

**The Williams Connection:**  
*'The Sydney II Legacy'*

By Laurie Williams  
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*Below are some family details relating to my uncle, Able Seaman Charles Henry Simpson (Service Number 13928) who was born on 11 August 1908:*

At 14½ years of age Charlie enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy on 15 February 1923 to see the world. His service started on HMAS Pingira and continued on the HMAS Melbourne, HMAS Cerberus, HMAS Adelaide, HMAS Brisbane, HMAS Albatross, HMAS Penguin, HMAS Kuttabul and finally with HMAS Sydney II. He was aboard the HMAS Sydney II in the Mediterranean on 19 July 1940 when she engaged action and sunk the Italian cruiser, Bartolomeo Colleoni.

Charlie was fostered by my Great Grandmother, Francis Wild, mid-wife, of Burgess Street, Richmond, Victoria. After the sudden death of her daughter Charlotte Thompson, Francis cared for her two grandchildren Francis (Bonnie) and Ethel. During this time Francis also fostered William McCarthy and Olive Normington.

Ethel, my mother now aged 91 living in a nursing home in Shepparton, tells of the love she had for Charlie, how proud she was of him and also remembers how handsome he looked in his navy uniform.

Charlie affectionately called Ethel "Etha". When Charlie was on shore leave, she recalls fussing over him. The morning after a sailor's night out, he would send Etha down to the dairy for a revigorating pint of milk. Charlie taught Etha how to press his bell-bottom pants with the seven pleats, representing the seven seas. Prior to Charlie leaving for the last time, he gave Etha a kitten, which she named Fluffy, who then lived for over fifteen years.

Charlie's nephews and nieces are Ray Wilson, Pam Vickery (Wilson), Patricia Miller (Williams), Judith Ginnane (Williams) and myself treasure his war service medals and the sketch of the HMAS Sydney II in battle with the Bartolomeo Colleoni.

The Wilson, Williams and extended families are very honoured to be associated with the HMAS Sydney II and appreciate the bravery and ultimate sacrifice the servicemen made for our country.

Sincere thanks to the Australian Government, John Howard and Finding Sydney Foundation for their hard work and dedication to finding the resting place for the HMAS Sydney II.

It is of great comfort for all of our family knowing Charlie is now resting in peace – Lest We Forget.

