

A Brief History on the Military Influences in Shark Bay  
Western Australia

by

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## Abstract

The military history of Shark Bay is best described as a collection of specific events or events of short duration. During colonisation, Shark Bay was not a focal point of people or farms, the bay being poor in fresh water and with an unfavourably warm climate. Therefore it did not warrant a sustained military presence. It was only with the discovery of substantial natural resources with the potential of providing substantial and timely income for the colony, that the first troops were stationed at a small bay on the eastern side of the Dirk Hartog Island.

This small outpost was the first permanent military establishment in Shark Bay. In the following years the military presence in the Bay would consist of visitations by either land forces or naval units. It was not until the Second World War when a small force of Volunteer Defence Corps were based in Carnarvon that the military would re-establish a permanent presence in the Bay. Since that time, the Bay has been visited by elements of the Australian Defence Force, primarily by the Royal Australian Navy during either coastal or customs patrols. This paper, presented as part of the Western Australian Maritime Museum's Shark Bay Study, focuses mainly on the maritime aspects of the military history of Shark Bay.

### The Shark Bay Station (1850–1851)

The first permanent garrison of British troops at Shark Bay was established in 1850. Its purpose was to protect the deposits of guano that had been found on Egg Island earlier that year by Captain Scott, master of the vessel *Pelsart*. Seeing the potential of guano as a valuable and much needed source of export income for the Swan River Colony, the Governor of Western Australia ordered preparations be made to commence the mining of guano at Shark Bay. Reports of foreign ships taking advantage of the unguarded guano deposits brought about the need to establish a garrison of soldiers to guard the colony's interests in Shark Bay. This military presence consisted of a small detachment of men from the 99th Regiment stationed at Fremantle, and the vessel HMCV *Champion*.

In early October 1850 a detachment of twelve troops of the 99th Regiment under the command of Lieutenant L.R. Elliott, boarded the schooner *Pelsart* at Fremantle, bound for Champion Bay (Geraldton). From Champion Bay Elliott and his party went to Shark Bay where they established a camp at Quoin Bluff, Dirk Hartog Island (Figure 1). The original Shark Bay station consisted of a timber building in addition to stone structures and jetties.

Principally, the station was to guard against the illegal removal of guano by both Foreign and British vessels. Elliott was 'not to allow any vessel whether British or Foreign to load with guano, shells, timber, or any other produce without specific

authority first obtained from the Colonial Secretary's Office'<sup>1</sup>. This however was not always the case as allowances were made for vessels which were unable to make the journey to Fremantle. In such cases agreements were made between the ship's Master and the local Government Agent concerning the sale of guano without prior authorisation. Bills of Exchange and Bills of Loading were then forwarded to the CSO and the Agent acting for the local Government in England by mail so that payment could be made after the loading of cargoes.

Elliott's principle task was to guard the guano deposits on the islands within Shark Bay, however his duties extended far beyond that of sentry. In addition to this task, Elliott had a number of specific instructions as to the role of the military in Shark Bay relating to the exploration of the area in search of other resources that would be of economic value to the colony. Among these, he was instructed to search for sponge, an article of great commercial value and, if found, samples were to be forwarded to Fremantle. Any barks which could be used to produce tannin were to be likewise sent. Correspondence from the Colonial Secretary indicates the importance of local grasses stating '...samples of any grasses such as used in India for affording the oils imported into England as Grass oil, Lemon Grass oils and Essence of Verbena or Ferbera oil are very desirable'<sup>2</sup>. Ceylon sage was also listed as may be existing in the area, or to the north. A clear resin, or gum, from a species of plant *Geranium spinosium*, found in eastern Africa and South Africa was also thought to be in the Shark Bay area and was a sought after item.

Of major importance were the supplies of sandalwood. These trees were known to the area but specific details had never been recorded. Elliott was to record the quantity of trees (number of acres), the average number of trees per acre, average size of the trees including average distance from the ground to the lowest branches and the diameter of the trunk. Samples of the trees were required to ascertain if the trees were suitable for cabinet making. For this purpose a cross cut saw was delivered to Elliott from Fremantle. Root samples also had to be taken to test the amount of epeutial oil they contained relative to the trunk and branches. In addition to his already numerous duties, Elliott was also to prevent the mixing of the crews of the visiting ships with local Aboriginal groups who looked upon the English as intruders on their land. To minimise the interaction between the two groups and to prevent the disruption to peace and order, he ordered that none of his men, nor those of visiting ships, were allowed on the mainland, but were restricted to Dirk Hartog Island<sup>3</sup>.

Within days of Elliott's arrival, the schooner *Champion*, under the command of Lieutenant Helpman, arrived at Dirk Hartog Island. This vessel had been acquired by the Colonial Government around 1840 to assist with exploration and military activities around the state and was to be used to maintain an ocean going supply line between Fremantle, Champion Bay and the Shark Bay outpost. Helpman, being more senior in rank to Elliott, would be the Government Agent for the issue of guano whilst the *Champion* was anchored at the Shark Bay Station. However, in his frequent absence, Lieutenant Elliott would assume this role.

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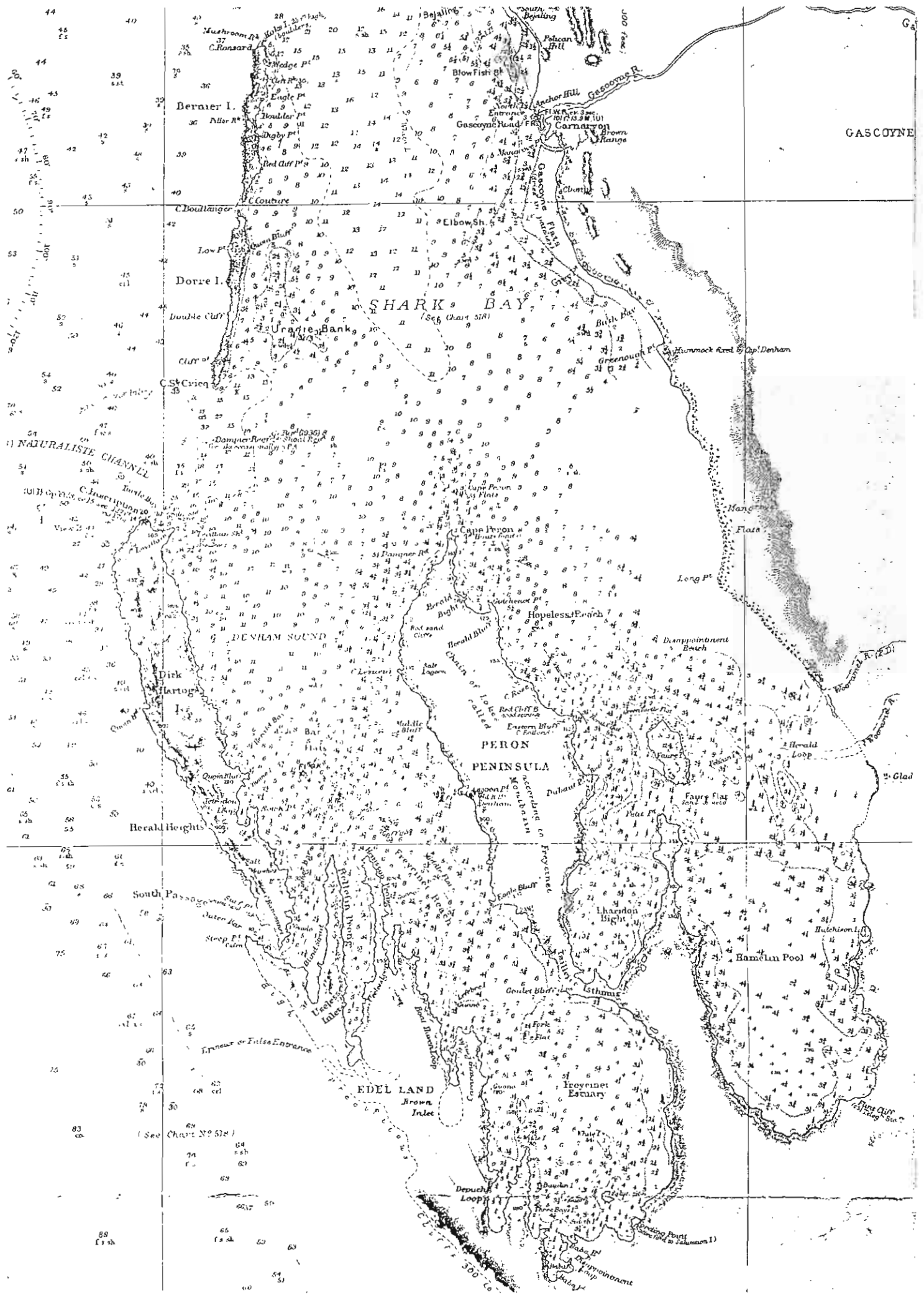
<sup>1</sup>Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO) Outward Correspondence, 5/12/1850, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

<sup>2</sup>CSO Outward Correspondence, 5/12/1850, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

<sup>3</sup>CSO Outward Correspondence, 5/12/1850, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

# Shark Bay

Showing Quoin Bluff on the east shore of Dirk Hartog Island and numerous 'guano islands'.  
From: BA 1056, Cape Cuvier to Champion Bay.



The role of the *Champion* in Shark Bay was to explore and map the bay and Exmouth Gulf with a view of discovering any rivers or estuaries that may exist, in addition to other islands that may be the location of guano deposits. They were instructed to identify these islands, their quantity, their natural facilities for loading, and the nature of anchorage's in the area. Helpman's search was not restricted to guano alone but also included an assessment of the nature of the oyster and pearl beds in the bay and was instructed to collect samples of the same. After exploring and charting Shark Bay the *Champion* then proceeded north to the Exmouth Gulf<sup>4</sup>. This voyage was only of ten to twelve days duration. Helpman had also been instructed to leave two volunteers from his crew and a serviceable whaleboat to assist Elliott in maintaining a water guard against raiders. As these two seamen could not be stationed at the garrison on a permanent basis, Elliott was encouraged to train his men in seamanship and boat drills<sup>5</sup>.

The *Champion* then returned to Champion Bay collecting Elliott as they passed Shark Bay. Elliott returned to Dirk Hartog Island after arranging supplies to establish a more permanent camp at Quoin Bluff.

The first vessel to take on a load of guano was the *Hashemy* under the command of Captain Ross. The *Hashemy* had brought with it six months' worth of stores for both the military station and the *Champion*, which was to return in the near future. In addition to these stores, were twenty tons of water contained in drums and two iron water tanks which were to be placed on wooden sleepers in positions where they could be kept cool. Ross also gave Elliott a barometer with an attached thermometer which he was requested to take great care of and to regularly record climatic readings at 10 am and 4 pm daily. Other data relating to the Bay itself such as the time of high tide was to be taken at the time of the full moon and the new moon. All these duties were seen to have been in the best interests of the Colony.

The government was anxious to exploit any natural resource in the area. Therefore, the crew of the *Champion* were instructed to teach the soldiers how to catch sharks. The purpose being to collect shark liver oil which was to be sent down to Fremantle at the first opportunity in the drums that had contained the shipment of fresh water. A trypot and other materials necessary for the processing of shark liver oil were also received from the *Hashemy*. For this activity the soldiers received one shilling and sixpence in addition to their normal wage.

The *Hashemy* was to be loaded with a shipment of guano bound for Singapore. Ross was able to load from Sunday Island or any other island except for Egg Island<sup>6</sup>, this having been reserved exclusively for Captain Scott<sup>7</sup>. This exclusive mining right was given to Scott as a reward for his initial discovery of guano in the region.

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<sup>4</sup>CSO Outward Correspondence, 14/10/1850, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

<sup>5</sup>In February 1851, Elliott was to get a permanent coxswain for this vessel in the person of a Mr Thomas Clar (CSO Outward Correspondence 19/2/51), State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

<sup>6</sup>Egg Island and Sunday Island are marked on the chart above as 'Guano islands' south of Quoin Bluff and adjacent Cape Ransonnet, respectively.

<sup>7</sup>CSO Inward Correspondence from Lieutenant Elliott, 21/12/1850, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

Elliott proved to be a prudent administrator as the acting Government Agent, in Helpman's absence. He brought to the attention of the Colonial Secretary that vessels that had paid for guano in Fremantle actually loaded much more than had been purchased. There was no accurate means of weighing guano that had been loaded on board a vessel. The discrepancy being that ships' Masters paid for the cargo tonnage that the vessel was registered to carry. However, it was apparent that these registers were often wrong. The problem was solved when it was agreed that vessels would purchase guano according to a new register believed to have more accurate carrying capacities of each vessel<sup>8</sup>.

The month of February, 1851 was one of increased activity for the garrison in Shark Bay. Governor Fitzgerald appointed Lieutenant Elliott Shark Bay's first Post Master. After removing the guano the Bill of Exchange and the Bill of Lading has to be forwarded to the Agent acting for the local Government in England by the vessel taking the guano. It became apparent that the masters of ships did not always carry out this procedure, unless the Bills were placed in his charge by an appointed Post Master and addressed and delivered to the Post Master General in London or elsewhere. Failure to comply in delivering of any such mail empowered a Post Master to withhold the vessel and its papers and clearance, the ship's master liable to be convicted and transported to the colonies.

In the same month, Elliott received orders that he should move his station to a location that was closer to the guano islands soon to be mined. The suggested location was Cape Herrisson<sup>9</sup>. This suggestion was later to become an order<sup>10</sup>. To facilitate the move the *Champion* was placed at Elliott's disposal. A new temporary wooden building was also bought to be used as a barracks for his men. He was authorised to make use of the wooden building already in use as his own separate accommodation and also as the government office. The new building consisted of two rooms; one for the Rank and File and the other for the Sergeant. A stockade was authorised to be erected for which the soldiers would be paid an extra one shilling per day during construction.

During its short time of operation the number of personnel at the Shark Bay station varied. The station was established with one Officer and twelve Rank and File—the same number of soldiers as the garrison at Fremantle. This gave the out-post the second highest concentration of troops at any of the other out-posts in the colony. By February this number had been reduced to one Officer and eight Rank and File. The number at Champion Bay was similar, having one Sergeant and eight Rank and File. Both the Shark Bay station and the Champion Bay station were relieved at the same time, the *Champion* had taken on board one Sergeant and nine Rank at Fremantle to relieve the Sergeant and sixteen Rank and File.

The Shark Bay station was supplied not only by the *Champion* but also by the vessels that had come from the south to collect loads of guano. These vessels brought food and other provisions, as well as more functional items. For example, in March 1851, the vessel *Sir Edmund Head* arrived in Shark Bay bringing with it a supply of wheelbarrows, pick axes and spades, available for purchase, and three oars for the station's whale-boat. At the end of March, 1851,

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<sup>8</sup>CSO Inward Correspondence from Lieutenant Elliott, 21/12/1850, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

<sup>9</sup>CSO Outward Correspondence, 7/2/1851, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

<sup>10</sup>CSO Outward Correspondence, 19/2/1851, State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library.

Elliott was ordered to provide information regarding the remaining quantities of guano.

By May, plans for abandoning the station at Shark Bay were already being formulated as guano supplies were diminishing. Elliott was to remain at the station until September while more decisive information concerning the pearl banks in the region could be forwarded to the Colonial Secretary. After the lease terms of the pearl banks had been formulated, Elliott and his troops would no longer be required at Shark Bay. On 10 July, 1851, with guano supplies running short<sup>11</sup>, Elliott received orders that he and his detachment were to return to Fremantle 'at the first opportunity'. If no vessel was available then one would be sent. Captain Scott of the *Pelsart* was to take over the duties as the Government Agent for the sale of guano in the region. Consequently, the station's supplies and materials were to be turned over to him including the iron water-tanks and the trypot.

The Shark Bay out-post was occupied for only twelve months. In that time, the troops were able to provide the Colonial Secretary with valuable information on the nature of the bay, its tides and its channels, and the surrounding region. The natural resources of the region were identified and samples sent back to the colony. The out-post provided protection over the deposits of guano in accordance with their primary instructions, but ultimately it was these secondary duties that were to be of greater value to the colony in the future. The *Champion* continued to operate throughout the Exmouth Gulf, discovering new supplies of guano and charting the north-west coast of Western Australia.

Today, remains of the original station at Quoin Bluff are still easily identifiable. Preliminary visits to the site have revealed that a stone wall that served as a jetty still exist, as do the foundations of structures that were located nearby. Artefacts such as iron nails, a George III sixpence, buttons bearing the insignia of the 99th Regiment, a hammer-head and china have also been noted. It is evident that the site is threatened by people randomly digging the site to 'see what they can find'. Efforts should be made to protect this site until further research is carried out and a management plan is developed and implemented (Shark Bay file, 210/80, WA Maritime Museum).

No reference could be found relating to any remaining structures of the station or stockade on Cape Herrisson. It is likely that the materials used in these constructions were recycled at pearling camps that were to be established on the cape in the years that followed.

### **1931/32 visits by HMAS *Australia* and HMAS *Canberra***

Records indicate that Shark Bay was visited by major elements of the Royal Australian Navy during the early 1930s. The heavy cruiser, HMAS *Canberra*<sup>12</sup>, during its passage to Fremantle for the Royal visit, stopped at the Bay for over a week between 18th and 28th September. The previous week *Canberra* had picked up a Seagull A9/3 flying boat whilst in Geraldton to examine flying boat operations on naval ships. The use of flying boats on cruisers was not common practice at this time, so this was a period of experimentation for the cruiser. The

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<sup>11</sup>Captain Humphreys of the barque *John Punter* was allowed to collect guano from any island nearly devoid of guano at the reduced price of £1 10/- per ton, so that the island's total supply of the fertiliser was completely used.

<sup>12</sup>The HMAS *Canberra* served with the RAN from 1928 until its loss at Savo Island, Guadalcanal, in 1942.



cruiser was soon joined by the other Australian heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia*. Together, the ships practiced low visibility torpedo attack drills taking advantage of the calm waters afforded by Shark bay. Unfortunately, this resulted in the loss of one of *Australia*'s torpedos which, after days of searching by aircraft and ship's boat, was not found and the search abandoned. The remainder of the time at Shark Bay was spent in public relations duties, such as hosting a cocktail party for Carnarvon, where the vessels were anchored and preparing the ships for the Royal visit. The vessels did not come along side at the town jetty, much to the disappointment of the townsfolk, because the water was too shallow<sup>13</sup>.

The following year, the cruisers returned to Shark Bay after visiting the Dutch East Indies<sup>14</sup>. This stop over was brief, lasting only one day and one night. The vessels did not visit Carnarvon as they had the previous year, but instead anchored inside Bernier Island. Prior to their arrival both ships had taken on board Seagull aircraft to access the suitability of carrying aircraft on cruisers permanently, rather than just periodically. The ships stayed in Shark Bay on 9 October 1932, and departed on the 10th.

It is believed that during one of these visits, presumably the former, one of the Seagull aircraft crashed on Dirk Hartog Island where it burned beyond repair. Records have not yet been found to confirm this report.

## World War II

With the onset of World War II the focus of the defence of Australia was concentrated to the north of the continent, with bases located at the major cities and ports around the country. it was impossible to defend the entire continent, thus large sections of coastline were relatively undefended. Shark Bay, being located between areas under threat to the north and the port of Fremantle, had little in the form of defences. It was, to all extensive purposes, considered of little significance. But this is not to say that the events of the war did not affect the area. Perhaps the most prominent event to occur in the vicinity of Shark bay during WWII was the naval battle between the Australian Light Cruiser HMAS *Sydney* and the German Surface Raider HSK *Kormoran*. On the afternoon of November 19, 1941, off the Western Australian coast near Shark Bay, the HMAS *Sydney* came into contact with a vessel claiming to be a Dutch freighter *Straat Malakka*. The vessel was hailed and ordered to give a coded signal that would prove its identity. As the crew of the German vessel made efforts to stall for time, the Australian cruiser came closer. When the *Sydney* was at apparently point blank range (c.1500 yards) the *Kormoran* revealed its weapons and engaged the *Sydney* in a battle that lasted for over half an hour. In the course of the battle, both ships were badly damaged. The *Kormoran* had taken a direct hit in her engine room causing the ship to loose power, eventually bringing it to a halt. After attempts to repair their vessel failed, the crew abandoned ship and scuttled the *Kormoran* by setting explosives around the ship's oil bunkers. The resulting explosions started fires that eventually caused the mine deck to explode sending the ship to the ocean floor. The *Sydney* was last seen heading off in the direction of Fremantle on fire. Neither the ship nor any of her crew were ever seen again. The reason as

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<sup>13</sup>MP 124/6, 462/202/573, Australian Archives.

<sup>14</sup>MP 138/1. 603/247/1005, Australian Archives.



to why the *Sydney* did not stand off at a safe distance has been the subject of much debate over the years<sup>15</sup>.

While only a carley float and two life preservers were ever recovered from the Australian vessel, the crew of the *Kormoran* were more fortunate. As the *Kormoran* was not in danger of sinking immediately, the crew had time to prepare to leave the stricken vessel in the ship's lifeboats prior to scuttling her.

Approximately three hundred and twenty crewmen of the *Kormoran* left the vessel in seven lifeboats. Of these, five lifeboats containing approximately two hundred and fourteen men were recovered at sea by either merchant vessels or naval vessels searching for the *Sydney*, which at this time was several days over due.

The remaining two lifeboats managed to sail ashore. The first, commanded by Chief Petty Officer Kohn, containing forty-six sailors, reached shore near 17 Mile Well adjacent to the stock route on Quobba station. The other, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Meyer with approximately fifty-seven men aboard, landed at Red Bluff further north. These men were rounded up and held in Carnarvon under guard by the Volunteer Defence Corps, which were soon relieved by the 11th Garrison Battalion. The prisoners were then transferred to Perth.

The two *Kormoran* lifeboats are the only physical reminders of this event remaining in the region with the exceptions of two memorials that have since been erected. Of these one remained on the beach at the 17 Mile Well for between four and six weeks, where it was washed back into the sea in a storm. Another was sold at Fremantle and was eventually purchased by Carrarang Station where it eventually sank after many years in service as a station lighter<sup>16</sup>.

#### **Government Aerodromes—Hamelin Pool and Wooramel**

During the war, emergency airfields were established to provide aircraft predetermined places where they could make emergency landings in relative safety. These airfields were not usually elaborate, consisting of little more than relatively flat ground that had been cleared of all vegetation. The fields were marked by half 44 gallon oil drums that were painted white and secured into position by concrete blocks. The fields were designed to accommodate small bombers such as B-24 Liberators or Mitchell B-25s.

Two such aerodromes were located in the vicinity of Shark Bay, at Hamelin Pool and at Wooramel. In addition to these were five other emergency fields between Hamelin Pool and Northampton. These were called 'Junga', 'Bettie', '95-Mile', '115-Mile', and '126-Mile' and were established 'many years ago as a measure of safety'<sup>17</sup>.

The government aerodrome at Hamelin Pool (Lat. 26°24'S, Long. 114°11'E) consisted of two crossed runways. Runway One was oriented at an angle of 45° and had a length of 5460 feet. The width of the runway was 300 feet. The second runway was smaller, being 4370 feet in length, but maintained a like width of 300 feet. This runway was orientated at 135° to north. An assessment of the field in August, 1941, stated that the airfield was unsuitable for general use by aircraft and should be used only in cases of extreme emergencies.

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<sup>15</sup>e.g. Montgomery, M., 1981; Winter, 1991; Frame, 1993

<sup>16</sup>McCarthy, 1990.

<sup>17</sup>A705/1 7/1/1121, Australian Archives.

The government aerodrome at Wooramel (Lat. 25°48'S, Long. 114°18'E) was larger than that at Hamelin Pool. This comprised of three runways in a triangular formation<sup>18</sup>. The runways were arranged as follows: Runway #1 was oriented at 105° and had a length of 4080 feet; Runway #2 was oriented at 15° and had a length of 4780 feet; Runway #3 was oriented at 146° and had a length of 5200 feet. Each runway had a standard width of 300 feet.

The current condition of these runways is unknown to the author, but experience has shown that fields such as these are still quite discernible both from the air and on the ground.

### **Flying Boat Anchorage—Peron Peninsula**

Prior to the beginning of World War II, the United States Navy had several bases throughout the Pacific. One of the more major naval bases was in the Philippines. It was here that Catalina's of the US Navy Patrol Wing 10 was based, located at Sangley Point and Olongapo. The wing comprised of two squadrons designated VP-101 and VP-102. its aim was to fly patrols around the Philippines and later expanded to include French Indo-China so as to monitor Japanese fleet movements<sup>19</sup>. When Japan did enter the war, the wing took on the duties of intercepting Japanese shipping. However, the overall Japanese advance could not be halted, and soon the Philippines were under attack eventually falling to the enemy. So began a continuous withdrawal of allied forces back to Indonesia, New Guinea and eventually Australia.

The planes of Patrol Wing Ten fought a continuous battle from the Philippines back to the island of Java, losing the majority of their planes in the process. With the evacuation of allied forces from Java in late February 1942, the few planes that remained of patrol Wing 10 moved its base of operations to Australia<sup>20</sup>. Originally ordered to the Exmouth Gulf it was considered that this location was 'too exposed to the elements and the Japanese to be a suitable advance base for ships, submarines, and flying boats<sup>21</sup>. It was decided that Perth would be a more suitable base of operations. Patrol Wing 10 established a base of operations at Crawley on the Swan River, calling it the 'Swan River Flying Club'<sup>22</sup>.

To support its operations to the north, a number of advance bases were established along the WA coast between Geraldton and the Exmouth Gulf by the wing. One such advance base was established at Herald Bight, on the north-eastern side of Peron Peninsula. This location base classed as an Emergency Alighting Area. Herald Bay provided a suitably sheltered area where flying boats could land, refuel and re-arm, and then take off again. The base was used only when one of the three tenders was present.

Patrol Wing 10 was supported by four seaplane tenders—the USS *Langley* (AV-3), USS *Heron* (AVP-2), USS *Childs* (AVP-14) and USS *William B. Preston* (AVP-20). Of these, only three escaped to Australia, the *Langley* being sunk off Java on

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<sup>18</sup>A705/1. 7/1/1895, Australian Archives.

<sup>19</sup>Messimer, 1985:13.

<sup>20</sup>Only three Catalina's arrived in Australia from this group. Patrol Wing Ten consisted of two squadrons (VP-21 and VP-26) of PBV-4s. When the wing was formed these numbers were changed to VP-101 and VP-102 respectively. The Wing originally consisted of 45 planes—14 were shot down, 24 destroyed on the ground, 3 lost in accidents, and 1 was abandoned at Tjilatjap, Java, but was flown out by the Dutch (Messimer, 1985:307).

<sup>21</sup>Messimer, 1985:275.

<sup>22</sup>Messimer, 1985:279.

27 February 1942. The *Childs*, the *Heron* and the *Preston* were all used to tender the seaplanes at various alighting bases along the coast of Western Australia. The *Childs* and the *Preston* were ex-destroyers converted to be suitable for tending seaplanes. The *Heron* was a Bird-class small seaplane tender. All three tenders survived the war and were sold in 1946/47<sup>23</sup>.

The pilots from Pat Wing 10 used to fly over Denham but did not land on regular occasions. On such instance when they did land was in June 1943, when General Blamey and General Lloyd arrived in Shark Bay to spend a day fishing. After having caught a plentiful catch, the fish were cleaned and placed in a freezer and were flown out the next day by another flying boat<sup>24</sup>. Fry, who had taken Generals Blamey and Lloyd fishing on this visit, later in 1944 also took Generals Kristey and Bennett out fishing.

While no formal installation was ever built at Herald Bay, maps do indicate that four Catalina buoys were used there as moorings during the war. While these buoys have long since been removed, it is possible that the weights that held the buoys in place are still located on the sea floor. In addition to these, it is likely that other associated material was discarded during the war, and may be found in the vicinity.

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<sup>23</sup>Silverstone, 1982.

<sup>24</sup>Fry, 1988.

## **Discussion**

From the outset of military involvement at Shark Bay in 1850 through to the Second World War, and to the present day, the Australian military has never focused its attention on the Bay for any extended period of time, other than for the protection of natural resources or by the necessity of war. The location of the Shark Bay, midway along the Western Australian coastline, has probably been the most significant factor for this. Shark Bay has never, nor does it currently support a large population centre. In such locations, rarely are permanent military installations found. The major naval military facility found on the west coast is located at HMAS Stirling, Garden Island. This base, also known as Fleet Base West, supports all major Australian units in the Indian Ocean. This base is further supported by smaller ports along the coast (mainly in supplies) including Darwin to the north. Such has been the case over the past 150 years. Military strategy has focused on this base, and the nearby population centre of Fremantle and Perth over the last century. In the past, as in the present, it is unfeasible to try and maintain a permanent watch over the entire length of the Australian coastline. For these reasons, Shark Bay has only ever been a place of temporary focus.

From these brief periods of occupation, important reminders of the activities that have occurred can still be seen. It is probable that more indicators exist but are not clearly visible. The remains of the Shark Bay station at Quoin Bluff can still be clearly seen although if efforts are not made to research this site further or to protect and conserve it, then it is in danger of being lost. This, along with other examples of military history, are important reminders of the brief episodes of military presence in Shark Bay.

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