

## **Oriel George Ramsay**

Ref: Australian Roll of Honour, honoured by the Queen 1952 – 1998.

Ramsay, Oriel George. B.E.M., R.F.M.

Awards: B.E.M. (1964), 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star, Africa Star, Burma Star, Pacific Star, 1939-45 Victory Medal, 1939-45 Australian Service Medal, R.A.N. Reserve Force Medal – with Two Clasps, R.A.N. Long Service and Good Conduct Medal with Two Bars (25 years), Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with F.E.S.R. Clasp.

Life: Born 11/03/1921 in Subiaco, Western Australia and 'Home' was in Wembley Park. Son of Alexander Stuart Ramsay and Ada Ramsay. Married Edna Groves 28 October 1944. Three children, Edna Kathleen Ramsay, Norman George Ramsay, Allan Douglas Ramsay. Educated at Jolimont Primary School, then to Perth Boys High School.

Career: Successful in business partnership and followed on in the Navy service (38 years). President of HMAS "Sydney" (1934-1941) Association (W.A). Member of six ships associations. Long time Navy hospital visitor – from 110 Military Hospital, then in 1992 Hollywood Repatriation Hospital, then to Ramsay Healthcare Private Hospital. Past Vice President of Perth Sub-section (W.A.) Naval Association. Naval Associations Meritorious Medal (1994).

Service: Enlisted R.A.N.R. (Cadet) 1937, served continuously in R.A.N. and R.A.N.E.R. until 1976 – in the Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic, Russia, Indian and Pacific Oceans, and to Japan (war surrender). In post war times, Australian waters, New Zealand, and New Guinea.

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H.M.A.S. Sydney II (1935-1941) was a 6" light cruiser of the Royal Australian Navy.

She was a Ship that endeared herself to the hearts of Western Australians because her 'first station' in World War II was here at the Port of Fremantle. In the short time she was stationed here her Crew was supplemented mainly with Royal Australian Naval Reserve Sailors from the Fremantle Port Division, and so the Ship and her Crew had very strong 'ties' with the people of Western Australia.

At the outbreak of War – Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939 – "SYDNEY" was at Victoria Quay in Fremantle Harbour. From that day on it was War Routine and she began making her name famous in a series of 'Firsts' that are worth recording –

- (a) First R.A.N. Ship's Company to be granted Leave in Wartime.
- (b) First R.A.N. Ship to convoy Australian Troops ("DUNTROON" 7.12.39 and 2<sup>nd</sup> A.I.F. Convoys US 1-2-3).

- (c) First R.A.N. Cruiser into the War Zone (Mediterranean May 1940).
- (d) First R.A.N. Cruiser into Action (Bombardment "BARDIA" June 21<sup>st</sup> 1940).
- (e) First R.A.N. Warship into Enemy Warship Action and Victory ("ESPERO" sunk June 28<sup>th</sup> 1940).
- (f) First R.A.N. Cruiser in a Fleet Action (In Royal Navy's First Fleet action in the Mediterranean for over a century – against the Italian Battle Fleet off Calabria – 9<sup>th</sup> July 1940).
- (g) First R.A.N. Cruiser in ship to ship (cruiser versus cruiser) action – in fact, against TWO enemy cruisers, sinking one of them, the "BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI" and damaging the other, the "GIOVANNI DELE BANDE NERE" – 19<sup>th</sup> July 1940.
- (h) First R.A.N. Warship in incursion raid into the Adriatic Sea – 11/12 November, 1940.

Truly a ship of which Western Australians can be proud.

During the period from the outbreak of War, September 1939 to December 1940 "SYDNEY" steamed 73,405 sea miles (a distance equal to three times around the world). This worked out at 6.3 miles for every hour of the War.

Compare that with the 57,477 miles she had steamed in the four years from first commissioning in 1935 up to the outbreak of war in 1939.

Throughout the period in the Mediterranean she fired;  
 2,769 – 6" shells and  
 1,240 – 4" shells.

Sadly, on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1941, "SYDNEY" was lost in an enemy action off our North West Coast – the third Australian Warship to be lost in W.W. 2 (following H.M.A.S. GOORANGI in 1940 and H.M.A.S. WATERHEN in the Mediterranean in 1941).

The tragedy which really struck home to all Western Australians was that of the total compliment of 645 Officers and Ratings lost, 93 of them (3 Officers and 90 Ratings) were West Australians.