

Basic Detail Report



ANMS1391[010]

Title

RAN sailors on deck

Date

1920-1929

Primary Maker

Jack Cyril Bray

Medium

Black and white photographic print on paper.

Dimensions

Overall: 75 x 55 mm

Name

Photograph

History

During the interwar years there was naval retrenchment worldwide as countries went through the disarmament process. This was formalised in 1922 during the Washington Conference which resulted in a treaty signed between the five major powers; Britain, USA, France, Japan and Italy. This agreement limited their naval capabilities in order to avoid an arms race. Germany was excluded from this conference as their military limitations were agreed upon with the Treaty of Versailles. The terms of the Washington Treaty laid out what tonnage of shipping each of the five navies could have and the type and amount of weaponry per vessel type. Britain originally had the largest navy but was restricted to the same amount as the US (525,000 tons capital ships and 135,000 tons aircraft carriers). This was to be followed by the Japanese navy (315,000 tons capital ships and 81,000 tons aircraft carriers), and the French and Italian were restricted to the same naval size (175,000 tons capital ships and 60,000 tons aircraft carriers). The various navies of the British Empire were treated as one under the treaty, including the RAN which gave up the battle cruiser HMAS AUSTRALIA (I) as part of the agreement. Limits were also placed on improvements and formation of new naval bases and fortifications. However, the treaty was not to last with Japan giving formal notice of intention to terminate the terms of the treaty in 1934 which came into effect in 1936. Italy had continued to build their naval force without declaring it, and most of the five countries had exceeded their allotted tonnage anyway. Jack Cyril Bray was born in 1904 in Kogarah, Sydney. He was brought up to work as a market gardener but in 1920, just before his 16th birthday, he volunteered with the RAN. He was assigned as a trainee to HMAS TINGIRA as a Boy 2nd Class from 20 May 1920 until May 1921. Bray was then transferred to HMAS SYDNEY as a Boy 2nd Class. He officially commenced his engagement on 31 Dec 1922, aged 18, aboard HMAS SYDNEY as an Ordinary Seaman. HMAS TINGIRA was originally launched as

the SOBRAON for shipping firm Lowther, Maxton and Co in 1866 and was built as a three masted clipper that relied solely on sail. After nearly thirty years of serving as a cargo and passenger ship SOBRAON was purchased by the Commonwealth Government in 1911, fitted out as a boy's training ship and commissioned into the newly named Royal Australian Navy as HMAS TINGIRA on 25 April 1912. The name TINGIRA was an indigenous word meaning 'open sea'. The clipper's permanent mooring was in Rose Bay and entry was limited to boys between the age of 14 and a half years and 16 years. They were bound to serve for seven years following their 18th birthday. The young boys were taught seamanship, completed gunnery training, had physical training and were kept under a strict disciplinary watch. During the 15 years TINGIRA was commissioned 3,158 boys underwent their training aboard the clipper with many going on to serve in both of the World Wars and the Korean War. TINGIRA was paid off in 1927 and eventually broken up in Sydney in 1941. SYDNEY (I) has an illustrious history, with the capture of Rabaul (1914), the sinking of German cruiser EMDEN (1914) and service in the North Sea (1916-1918) listed as Battle Honours for the vessel. Following the end of the war the Chatham Class Light Cruiser was mainly based in home waters. However, in 1922 SYDNEY visited New Guinea, particularly as the administration of the former German New Guinea colony in the northeast quarter of the main island was placed under mandate to the British Government by the League of Nations and was administered by Australia. The area referred to as Papua, the southern coast, had been a British protectorate that was placed under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1902 with formal Australian administration beginning in 1906. The indigenous population of the territory now referred to as Papua New Guinea has several thousand separate communities often with individual and distinct languages, traditions and customs. The individual languages are thought to number around 850 with only half that are actually related. With a largely rural population the economy is based on subsistence-based agriculture. When HMAS SYDNEY (I) visited the region in 1922, Jack Bray had been promoted to the position of Ordinary Seaman. Later that same year Bray was posted to HMAS PLATYPUS, a Submarine Depot ship originally built for the six J class submarines. On 12 July 1922 PLATYPUS was paid off as a Submarine Depot ship as the Naval Board had abandoned the policy of maintaining a submarine service in the RAN. On 13 July PLATYPUS was recommissioned as a Destroyer Depot and Fleet Repair Ship. According to Bray's service record he served aboard PLATYPUS and HMAS STALWART (I) between 9 September and 30 October 1922. From 31 October 1922 until 30 November 1925 Bray served aboard STALWART with three consecutive postings. Built between 1918 and 1919 as part of the British emergency war program, torpedo boat destroyer HMS STALWART was transferred to the RAN in 1919 along with five sister ships: SUCCESS, SWORDSMAN, TASMANIA, TATTOO and ANZAC. As part of the British Royal Navy the vessel was numbered H56 (see first photograph) and was renumbered H14 once transferred to the RAN. STALWART spent its entire career on the Australia Station and was paid off on 1 December 1925 and sold for breaking up in 1937. Note that Bray was part of the last group of men stationed aboard the vessel before it was paid off. Whilst aboard STALWART, Bray had been promoted to Able Seaman in 1923. Bray was then transferred to one of the sister S-class destroyers, HMAS SUCCESS (I) which had been part of the RN flotilla that was transferred to the RAN in 1919. They were offered as replacements to the ageing River Class vessels. SUCCESS was soon paid off into reserve in 1921, recommissioned on 1 December 1925 following STALWART's paying off the previous day. Whilst Bray was aboard the vessel SUCCESS visited Port Moresby, New Guinea, in May 1926. Apart from the single trip, the vessel did not leave Australian waters again. It was paid off for the last time on 12 May 1930 and was also

sold for breaking up in 1937 alongside its sister ships. Bray's final posting was to HMAS PENGUIN (II) where he served until 24 July 1929 when his seven year service was completed and he was discharged from the Navy. Originally the Light Cruiser was built for the Royal Navy in 1902 as HMS ENCOUNTER and transferred to the RAN in 1912 as HMAS ENCOUNTER. After several years of training the new Australian Fleet Unit and serving in World War I, capturing a German controlled steamer, the first RAN prize of the war, and was involved in the successful Australian operation to capture German New Guinea. It was paid off on 30 September 1920. On 1 January 1923 HMAS PENGUIN, the depot ship at Garden Island, was paid off after 47 years of naval service. On the same day ENCOUNTER was renamed PENGUIN (II) and recommissioned for service as the Depot and Accommodation ship. After six years PENGUIN (II) was paid off for the last time on 29 August 1929. After being stripped the hull was sunk off Bondi Beach in September 1932 and is now a popular dive spot. After two years of training and seven years of service in the RAN, Jack Cyril Bray was lucky to serve in the inter-war period. He returned to market gardening, working in Menai NSW, married Esme and had one child, Marjorie. He joined the Freemasons and was also a keen lawn bowls player. He died on 15 August 1968 and was buried at Woronora Cemetery along with his parents and near his wife Esme.