

**The Baverstock Connection:**  
**'The Sydney II Legacy'**  
*Three Generations of Pride and Involvement*

**By Garry Frederick Baverstock AM**  
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The following artefacts relating to my Uncle, Able Seaman Ernest George Baverstock remained wardrobe of my father Frederick John Baverstock, for over 50 years:

1. Honour scroll from the King upon his death
2. War service medals
3. The commemorative medallion of the victory over the Bartolomeo Colleoni
4. An original 'Tally band' from his cap, worn while serving with the crew in the Mediterranean battles in 1940.

Upon my father's death in 1998, they were left to me, as they had been passed on to him, after WWII by his family. I was privileged to inherit these artefacts along with my father's war medals. He also served in the R.A.N. in WWII, serving on a number of corvettes, cruisers and destroyers. He survived many actions and sea battles.

I recall the emotional moment in the National War Museum in Canberra in 1974, when facing the bullet and /or shrapnel ridden Carley float in a glass case, my father broke down briefly, then consoling himself, told me of his involvement in the search for survivors, hoping to find his brother alive. As an invited family related serviceman, he joined the crew of the Yandra. I have been told that they were armed with rifles and fixed bayonets but had no issue of bullets.

There were a few stories over the years about our famous, tragically lost, Uncle Ernie. My father would often talk about their pre-war exploits and their very close friendship that was over and above brotherhood. His stories included sailing the "Melody" (winner of the Royal Perth Regatta in 1939), a boat built by the crew and skippered by Don Blaxell, a school friend of the two brothers. Don became a prominent post war businessman in Perth. Not a lot was spoken of WWII until Fred's latter years when many concealed stories came out. It was then I realized what a tragedy the H.M.A.S. SYDNEY was to him the horrors he had faced in his own service and the effect the loss of his close brother had upon him in the post-war years. There was no counselling in those days, all was simply forgotten and not spoken about for decades. Like many other servicemen who were in the heat of war action, they had to endure their secret, vivid memories until their passing.

The Baverstock family of seven children came from Canada in 1929 and lived in Kent St Victoria Park. The tragedy affected all of them. My Uncle Herb (Herbert Baverstock), in many ways the patriarch of the family after the premature death of my grandfather, served in the air force after the bombing of Darwin. All of his life he had a photo of Ernie on his mantle piece which was moved to his desk in latter years.

The inspiration of my father's war service, along with the honour of being related to Able Seaman EG Baverstock, passed to my brother, Sydney Baverstock, and myself (Syd was named after H.M.A.S SYDNEY). Paul Baverstock, my nephew and Syd's son, enlisted in the navy and served one term. This undoubtedly was an idea born through the stories of naval service told by my father Fred in the latter years of his life. It was such thus that Paul also took great interest in the mystery of the H.M.A.S. SYDNEY and carried on the pride to the next generations of Baverstocks. He received a Literary Skills Award from Commodore Gately at the end of his training, at H.M.A.S. CERBERUS in Victoria.

Since my father's passing, I have taken a more solid personal interest in the story of the Sydney/Kormoran battle and in the search for the ships as well as solving the mystery of what actually happened. The War Memorial in Geraldton has been part of the unresolved closure suffered by the families of the 645-crew ever since the ship went missing with no survivors. From my experience, not knowing the truth has certainly been a burden unfairly suffered by the siblings, wives and children of the lost crew all of who are now themselves aged or deceased at the time of this writing (2007). Meeting Lieutenant Commander Ean McDonald (retired and a former crew mate with my uncle while in the Mediterranean), in the late 1960's and later again in the 1990's, led me to take interest in the research of what happened and the location of the wrecks. The group known as the Family and Friends Association of H.M.A.S. SYDNEY invited me to join their research and information-sharing network.

**On behalf of the Baverstock Family and friends, we donated the artefacts of my late Uncle, Able Seaman Ernest George Baverstock to the WAMM / Geraldton Museum for posterity. Also, in appreciation to the people of Geraldton and their incredible devotion and generosity in planning and completing the wonderful memorial to H.M.A.S. SYDNEY II, with the help of their funding and public and Federal Government donations.**

**The sacrifice by the crew of HMAS Sydney II is a national asset and belongs to the Australian people.**

**Lest We Forget**