

4 Christine Avenue
Ryde NSW 2112

26 January 2008

K F H Smith
Commander, RAN
Acting Director
Sea Power Centre – Australia

Dear Sir

Thank you for your invitation to be part of the Virtual memorial to the men of HMAS Sydney II. My uncle Donald Edgar Jones, 24.4.1920 – 19.11.1941 was one of those men.

Donald was the youngest child of Frederick Jones and Violet Jones nee Gostelow, brother of Frederick, Mavis, Thelma and Albert. Mavis was the only one left to know^{of} the discovery of the Sydney II. Until the day she died his mother believed he would return some day. His siblings believed he was lost to them, although, the many unanswered questions haunted them. Donald's mother also lost a brother at Gallipoli.

Some years ago my niece Kate had need of a topic for a school project. She chose Sydney II. Kate, my sister Jill and I sat down with Donald's sisters, Mavis and Thelma to hear them reminisce about World War II and their brother. Here are some of the things they said.

Donald was constantly rebuked by his teachers for being a daydreamer. Forever gazing out the windows and wishing to be elsewhere. As children their playground was Sydney Centennial Park, and Mavis said he must have fallen into every pond, once coming out covered in leaches. He delighted in climbing trees and dropping acorns on his sisters. Thelma remembered him putting frogs down the girls dresses. Always the larrikin and practical joker. The last time Thelma saw him he was sitting on her kitchen table singing "Sweet Leilani". He loved back yard cricket and Don Bradman was his hero.

When WW2 broke out Donald joined the Navy. He was sent to train as a gunner at the Flinders Naval Depot in Victoria, where he received top marks. He spent one year on the Sydney II, having his 21st birthday on board.

Donald's sister Mavis kept the letters he had written to her during his time in the Navy. These letters, and some photos of him in uniform, have been sent to the Sea Power Centre in Canberra. Our family is so grateful that the letters will be preserved for future generations. Perhaps the best way to pay our respects to our Uncle Donald is to quote from one of these letters.

Dear Mavis

Received your extra welcome letter last night. I had a great longing to jump off the train as soon as I got on it. I'm glad there were no tears as It would have broken me down, but there is a duty to perform and I just couldn't shirk it.

We have already heard to what ships were to go . I and about fifteen others are to join the HMAS Sydney. That won't be so bad as she's seen a lot of foreign countries and also a little action. It is a ship that has a reputation and I think we will keep up the good work.

Talking of action sweet one, I'm going to do everything in my power to get back, but as you know there is a possibility of my not returning.

Well Mavis there isn't anything else to write about as I am a little lonely and homesick. Hoping to see you again someday. I am, yours as ever, Don.

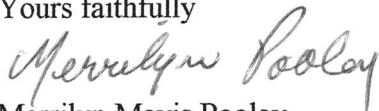
P.S. Don't answer this as I won't be here to collect it. I will write when I'm on board – Don.

In later letters, Donald expressed a worry that it could be hard to settle down after the war, as he had such a love of the sea and travelling. He also spoke of his admiration for Captain Collins.

As a boy Donald loved water and mucking about in boats. He ran away from home with the idea of working on a boat. He was brought back home to his family by police. He eventually got his way.

Remembered with gratitude by his nephews and nieces.

Yours faithfully



Merrilyn Mavis Pooley
Niece