oceanographic ships.

This is not the first time that the RAN has employed multi-role vessels for these tasks, and the successful experience of building and operating the Bathurst class minesweepers 70 years ago offers an intriguing background to current and future challenges.

## Message from the President

At the Corevette's Veteran's Club where we are very proud of our members and the work we do for the veterans, their families and the wider community. We have always been a safe and friendly place for friends to get together and continue to be so today. So come on in and share in the friendship - New members and guests are always welcome.

The club remains committed as it has had for many years, to measures of counselling and education. It is encouraging to see the realistic relationship that the State Government has with clubs and their members and the communities they support.

The ANZAC commemorations are fitting ceremonies to mark those who served and now serve. The Dawn Service and March on ANZAC Day are moving activities. I commend the sub-branches for their commitment and involvement.

Bob McGavin  
President

*HMAS Whyalla is one of only two Bathurst Class preserved as museum ships, the other being HMAS Castlemaine in Williamstown, Victoria.*

## HMAS Whyalla

HMAS Whyalla was one of sixty Australian Minesweepers (commonly known as corvettes) built during World War II in Australian shipyards as part of the Commonwealth Government's wartime shipbuilding program. Twenty (including Whyalla) were built on Admiralty order but manned and commissioned by the Royal Australian Navy. Thirty-six were built for the Royal Australian Navy and four for the Royal Indian Navy.

HMAS Whyalla was commissioned at Whyalla on 8 January 1942 under the command of LEUT Leslie N. Morison RANR(S).

Between February and April 1987, Whyalla was slowly moved up the slipway from which she was launched in 1941, and then relocated two kilometres inland and placed on permanent foundations, becoming the centre piece for the Whyalla Maritime Museum which was officially opened on 29 October 1988. Whyalla is one of only two Bathurst Class preserved as museum ships, the other being HMAS Castlemaine in Williamstown, Victoria.

## Upcoming Events

Here are some upcoming events for the Corvette's Veteran's Club over the next few months. Hope to see you all there.

<b>Moe Music Festival</b>	May 4
<b>Queen's Birthday Lunch</b>	June 10
<b>Naval Conference</b>	June 24 – June 25
<b>Melbourne Cup Luncheon</b>	November 5
<b>Remembrance Day</b>	November 11
<b>Christmas Dinner</b>	December 14
<b>New Year's Eve Celebration</b>	December 31



*The Corvettes Big Band is based at HMAS Cerberus in Victoria and is part of the Royal Australian Navy Band - Melbourne Detachment.*

## Moe Music Festival

The Corvettes Big Band play a range of material spanning the Big Band genre, from traditional swing through to modern 'Jazz Orchestra' sounds. Bring the family for a great day of country, rock, big band and more.

Date: 4 May 2013

Time: 11.30am to 12.45pm

Where: Gippsland (Murray) Heritage Park, Moe, Victoria

Website: [www.moemusicfestival.com.au](http://www.moemusicfestival.com.au)

Cost: Adults \$15, Students \$10, Children free!

## Sailor Profile: Edward "Teddy" Sheean

SHEEAN, Edward 'Teddy' (1923-1942), sailor, was born on 28 December 1923 at Lower Barrington, Tasmania. In Hobart on 21 April 1941 he enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve as an ordinary seaman, following in the steps of five of his brothers who had joined the armed forces (four of them were in the army and one in the navy). On completing his initial training, he was sent to Flinders Naval Depot, Westernport, Victoria, in February 1942 for further instruction.

In May Sheean was posted to Sydney where he was billeted at Garden Island in the requisitioned ferry Kuttabul, prior to joining his first ship as an Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun-loader. Granted home leave, he was not on board Kuttabul when Japanese midget submarines raided the harbour and sank her on 31 May. Eleven days later he returned to Sydney to help commission the new corvette HMAS Armidale, which carried out escort duties along the eastern Australian coast and in New Guinea waters. Ordered to sail for Darwin in October, Armidale arrived there early next month.

On 29 November Armidale sailed for Japanese-occupied Timor—in company with the corvette HMAS Castlemaine—to withdraw the exhausted Australian 2nd/2nd Independent Company, evacuate about 150 Portuguese civilians and 190 Dutch troops, and land soldiers to reinforce Dutch guerrillas on the island. Arriving off Betano before dawn on 1 December, the ships rendezvoused with the naval tender HMAS Kuru, which had already taken the civilians on board. When these people were transferred to Castlemaine, she sailed for Darwin, leaving the other two vessels to carry out the rest of the operation. From 12.28 p.m. Armidale and Kuru came under repeated attack from Japanese aircraft. Despite requests, no air cover was received.

Shortly before 2 p.m. on 1 December 1942 Armidale, by then separated from Kuru, was attacked by no less than thirteen aircraft. The corvette manoeuvred frantically. At 3.15 a torpedo struck her port side and another hit the engineering spaces; finally a bomb struck aft. As the vessel listed heavily to port, the order was given to abandon ship. The survivors leapt into the sea and were machine-gunned by the Japanese. Once he had helped to free a life-raft, Sheean scrambled back to his gun on the sinking ship. Although wounded in the chest and back, the 18-year-old sailor shot down one bomber and kept other aircraft away from his comrades in the water. He was seen still firing his gun as Armidale slipped below the waves. Only forty-nine of the 149 souls who had been on board survived the sinking and the ensuing days in life-rafts.

Sheean was mentioned in dispatches for his bravery. A Collins-class submarine, launched in 1999, was named after him—the only ship in the RAN to bear the name of an ordinary seaman.

Source: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sheean-edward-11671>.



*Edward "Teddy" Sheean (1923-1942)  
served on the HMAS Armidale during  
World War II.*