

## **Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter**

### **No. 41 Commemorative events at Sydney Harbour: Building on the foundation of peace for the future**

11 June 2021

Did you know that Japanese midget submarines attacked Sydney Harbour from 31 May to 1 June 1942? As a result of this attack, 21 sailors on the Australian side and 6 crew members on the Japanese side lost their lives. For this reason, commemorative services are held every year at this time on Sydney Harbour.

Last year, when COVID-19 restrictions were strict, I was invited to attend the memorial service at HMAS Kuttabul. It was my first time to participate and I laid a wreath. I described last year's memorial service, the attack and the subsequent history in my newsletter last year.

This year, restrictions have eased. I not only attended the HMAS Kuttabul memorial service again, this year conducted on a larger scale, but I was also invited to attend a commemorative service at a memorial in Manly. So it was that for the first time I went and laid a wreath there. In addition, I learnt that the Naval Historical Society of Australia was organising a new cruise tracing the attack on Sydney and I was also able to participate in this.

In this newsletter, I would like to report on these events and reflect with you about their significance for Japan-Australia relations.



**Australian Defence Force personnel lowering the flag to half mast at North Head  
(28 May 2021)**

● **Ceremony at North Head, Sydney Harbour**

In the morning of Friday 28 May, the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Service was held at the Defence of Sydney Monument located at Sydney Harbour's North Head. This ceremony has been organised by the local member of parliament every year without fail since 1995 when the monument was erected on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII.

Last year, strict COVID-19 regulations meant the ceremony took place with only three people. This year, while it was again on a smaller scale than usual, under the direction of local member for Manly and NSW Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and Veterans, Mr James Griffin MP, invitations to the ceremony were extended to the Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, NSW members of parliament from surrounding areas, local mayors and councillors, naval and airforce bases, the consulates-general of Japan and the US, and representatives of veterans' groups and high schools, among others.

After the keynote speech by Mr Paul Kelly, Editor-at-large at *The Australian*, participants laid wreaths. I also laid a wreath as the representative of the Government of Japan.



**Master of Ceremonies, Mr James Griffin MP,  
NSW Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and Veterans  
(28 May 2021)**

Mr Griffin not only made all the preparations for the ceremony, he also acted as the master of ceremonies on the day. Seeing the wide range of local stakeholders who attended the ceremony, I felt that the history of the Japan's attack on Sydney Harbour has great significance to local people to this day.

Then, as I watched a representative of the local high schools give the vote of thanks to the guest speaker and later saw representatives from each school lay a wreath, I understood that this history is being passed on to the next generation.

At the venue, one participant told me, “The representative of the Government of Japan was invited, because I proposed it and everyone agreed.” I feel that the fact that representatives of the Government of Japan are attending such ceremonies is due to the mutual understanding between Japan and Australia and to the accumulation of exchange and cooperation between us.



**The cruise organised by the Naval Historical Society of Australia tracing the 1942 Japanese midget submarine attacks in Sydney Harbour (31 May 2021)**

**● History cruise on the Japanese midget submarine attacks in Sydney Harbour**

The following week on Monday 31 May, I participated in a cruise tracing the history of the Japanese midget submarine attacks in Sydney Harbour that was established and organised by the Naval Historical Society of Australia. This inaugural cruise was planned looking ahead to next year’s 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack. On the day of the cruise, we were blessed with fine weather and the departure point happened to be where the Japanese sculpture exhibition had just been held in The Rocks.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the number of participants was capped at ninety-six, about half the full passenger capacity, and the cruise quickly booked out. The people who joined the cruise were from all age groups, and I could see that many people from different backgrounds were interested in the history of the attack on Sydney Harbour. Among the Japanese passengers were Dr Tamura Keiko from Australian National University (ANU), who has researched widely on the history of war and reconciliation between Japan and Australia, and Mr Kogure Tetsuo, Sydney Bureau Chief of the *Asahi Shimbun*.



**Greetings by the Naval Historical Society of Australia President, Mr David Michael  
(31 May 2021)**

On the cruise, after we were greeted by the President of the Naval Historical Society of Australia, Mr David Michael, we learnt about the Japanese midget submarine attacks in Sydney Harbour from the researcher Mr Noel Phelan who has given lectures on the topic more than 30 times in various places. He explained the important locations within Sydney Harbour that relate to the attacks.

To be able to experience the actual locations that I looked up last year when studying about this history was a really valuable opportunity. While looking at the scenery from the sea, I thought about the events at that time. Also, aboard the boat, I did not hear a single negative comment about Japan nor the crew of the midget submarines – I felt the progress of reconciliation and mutual understanding between Australia and Japan.

I learnt from representatives of the Naval Historical Society of Australia that in addition to operating the history cruise, they have a mid- to long-term vision to develop an exhibition facility in the city where people can relive the attack on Sydney Harbour.



Laying wreaths at the memorial on HMAS Kuttabul naval base  
(1 June 2021)

- **The memorial service at HMAS Kuttabul naval base**

Then in the morning of Tuesday 1 June, the memorial service was held at HMAS Kuttabul naval base (on Garden Island, Sydney Harbour). Captain Matthew Shand, Commanding Officer – HMAS Kuttabul, acted as master of ceremonies, and in his welcoming remarks, he gave an overview of the attacks by the Japanese midget submarines and also said that the Australian and Japanese victims of the attacks “provide a firm foundation for friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding we all now share”. Further, he emphasised that “it is our common past that prepares the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful future”, and that “This Memorial Service ... is about celebrating the peace and freedom we enjoy as a result of the gallant effort of those who gave their lives 79 years ago today”.

Students from Australian schools and the Sydney Japanese International School took part in the ceremony and read out the individual names of 21 sailors on the Australian side and 6 crew members on the Japanese side. After the reading of the roll of honour, I laid a wreath together with Rear Admiral Mark Hammond,

Commander Australian Fleet of the Royal Australian Navy, at the memorial on which the names of the 21 sailors on the Australian side are inscribed. Finally, the Japanese and Australian national anthems were sung and the ceremony concluded.



**Laying wreaths by the Japanese midget submarine  
at the RAN Heritage Centre at HMAS Kuttabul naval base  
(Rear Admiral Mark Hammond [left], Commander Australian Fleet, and me)**

After the ceremony, there was a reception at the Heritage Centre located on the base. A part of one of the midget submarines is preserved in this centre and there is a plaque with the names of the six Japanese crew members (there were two crew members on each of the three submarines). Rear Admiral Hammond and I laid wreaths in front of the submarine.

Currently, there are major repair works being done on HMAS Kuttabul naval base, and the heritage centre will not be open to tourists for over a year. Through this newsletter, I hope to let people know about how this midget submarine is being preserved.





**Students from Sydney Japanese International School (SJIS)  
who participated in the memorial service  
(1 June 2021)**

● **Building on the foundation of peace for the future**

By participating again in ceremonies commemorating the attack on Sydney Harbour by Japanese midget submarines, I felt anew the importance of the events 79 years ago that are to this day being widely passed down as an important part of history.

What I feel to be of particular significance is the way in which the ceremonies at Manly and HMAS Kuttabul are passing on this lesson to the next generation of children - that the peace and prosperity we are able to enjoy today is due the efforts of those who came before us, and that giving thanks for this leads to future peace and prosperity.

Next year will mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Darwin and the attack on Sydney. Both Japan and Australia live in the tide of history. I would like to make each step I take here in Sydney count - learning history and building the foundations of peace and prosperity of Japan and Australia, and the world. I thank you for your continued support.

Defence of Sydney Monument

<https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/memorials/defence-sydney-monument>

<https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/ww2/display/22023-defence-of-sydney>

The Naval Historical Society of Australia – Sydney Under Attack Harbour Cruise

<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/harbour-cruise-sydney-under-attack-harbour-cruise/>

*Asahi Shimbun* online article regarding the Sydney Under Attack Harbour Cruise (Japanese)

<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASP506TKDP50UHBI01F.html>

HMAS Kuttabul Memorial

<https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/content/hmas-kuttabul-memorial-garden-island>

<https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/ww2/display/21232-h.m.a.s.-kuttabul>

RAN Heritage Centre at HMAS Kuttabul naval base

<https://www.navy.gov.au/ran-heritage-centre>

Newsletter No. 17 "HMAS Kuttabul and the Midget Submarines in Sydney – 'We will remember them.'" (19 June 2020)

[https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/document/CGKiya\\_17newsE.pdf](https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/document/CGKiya_17newsE.pdf)

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