

BARTREAD



WARTIME VEHICLE CONSERVATION GROUP
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIA BURNS

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WVCG MONTHLY MEETINGS

ARE HELD AT THE TOWER HOTEL, MAGILL SA ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH STARTING AT 1900 HR'S. MEALS AVAILABLE, ORDER AT THE BAR AND MEAL WILL BE SERVED IN THE MEETING ROOM.

Inside this issue:

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PHIL HOADLEYS JEEP RESTORATION

I have obtained some new dress up items for the engine, I obtained a Edelbrock air cleaner, just in case the engineer can't get the Hillborn scoop passed.

I also made the images of templates for front chassis reinforcement and boxing.
See photos below.

Dr. Phil Hoadley, Ph.D.
Doctor of Leisure Science from Abide University



Exercise Briefing of RSA-WVCG Joint Re-enactment in Mt Crawford 2020



Chris ENTWISTLE and Steve Smith from the SA re-enactors attended the WVCG General Meeting at the Tower Hotel Tuesday night 4th February 2020 and addressed the members to discuss their upcoming Mt Crawford Tactical Re-enactment between - 29th - 31st May 2020. Both Chris and Steve attended the meeting in full WW2 uniforms, as a British Commando and a German Officer to bring some authenticity to their presentation. Their visit was well received by those attending.





A Message From the WVCG committee

We ask all our members travelling to COROWA or any Club outings to take extreme care when driving your precious restored vehicles on our busy roads and highways. We want you all to arrive safely to the venue and return home safely back to your families.

Your committee

WHO AM I

NO DETAILS RECEIVED

WHO AM I

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE WVCG MEMBER IN THE PHOTOGRAPH.

The correct answers will be posted in the following issue of the magazine. So forward a copy of yourself and let's see what you looked like years ago. It may be of you playing sport or in the services or just doing anything at all. Please forward your photograph to:

Editor/Publisher.

Email: gumbrae44@tpg.com.au

ANSWER TO THE SEPTEMBER 2019 ISSUE WAS: FRANK SCOTT

KVE News

Newsletter of Khaki Vehicle Enthusiasts Inc.
Organisers of the Annual Corowa Swim-In held at Corowa
N.S.W.



Khaki Vehicle
Enthusiasts Inc.

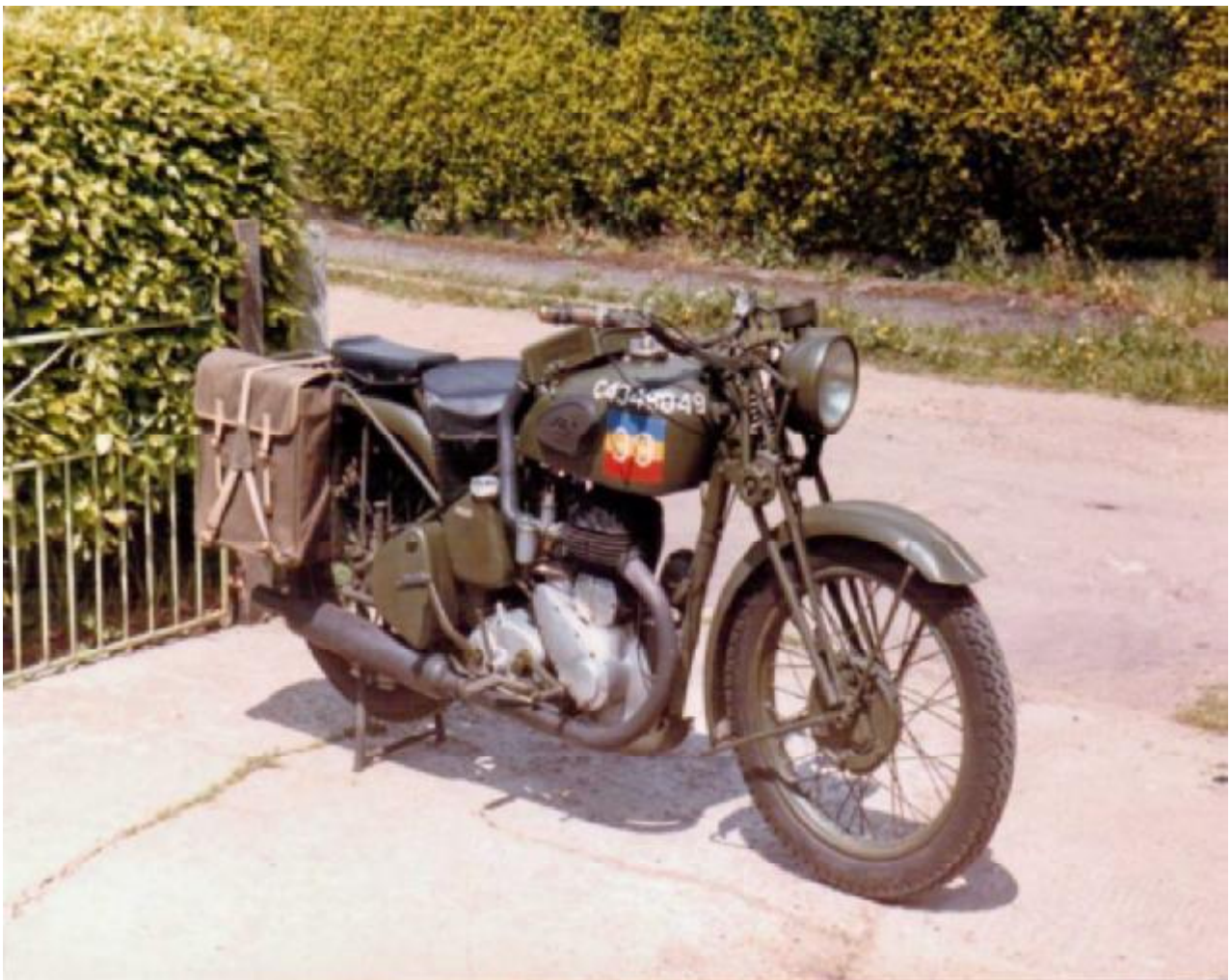
41st Corowa Swim-In & Military Vehicle Gathering

Mon. 9th - Sun. 15th March 2020

Corowa - NSW

All types of ex-military vehicles welcomed to enter

YEAR OF THE MILITARY MOTORCYCLE



COROWA SWIM-IN 2020

The event's 40th Anniversary Theme for this year is;

YEAR OF THE MILITARY MOTORCYCLE

We invite all owners of Ex-Military motorcycles to bring their machines to Corowa for 2020. It will be wonderful to see a large gathering of makes such as BSA, Norton, Triumph, Matchless, Ariel, Royal Enfield, Harley Davidson, Indian, BMW, Zundapp, Bombardier, Armstrong, Condor, Suzuki and Yamaha machines ... and even Welbikes!

The event has runs organised from Wednesday to Friday and on Saturday there is a Parade through Corowa out to the Showground for a static display and Swap Meet. The theme vehicles always lead the Parade. As always, there will be a wide variety of other types of ex-military vehicles attending.

Military Motorcycle Rideout

On Friday there is a dedicated run planned for the Motorcycles only, to leave Ball Park Caravan Park in Corowa and ride out over the border into Victoria and head towards Chiltern and surrounding area. There is a planned lunch stop at Wooragee, where we will meet up with the other military vehicles. The route will be partly on quiet back roads so as to make it more of a pleasant ride.

Please pass the word around to owners of ex-military motorcycles who may not be members of military vehicle clubs.

Just tell them to look at our website; www.corowaswim-in.org

Secretary & Public Relations Report

Joining KVE Inc

To be a part of the organising of the Swim-In in the future you are welcome to join KVE Inc. You can download a Membership Application Form off the website or ask me for a copy. By joining KVE you will be given more of a chance to make suggestions for how the event is run in the future.

For further information on the event please feel free to give me a call on 0412 078 096 or send an email to kveinc@optusnet.com.au To ensure you are kept up to date with details send me an email to get on the database.

Until next time,

Jan Thompson-Creamer Secretary and Public Relations Officer



Motorcycle disposal sale UK post-war. (thanks to Lang Kidby for the photo)

The motorcycles appear to be roped together in batches. It was easier to sell like this and dealers could buy them and use some for spares, all appear in a rough state including the vehicles behind. A lot of BSA WM20's in the foreground and also a lot of civilian register bikes that would have been impressed and could have been used for Civil Defence or National Fire Service duties.

AUSTRALIA DAY PARADE 2020











World War Two tank discovered in German man's basement

The tank, among the weapons haul discovered hidden in the cellar of a villa in Kiel, took nine hours to remove



A World War Two era 'Panther' battle tank is removed from a residential basement.

German soldiers grappled for nine hours with an unusual task: trying to remove a Second World War tank found in the cellar of a villa. Almost 20 soldiers struggled to remove the tank from a villa on Thursday in a wealthy suburb of Kiel in northern Germany, after police searching the property discovered the tank, a torpedo, an anti-aircraft gun and other weapons in the cellar on Wednesday. Police raided the home in the town of Heikendorf under instructions from prosecutors, who suspected that the villa's 78-year-old owner held the weaponry illegally under a law controlling the possession of instruments of war. The army was called in to try to remove the 1943-vintage Panther tank and struggled for nine hours to tow it out using two modern recovery tanks designed to haul damaged battle tanks off the field. The soldiers ended up having to build their own wooden ramp in order to free the tank. Ulrich Burchardi, an army spokesman, described the difficult task of removing the tank without damaging the house as "precision work". The other weapons have also now been confiscated by police. Prosecutors in Kiel were alerted to the existence of the weapons by the authorities in Berlin, who had previously searched the villa for stolen Nazi art around a month earlier, national newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* reported. But Peter Gramsch, lawyer for the villa's owner, claimed that the tank and the anti-aircraft gun could no longer fire their weapons and were therefore not breaking any law. He told the newspaper there was even a note from

the responsible district office from 2005 stating that the tank had lost its weapons capability. Mr Gramsch now wants to take legal action against the seizure and for compensation for his client. "I assume that the tank was damaged in the process," he said.



German Police discovered military equipment from World War II including the Panther tank, weapons and a torpedo in a cellar of a villa



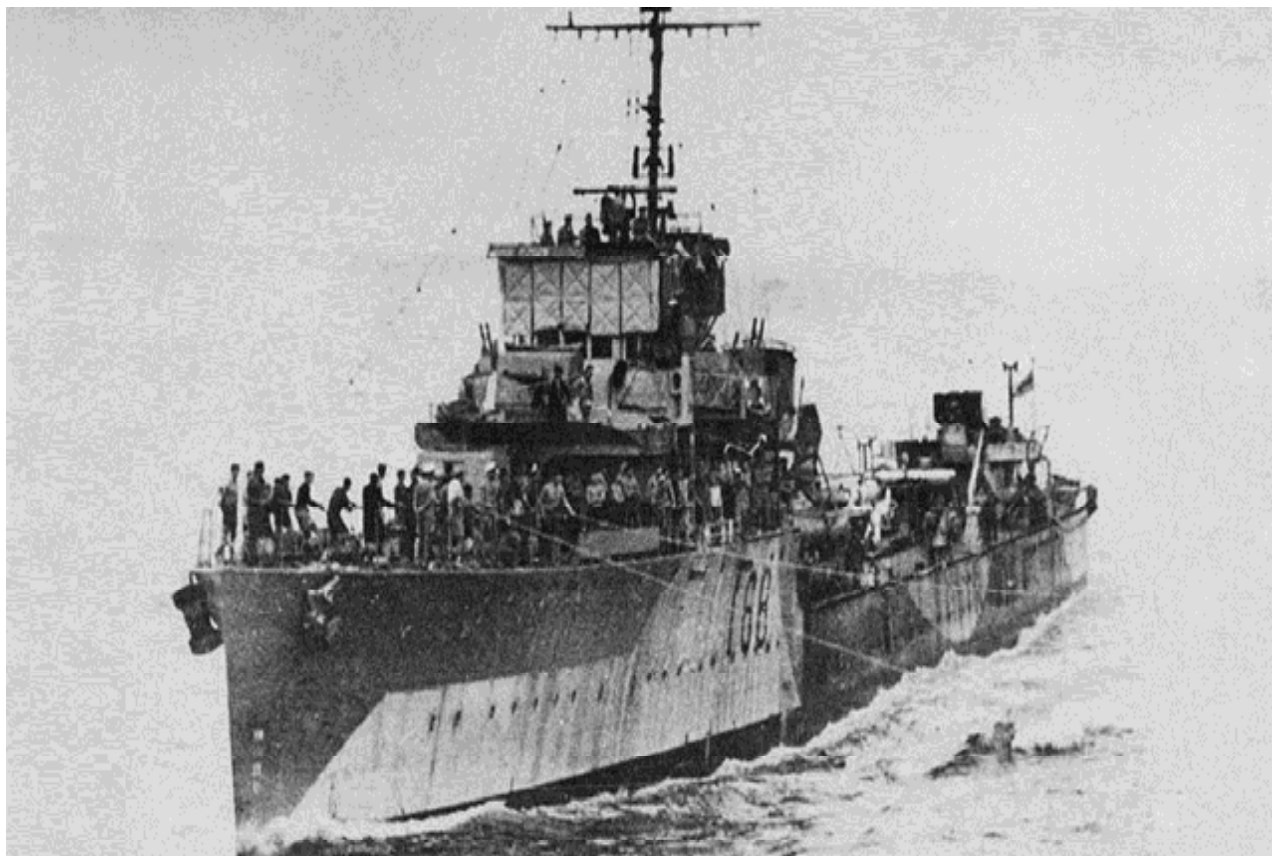
The villa owner, described as leading a secluded life, is now being investigated for breaching the war weapons control act. The mayor of Heikendorf, Alexander Orth, who was present at the tank's remove, said the discovery came as no surprise, telling the newspaper that the owner "was chugging around in that thing during the snow catastrophe in 1978". Mr Orth said the man has a "a certain fondness for particular things", adding: "Some people like steam trains, others like tanks. "However, there is no evidence that the man has broken the law.



A World War Two flak cannon was also found at the collector's villa.



New search for HMAS Vampire missing since 1942



By: **Brian Hartigan**

One of the remaining maritime mysteries of World War II may soon be solved, thanks to a joint Nine sailors died when the destroyer HMAS Vampire sank after enduring an intensive Japanese air attack off the Sri Lankan coast. She had been attempting to protect the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Hermes on 9 April 1942. Commander Australian Fleet Rear Admiral Jonathan Mead said the ship's precise location had never been confirmed but that a new lead had recently emerged. "This new information was shared during recent high-level Navy-to-Navy talks in Colombo," Rear Admiral Mead said. "We have always known roughly where the Vampire went down but its exact location has proved elusive. "There are no guarantees of success, but we owe it to the families of those on board to follow up this new lead." Further research by both Australian and Sri Lankan hydrographers in recent months concluded that there is a strong chance HMAS Vampire's final resting place has been identified. The Australian hydrographic ship HMAS Leeuwin and mine hunter HMAS Diamantina are in the region to assist with a more thorough search. "Whatever the outcome, we are most grateful to Sri Lanka for their cooperation and understanding," Rear Admiral Mead said. The Vampire story illustrates the enduring ties we have with Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean region." Families and friends can register their interest to keep updated with the search of HMAS Vampire by emailing: vampire.search@defence.gov.au operation between the Royal Australian Navy and the Sri Lankan Navy.

**HMAS VAMPIRE IS STILL ON PATROL
"LEST WE FORGET"**

GREAT RESTORATIONS BY LOVERS OF MILITARY VEHICLES









Submarine Missing for 75 Years, Is Found Off Okinawa

Private explorers found the U.S.S. Grayback beneath 1,400 feet of water after realizing that a mistranslated Japanese war record had pointed searchers in the wrong direction.



*Tim Taylor, an undersea explorer, set up the Lost 52 Project with the goal of finding the wrecks of every American submarine lost in World War II.
Credit ...Mary Inhea Kang for The New York Times*



By John Ismay
Published Nov. 10, 2019 Updated Dec. 2, 2019

A 75-year-old mystery has been solved, and the families of 80 American sailors lost at sea will now have closure: the U.S.S. Grayback has finally been found. It was hidden from discovery all this time by a single errant digit. The mystery began on Jan. 28, 1944, when the Grayback, one of the most successful American submarines of World War II, sailed out of Pearl Harbor for its 10th combat patrol. By late March it was more than three weeks overdue to return, and the Navy listed the submarine as missing and presumed lost. After the war, the Navy tried to piece together a comprehensive history of the 52 submarines it had lost. The history, issued in 1949, gave approximate locations of where each submarine had disappeared. The Grayback was thought to have gone down in the open ocean 100 miles east-southeast of Okinawa. But the Navy had unknowingly relied on a flawed translation of Japanese war records that got one digit wrong in the latitude and longitude of the spot where the Grayback had probably met its end. The error went undetected until last year, when an American undersea explorer asked a researcher, Yutaka Iwasaki, to go through the wartime records of the Imperial Japanese Navy base at Sasebo. The files included daily reports received by radio from the naval air base at Naha, Okinawa — and the entry for Feb. 27, 1944, contained a promising lead.

The report for that day said that a Nakajima B5N carrier-based bomber had dropped a 500-pound bomb on a surfaced submarine, striking just aft of the conning tower. The sub exploded and sank immediately, and there were no survivors. "In that radio record, there is a longitude and a latitude of the attack, very clearly," Mr. Iwasaki said. And it did not match what was in the 1949 Navy history, not by a hundred miles. Mr. Iwasaki is a system engineer who lives in Kobe, Japan, and who became fascinated as a teenager with the Japanese merchant ships of World War II — four-fifths of which were sunk during the war, he said. Uncovering the history of those ships necessarily brought him into contact with records on submarines. "For me, finding U.S. submarines is part of my activity to introduce the tragic story of war," he said. "It is my hobby, and also my passion."

His work on Japanese maritime shipping had brought him to the attention of Tim Taylor, an undersea explorer who has set out to find the wrecks of every American submarine lost in the war. In 2010 he found his first submarine, the U.S.S. R-12, off Key West, Fla., where it sank during a training exercise in 1943. He set up the privately funded Lost 52 Project to track down the rest, relying on technology that had become available only in the last 10 to 15 years. Mr. Taylor says that of the 52 lost American submarines, 47 are considered discoverable; the other five were run aground or destroyed in known locations.

Mr. Taylor and his wife, Christine Dennison, have been searching for those 47, and have begun to focus on the ones that were probably sunk near Japan. Through his work in undersea exploration, Mr. Taylor was introduced to Don Walsh, a former Navy submariner who, as a lieutenant in 1960, reached the deepest point of any ocean on Earth, in the Mariana Trench near Guam. Mr. Walsh gave Mr. Taylor his copy of the 1949 Navy history, "U.S. Submarine Losses, World War II." Armed with the information in that book and Mr. Iwasaki's discovery, Mr. Taylor and the Lost 52 team decided to make a run at finding the Grayback.



Mr. Taylor set up the Lost 52 Project to track down missing American submarines from World War II, relying on technology that had become available only in the last 10 to 15 years.

The Grayback last patrol was its third under the command of Cmdr. John A. Moore, who had been awarded the Navy Cross for each of the first two. His third Navy Cross would be awarded posthumously, after the submarine sent 21,594 tons of Japanese shipping to the bottom on its last mission. In all, the Grayback sank more than a dozen Japanese ships. The Navy considers submarines like the Grayback to be "still on patrol."

As Commander Moore did 75 years before, Mr. Taylor launched his mission to Okinawa this spring from Hawaii. When they reached Japanese waters in June, he and his team fought through mechanical and electrical problems that bedevilled their mission. They were searching an area where the ocean was 1,400 feet deep, and their main search tool was a 14-foot-long autonomous underwater vehicle weighing thousands of pounds that Mr. Taylor likened to an underwater drone. It would dive to just a few hundred feet above the sea floor and then spend 24 hours pinging with different sonars back and forth across about 10 square nautical miles. When the drone returned to the mother ship, technicians downloaded its data, using computer software to stitch all the sonar imagery into one coherent picture that they could quickly review.



A sonar image of the U.S.S. Grayback lying at a depth of 1,427 feet off the coast of Okinawa, Japan. Tim Taylor and his team at the Lost 52 Project located the wreck using an autonomous underwater vehicle to gather sonar data from a few hundred feet above the seafloor.

"When you're on these sites, you feel like you're one breakdown away from having to go home," Mr. Taylor said of the search area. "So, every day is precious." On the next to last day of the expedition, the drone reported a malfunction one-third of the way through a planned 24-hour mission. As they recovered the drone, Mr. Taylor said, half of his crew started getting the ship ready to return to port, thinking that the vehicle was likely to be beyond quick repair. But Mr. Taylor began reviewing the images captured by the drone. He quickly spotted two anomalies on the sea floor and readied another of the ship's remotely operated vehicles to visit the bottom. Unlike the drone, this one was steered manually from the mother ship, and had high-definition cameras. In a matter of hours, Mr. Taylor was looking at the hull of the Grayback and, lying about 400 feet away, was the submarine's deck gun, which had been blown off when the bomb exploded.

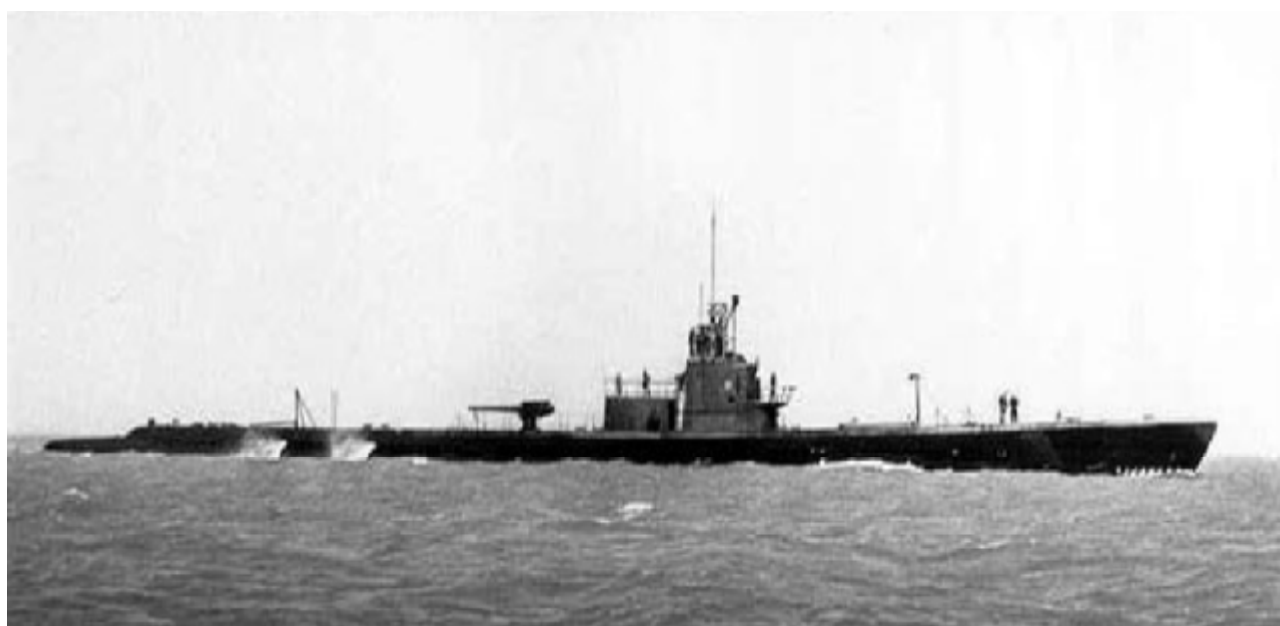
"We were elated," Mr. Taylor said. "But it's also sobering, because we just found 80 men." The next day, Mr. Taylor and his crew held a ceremony to remember the sailors lost aboard the ship and called out their names one by one. One of those names was John Patrick King. His nephew John Bihn, of Wantagh, N.Y., is named after him. Mr. Bihn, who was born three years after the Grayback went down, remembers him as a constant presence in his maternal grandparents' home, where a black-and-white photo of the submarine hung in the living room near a black frame holding Mr. King's Purple Heart medal and citation. But in his family, the subject of his uncle's death was "too sad to ask about," Mr. Bihn said. "My mother would cry very often if you spoke to her about it." With no body to bury, Mr. Bihn grandparents, Patrick and Catherine King, memorialized their son on their own headstone. Under their names, Mr. Bihn said, they had engraved, "John Patrick King 'Lost in Action.'" Mr. Bihn got a text message from his sister Katherine Taylor (no relation to Tim Taylor) two weeks ago, saying the Grayback had been found. She had gotten the news

She had gotten the news from Christine Dennison. "I was dumbfounded," he said. "I just could not believe it." "I wish my parents were alive to see this, because it would certainly make them very happy," he added. In a video taken by the vehicle that surveyed the wreck, Mr. Bihn said, the camera tilted upward at one point to show the conning tower, and a plaque reading "U.S.S. Grayback" was plain to see. "It's like someone wiped it clean," Mr. Bihn said. "It's like it wanted to be found."



The U.S.S. Grayback was on its 10th combat patrol when it sank on Feb. 27, 1944, struck by a 500-pound Japanese bomb just aft of its conning tower.

Correction: Dec. 2, 2019. An earlier version of this article misstated the military rank of John A. Moore, who led the final voyage of the U.S.S. Grayback. He was a commander, not a lieutenant commander.



FROM THE ANNALS OF THE NSW JEEP CLUB

“OUT AND ABOUT” THE CLARENCE TOWN SWIM IN

A great picture selection of last Novembers Clarence Town Swim in event from Jackaroo! This years event slated for 5th to the 8th November 2020











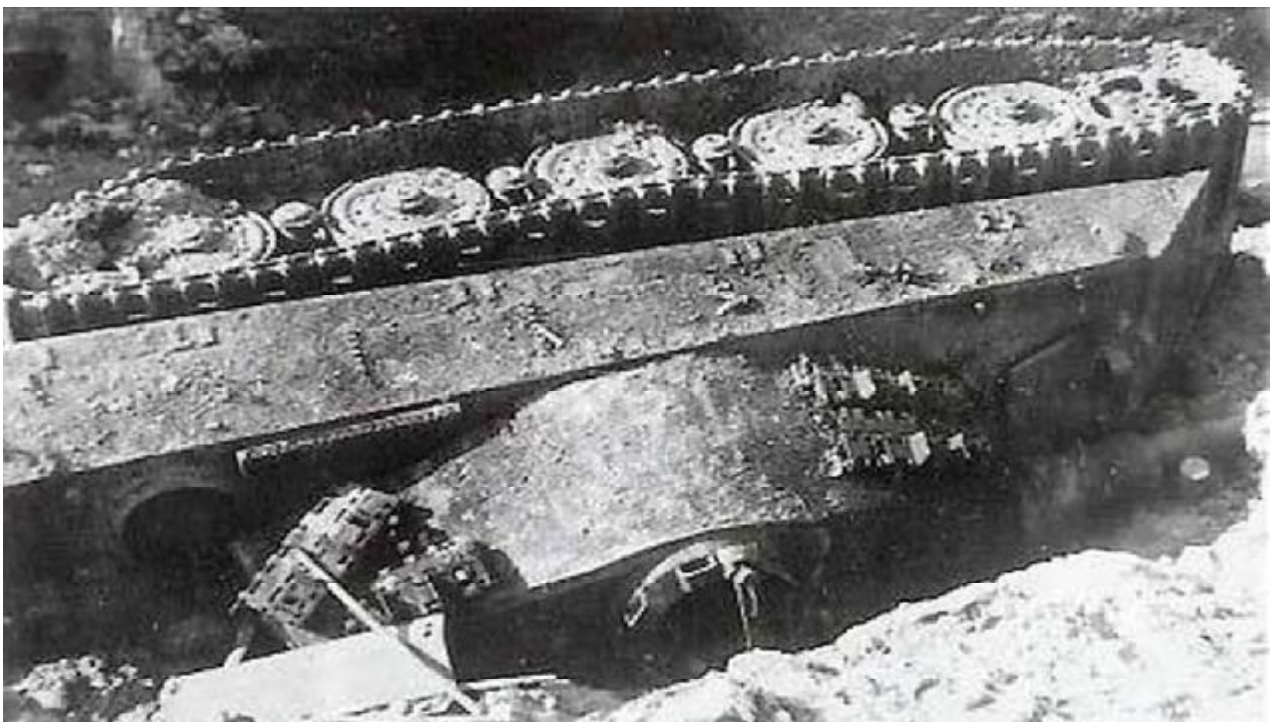
King Tiger WWII Tank Wreck Found

This German WW2 King Tiger tank is currently in two parts. The turret has been rescued and restoration is starting but the chassis is buried under a French road to the North West of Paris.



German King Tiger Tank

This is a photo of a King Tiger Tank turret in France. He said that this and other King Tiger Tank parts were found in 2001 near Mantes-la-Jolie, France. This Tiger 2 tank, from the 101 SS.s. Abteilung, was lost in a crater near Fontenay-Saint-Père on 26 August 1944. It was blown up by a scrap dealer after the war and the small metal bits were buried when the D913 road was constructed. Bruno Renoult, a local historian, discovered and recovered parts of the turret, including the roof and parts of the turret's left side.



German King Tiger Tank

The hull of the tank remains (in bits) under the road. There is a project to recover all the bits remaining under the road, to reconstruct the tank and to build a monument where the tank will be displayed, but the project has encountered technical, Financial and administrative difficulties. The tank is technically the property of the city of Fontenay-Saint-Père under the D913. But in France the roads are the property of "Conseil General". He must agree to divert the road during excavation. There is a bigger problem. It is believed that some of the shells in the King Tiger may be live and could explode. Agreement must be reached with the French Army Services to take on the job of deactivating the ammunition during the excavation.



German King Tiger Tank 124 turret

In France at this time there are three projects which are "urgent" 1) Restoring the Tiger 1 tank in Vimoutiers, 2) Saving the Tiger 2 tank under the D913 road near Fontenay-Saint-Père, Mantes la Jolie 3) Saving the last surviving example of a Hotchkiss H35 tank which is under water on a beach in Pas de Calais. These three projects will cost a lot of money. The Vimoutiers Tiger 1 Tank project is the responsibility of the Mayor of Vimoutiers and the French Ministry of Culture the Tiger 2 tank project is the responsibility of the Mayor of Fontenay-Saint-Père and the French Conseil General. The Hotchkiss H35 tank restoration is a Saumur French Tank Museum project. Staff at the museum will be available to offer technical advice on all three projects. The Vimoutiers Tiger Tank has legal protection as it is officially classified as a historic monument and may not be sold or given away. The Fontenay-Saint-Père King Tiger will be classified as a historic monument as soon as it is dug out of the ground. That means the local Mayors Office of Fontenay-Saint-Père cannot sell the tank or any parts of the tanks. Several collectors have already made offers.

Operational history

The 11th August 1944, a company of King Tiger Tanks left Mailly le camp by rail. It did not arrive in time to participate in the battle of the Falaise Pocket. They fought near the town of Mantes la Jolie centred around the village of Fontenay-St-Père. Among them was Tiger II tank number 124 commanded by SS-Oberscharführer Fritz Zahner of the German Heavy Tank Battalion Schw.Pz. Abt 503



Bad photo of the Fontenay-Saint-Père King Tiger Tank 124 turret. It is now re-stored, and dry stored, waiting its body to be dug up.

The American troops trying to liberate the towns of Mantois and Vexin underwent six days of repeated attacks by the Tiger II tanks. At 4. 46 pm, USAF P-47 fighter-bombers come to the troops rescue and attack the Tigers. King Tiger 124 is damaged by an explosion and retreats to the village of Montgison. This is where the stories differ. One story says that one of the American bombs caused an enormous crater in the road. The King Tiger's driver saw it too late and the tank falls inside it. The crew cannot get the tank out of the hole and must abandon their killing machine. The second story is that a second air to ground attack causes the crew to bail out and abandon the tank. To clear the road, it is shoved into the bomb crater. The third story is from a conversation Bruno Renoult, the historian who found the turret in an archaeological dig, had with a local resident who lived through the battle. He recalled that the King Tiger tank was left over turned on its side by the edge of the road before it was dragged into the bomb crater. Bruno said he saw a photo of the tank on its side with the number 123 painted on the turret not 124. Research has shown that this Tiger II was part of the same company as the restored King Tiger in the French Tank Museum in Saumur. A decision was made that the tank and the bomb crater would be covered in soil to enable the road to be repaired. The tanks Turret was saved and is now under re-construction.

A SPECIAL REQUEST

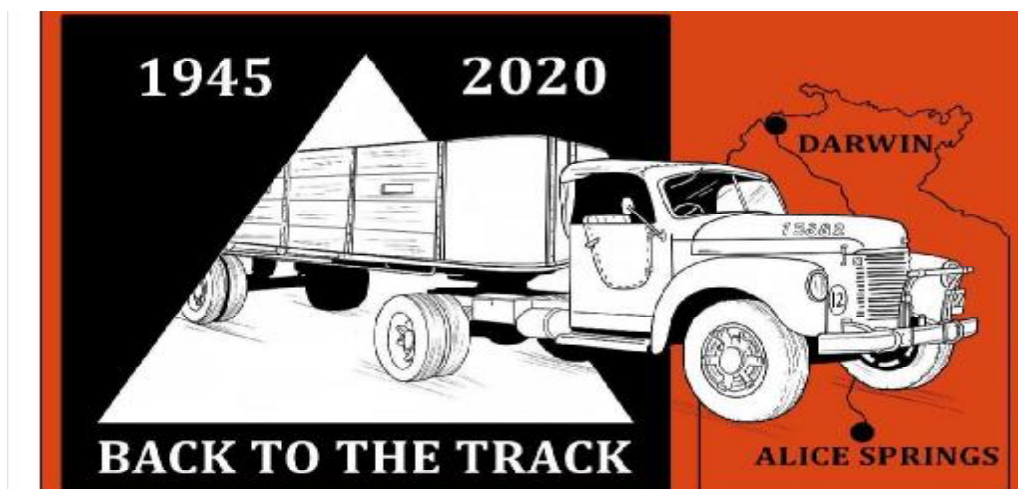
DON'T THROW AWAY THOSE OLD JEEP BARTREAD TYRES. RICK SHEARMAN WILL TAKE THEM OFF YOUR HANDS. IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHAT CONDITION THE TYRES ARE IN AS LONG AS THEY ARE NOT HOLED OR CRACKED. CONTACT. RICK SHEARMAN

Mobile: 0408 835 018

EMAIL: rickshearman@bigpond.com

BACK TO THE TRACK

24 JULY — 15 AUGUST 2020



More news on the BTTT 2020 itinerary, public engagement events and grant funding
January 2020 Update



Work on the itinerary is near complete with a full two weeks of activities in Alice Springs and something for each day on the track for two weeks as we head towards fortress Darwin. <https://www.backtothetrack2020.com/itinerary>



We have representatives in each major destination along the track working on events and activities. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find out if NT Gov or City of Darwin are going to be doing anything at all to commemorate the service and sacrifice of service men and women during WWII in the Northern Territory for the 15th August - 75th anniversary. Access to memorials and cenotaph will not be made due to festivals set up along the esplanade. Which will be a huge disappointment for the 350+ participants driving from every corner of the country to discover the military history in the NT and arriving in fortress Darwin. Work to secure grant funding to have surviving members of the 58th A A Searchlight Battery, who served in Darwin during WWII, attend, will have to be modified to fly them to Alice Springs and commemorations held at the National Women's Museum. They wanted a reunion in Darwin where they served, but to organize for them to make the trip and to receive no recognition, would have been a huge disappointment. Alice Springs activities will now include more recognition of the ladies' service (7 Mile aerodrome historic precinct, CA Aviation Museum, National Women's Museum dedication "Women in War" exhibition). Official Entrant participant back packs (WWII style) full of event information and guidance are being compiled (140 for the WWII vehicle entrants and 25 for support vehicles)

Your official entrant guidebook with event ticketing information will be published in April. All packs for collection at the start in Alice Springs. Saluting Their Service major grant application will be submitted at the end of March which will hopefully allow us to support veterans attending commemorations in Alice Springs (and Darwin?) including members of 58th Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Battery women of WWII. Our hosts in Alice Springs - Road Transport Hall of Fame, has worked its way through a new governance model and is now working with us to ensure all planned events and camping facilities are ready for us in July. Volunteers are in short supply, so if anybody is looking to arrive in June and early in July, you might be interested in helping establish a military vehicle museum extension to the RTHF. Designed to commemorate the WWII Army presence in Central Australia, the building of the Stuart Highway, and provide suitable undercover display of military vehicles, a WWII workshop display, and help set up a display of photographs and militaria in the original WWII passenger carriages, all to be displayed inside the original Ghan engine and carriage shed.

We will be in Corowa again this year, so if you are wanting an update on the event and are attending the military vehicle meet, catch up with my event presentation on the Friday Night (Football club rooms). <https://www.corowaswim-in.org>

Email is the best contact for me (I have no mobile at work) dougdraeger@hotmail.com

Community Engagement

I have been promoting this event as a commemorative event so we are looking for participants to engage as much as possible with the public and media who will be covering this event:

Do you have a story to share? Prepare now, as everybody will have an opportunity to tell their story:

- The story of your vehicles restoration.
- What was your vehicle used for during the War.
- A family member who served.
- Your families story of life in Australia during the War





Mission Statement

Our focus remains the Mission Statement:

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII, through a national procession of historic military vehicles from every state to Darwin We are telling the story of the sacrifices made during our most desperate time in Australia's and world history, and resources are being gathered to display some aspects of this desperate times in the Territory along the track.

https://mcusercontent.com/37ec7485d3fe1d1dcdf7a7bad/files/99195592-d824-49ce-9003-879fd8d71faa/Indigenous_Australians_at_war_14425_01.docx

https://mcusercontent.com/37ec7485d3fe1d1dcdf7a7bad/files/2486b8b3-8885-4cbf-888e-435937d1e5d0/Women_at_War.01.docx

https://mcusercontent.com/37ec7485d3fe1d1dcdf7a7bad/files/4ed11adf-6b3b-4ce1-a8fe-5e4d0976389b/The_Australian_Red_Cross_in_two_world_wars.01.docx

What's on in Darwin

Darwin has several festivals happening in the same week as the anniversary of the End of the Battle for Australia, so at this stage, no access can be given by Darwin City Council to memorials or cenotaph along the esplanade. Hopefully this attitude will change closer to the Anniversary.

Current Itinerary

<https://www.backtothetrack2020.com/itinerary>

Crew of missing WWII Catalina can rest at last

Ann Lefebvre, the daughter of Jim Cox — who was one of nine missing RAAF aircrew on the Dabster who disappeared on a bombing raid in The Philippines in 1944.

Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen



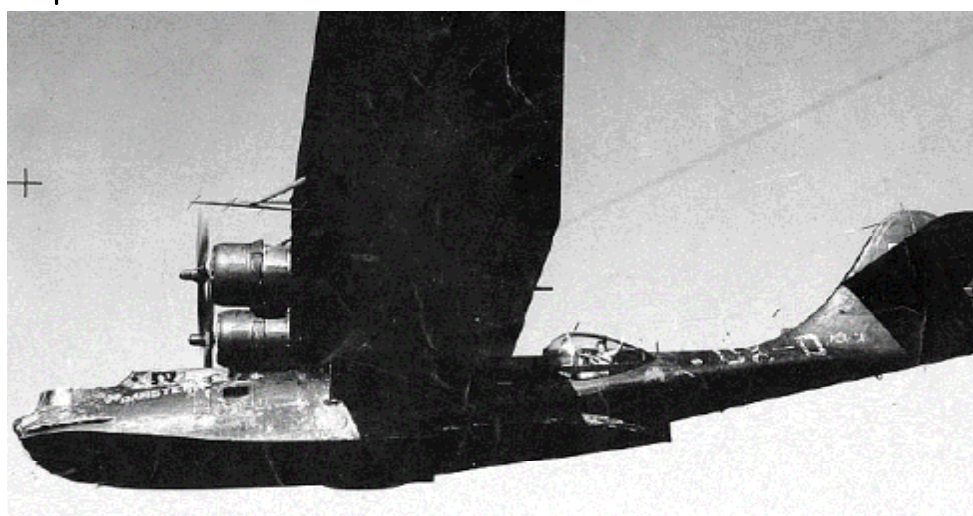
Report By RORY CALLINAN

The crash site of a Catalina flying boat carrying nine Australian aircrew that went missing on a World War II bombing raid more than 74 years ago has been found in The Philippines. Air force officers have begun contacting the next of kin of the nine airmen to alert them to the discovery of wreckage from the Catalina A24-64, known as the Dabster, which vanished without a trace on December 14, 1944. An official expedition to the site earlier this year using metal detectors discovered distinctive wreckage from the Catalina, including parts associated with the small stove that was issued to the aircraft for long haul flights, as well as a piece of window frame and other parts. Following extensive forensic examination of the parts and confirmation of their association with the Catalina, RAAF officers began contacting families. The Australian last year revealed the RAAF's intention to mount the expedition following reports of an officer's cap badge being found at the site, but experts were divided over which plane might have crashed on the hillside. One theory was that a Liberator bomber returning from a secret mission with Australian special forces to Borneo had hit the hillside but another hypothesis pointed to the Catalina. Both planes were lost without a trace during missions in the region and extensive searches had failed to find any clue to their fate.



Jim Cox with wife Barbara.

While some relatives knew there was an expedition, they had received no definite indication as to which aircraft if any would be at the site until last week. For Anne Lefebvre, who was seven months old when her navigator father Flight Lieutenant James Cox went missing on the Dabster, the call left her stunned. "When they told me they had found my father's plane, I thought it was a scam," said 74-year-old Ms Lefebvre. "I nearly fell off my chair. I was in shock." Ms Lefebvre said even as a young child, she had desperately tried to find out what happened to her father. "I lived in Canberra and even when I was young, I used to take my friends up to the war memorial and look for my father," she said. "One day, I must have been about seven or eight, I climbed up into an aircraft they had there to look inside to see if I could find my father. "The guards came and got me down. I told them I was trying to find him." Ms Lefebvre said she also received a personal briefing from the air force last week that included being shown some of the material they recovered from the site. She said as well as being shown the coils from the stove and apart from a window that could only be used on the Catalina, the officers also had drone footage of the site that suggested an impact on the hillside.



The Dabster.

Defence is understood to be planning an expedition in 2020 to the site to conduct an in-depth search and check to see if any human remains are at the site. However, Ms Lefebvre said she had the impression from the briefing that it was unlikely any human remains would be found given the weather conditions and the length of time that had passed since the crash. Of the nine crew on the plane, five were from NSW, two from West Australia and two from -Victoria. For the families of the men, the hardest thing was having no clue as to what happened to the Dabster, which was supposed to be returning from a night mine-laying operation on Manila Bay. Some of the next of kin spent years seeking answers and keeping the missing men's memories alive. One parent, Stanley Goodchild, whose son Crew Sergeant Harold Goodchild was on the plane, left a lasting monument to his son. He constructed a large brick gateway to the entrance to his wheat farm in Mukinbudin in Western Australia and installed electric lights to act as a beacon in the remote bush to guide his -missing son home. Ms Lefebvre said her mother, despite remarrying, never gave up believing that her father was going to come back. "Even when she died, I still think she had hope he was still alive," she said. "It would be tears for weeks before Anzac Day. "When my mother went out, I would get a suitcase of photographs sent back by my father and go through them, as he was an amateur -photographer." Also missing on the Dabster were flight lieutenants Herbert Cunningham Roberts and Frank William Silvester; flying officers Robert Carlisle Barbour and -Raymond Harold Bradstreet; and -sergeants James Robert -Robinson, David John Albert, and John Charles MacDonald. The Dabster's night mission had been to mine the Balabac Strait and the mouth of Manila Bay in a bid to stop the Japanese from attacking an allied landing on Mindoro the following day. Twenty-four Catalinas — dubbed the Black Cats — took part in the mission, which involved a four-hour flight to the harbour and a night attack.

Bad Angel

The "Bad Angel" WWII Story

We were in Hanger #4 of the Pima Air and Space Museum to view the beautifully restored B-29, when I happened to take notice of a P-51 Mustang near the big bomber. Its name? "Bad Angel".



I was admiring its aerodynamic lines and recalled enough history to know that until the Mustangs came into service, the skies over the Pacific Ocean were dominated by Japanese Zeros. Then something very strange caught my eye. Proudly displayed on the fuselage of "Bad Angel" were the markings of the pilot's kills: seven Nazis; one Italian; one Japanese AND ONE AMERICAN. Huh? "Bad Angel" shot down an American airplane?



Kill marks on "Bad Angel"

Was it a terrible mistake? Couldn't be. If it had been an unfortunate misjudgement, certainly the pilot would not have displayed the American flag. I knew there had to be a good story here. Fortunately for us, one of the Museum's many fine docents was on hand to tell it. In 1942, the United States needed pilots for its war planes lots of war planes; lots of pilots. Lt. Louis Curdes was one. When he was 22 years old, he graduated flight training school and was shipped off to the Mediterranean to fight Nazis in the air over Southern Europe.



Lt. Louis Curdes

He arrived at his 82nd Fighter Group, 95th Fighter Squadron in April 1943 and was assigned a P-38 Lightning. Ten days later he shot down three German Messerschmitt Bf-109 fighters. A few weeks later, he downed two more German Bf-109's. In less than a month of combat, Louis was an Ace. During the next three months, Louis shot down an Italian Mc.202 fighter and two more Messerschmitt's before his luck ran out. A German fighter shot down his plane on August 27, 1943 over Salerno, Italy. Captured by the Italians, he was sent to a POW camp near Rome. No doubt this is where he thought he would spend the remaining years of the war. It wasn't to be. A few days later, the Italians surrendered. Louis and a few other pilots escaped before the Nazis could take control of the camp. One might think that such harrowing experiences would have taken the fight out of Louis, yet

This time, Uncle Sam sent him to the Philippines where he flew P-51 Mustangs. Soon after arriving in the Pacific Theatre, Louis downed a Mitsubishi reconnaissance plane near Formosa. Now he was one of only three Americans to have kills against all three Axis Powers:

Germany, Italy, and Japan. Up until this point, young Lt. Curdes' combat career had been stellar. His story was about to take a twist so bizarre that it seems like the fictional creation of a Hollywood screenwriter. While attacking the Japanese-held island of Bataan, one of Louis' wingmen was shot down. The pilot ditched in the ocean. Circling overhead, Louis could see that his wingman had survived, so he stayed in the area to guide a rescue plane and protect the downed pilot. It wasn't long before he noticed another, larger airplane, wheels down, preparing to land at the Japanese-held airfield on Bataan. He moved in to investigate. Much to his surprise the approaching plane was a Douglas C-47 transport with American markings. He tried to make radio contact, but without success. He maneuvered his Mustang in front of the big transport several times trying to wave it off. The C-47 kept ahead to its landing target.



He tried to make radio contact, but without success. He maneuvered his Mustang in front of the big transport several times trying to wave it off. The C-47 kept ahead to its landing target. Apparently, the C-47 crew didn't realize they were about to land on a Japanese held island, and soon would be captives. Lt. Curdes read the daily newspaper accounts of the war, including the viciousness of the Japanese soldiers toward their captives. He knew that whoever was in that American C-47 would be, upon landing, either dead or wish they were. But what could he do? Audaciously, he lined up his P-51 directly behind the transport, carefully sighted one of his 50 calibre machine guns and knocked out one of its two engines. Still the C-47 continued on toward the Bataan airfield. Curdes shifted his aim slightly and knocked out the remaining engine, leaving the baffled pilot no choice but to ditch in the ocean. The big plane came down in one piece about 50 yards from his bobbing wingman. At this point, nightfall and low fuel forced Louis to return to base. The next morning, Louis flew cover for a rescuing PBY that picked up the downed Mustang pilot and 12 passengers and crew, including two female nurses, from the C-47. All survived. Later, Lt. Curdes would end up marrying one of these nurses! For shooting down an unarmed American transport plane, Lt. Louis Curdes was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thereafter, on the fuselage of his P-51 "Bad Angel", he proudly displayed the symbols of his kills: seven German, one Italian, one Japanese and one American flag.



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