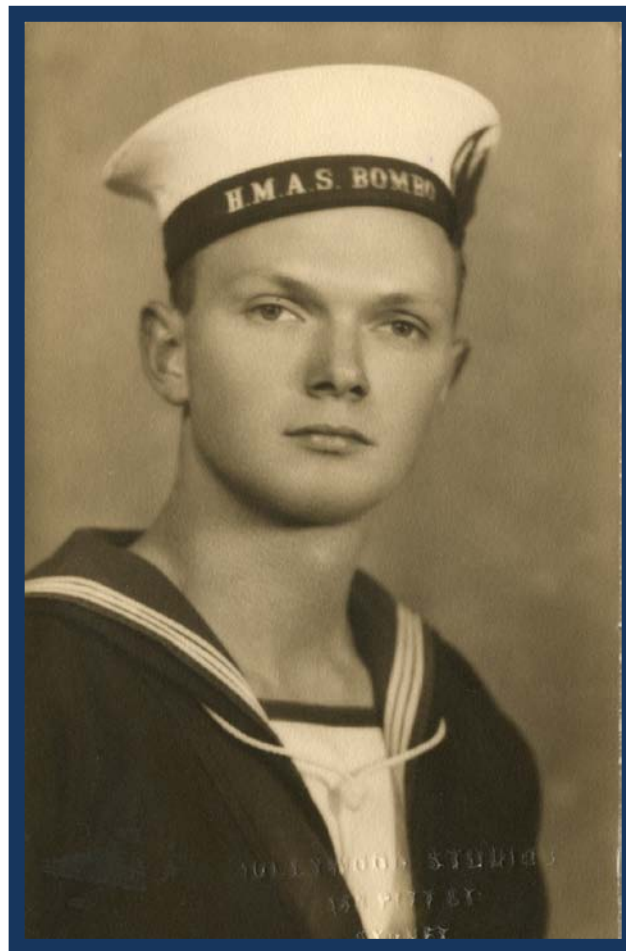


WILLIAM (BILL) MENZIES

Able Seaman

HMAS SYDNEY II



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Written by Judy Washington for the Menzies Family.

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Silver Gull Sculpture: a replica of the 645 stainless steel silver gulls that form the Dome of the Sanctuary of the HMAS Sydney II Memorial in Geraldton (pictured on page 22). It was inspired by a flock of gulls which swooped over the crowd at the dedication of the Memorial Site, at sunset, with the notes of the Last Post ringing through the air. Each gull represents the spirit of a sailor who died. This sculpture was given to Bill Menzies' brother Colin by Laurel Asimus, and on Colin's death was given by his wife Joan to Simon Asimus, who continues as a Captain in the Army Reserve.



Early Life

Bill Menzies was born in Myrtle Street, Dorrigo NSW, on 13 April 1919, probably in the private hospital established in 'Teesdale', 10 Myrtle Street, by Dr George Gatenby, Dorrigo's first doctor. Bill was the fourth child and second son of Andrew and Rebecca Menzies. He had two older sisters, Minnie and Ivy, an older brother Earle and a younger brother Colin. His mother recounted that she nearly lost him at birth as, although he was a large healthy baby, the cord was looped around his neck.

Bill grew up living alternately on his father's dairy farm, Glenview, in North Dorrigo, and the family's town home, Emoh Ruo, in Tyringham Street, completed about 1920.



Bill Menzies when a baby



He attended North Dorrigo and Dorrigo Schools, up until the Intermediate Certificate. An accident in his Intermediate year (possibly while using a machine removing corn from the cob with his brother Earle) necessitated him missing two months school. His Headmaster at Dorrigo Public School, O.F. Wallace, wrote in a reference that this affected his final results, but insisted that Bill was 'a most earnest and diligent pupil and prepared his home lessons with every care'.¹

Above: Bill and Colin Menzies, aged about seven and four, on Glen View farm verandah

Below: Bill Menzies (in striped jacket) with (L-R) his brothers Colin and Earle and sisters Ivy and Minnie

In 1936, aged 17, Bill applied for a position in the National Bank of Australasia. A number of glowing references from citizens of standing in the Dorrigo area (ten remain in the family files) ensured him a position. On 11 June 1936 he was appointed as a Probationer at the Bank's Brisbane office at a commencing salary of £72 per annum. His cousin Ron Doust accompanied him to Brisbane, to work for the Commonwealth Oil Refinery. Bill boarded at the home of his uncle and aunt, Barton and Amy Doust, whose children Alison, Alan, Ian and Robin all remember Bill with great affection.



Bill in the Bank in Brisbane

Bill also developed a great friendship with a Scottish family living opposite – George and Alison Merson and their young adult family, Bill, Jessie, Agnes and John – where he was always welcomed into family activities. The family association has continued into the next three generations.



Bill and Dorothy Adams

In 1938 Bill transferred to Sydney, where he worked in the National Bank of Australasia's George Street Branch, near the G.P.O. As a junior in the Sydney branch he was given a variety of work including 'exchanges, statements, cables and the like'². In January 1939 he joined the Navy Reserve³, spending many of his weekends on the water.

In Sydney he boarded at a house in Rose Bay. Here he met a young nurse from Melbourne, Dorothy Adams, with whom he became friendly. Bill was a good swimmer and they would go to Bondi Beach, or out for dinner or to visit mutual friends. On one leave he took her to Dorrigo to meet his family. After he was called up Dorothy went to Dorrigo to nurse Bill's mother following a serious operation.

Bill's sister, Ivy, boarded with him for some time in Rose Bay.



Bill is called up for Naval Service

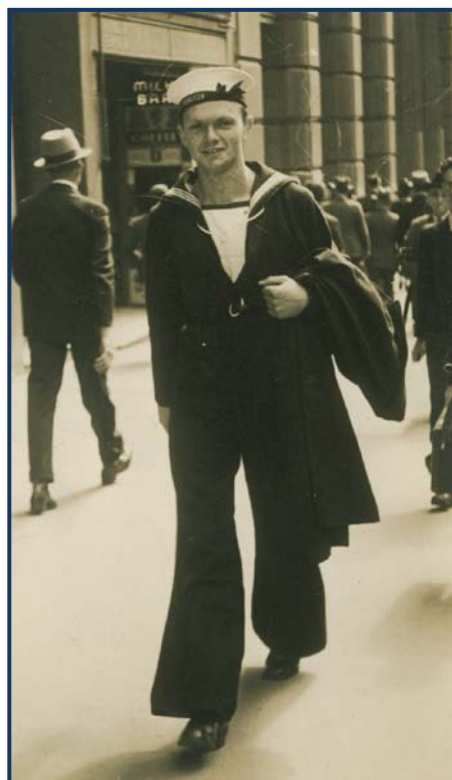
NAVAL POSTINGS OF BILL MENZIES

- Penguin II(I) 25 September, 1939
- Bingera 16 August, 1940
- Cerberus 30 October, 1940
- Rushcutter 8 March, 1941
- Penguin (Bombo) 17 April, 1941
- Kuttabul 8 July, 1941
- Sydney 28 August, 1941

On 3 September 1939 Prime Minister Menzies announced that Australia was at War. Conscription for home defence was announced and a decision was made to enlist men immediately to serve at home and abroad. Preference was given to single men aged 20 to 45 years not otherwise engaged in essential work. Bill Menzies was on holiday in Brisbane with the Merson Family and enjoying the Sunday singalong after attending Scots Presbyterian Church (where Bill and Agnes Merson were members of the church choir) when he was notified of his call to permanent war service and ordered to report immediately. Reservists were called up first, and Bill was flown back from Brisbane to Sydney by the Navy.

On 25 September 1939, just three weeks after the declaration of War, Bill reported for duty as an Ordinary Seaman. He started his service at HMAS Penguin, the Navy's main depot and accommodation ship at Garden Island, where he remained until 15 August 1940. Penguin III had formerly been HMAS Platypus, a Submarine and Destroyer Tender and Fleet Repair Ship.

On his Service Record card Bill was described as six feet in height with dark brown hair, brown eyes and a fresh complexion. His medical record noted the stiff first joint on his left index finger, caused by his earlier accident in Dorrigo. While on Penguin his rating was changed to 'A.B. Seaman' on 16 February 1940. In both his Assessments in December 1939 and 1940 his character was rated as 'Very Good' and his Efficiency as 'Satisfactory'.



Bill in HMAS Penguin Uniform

During this period he applied to be discharged to join the RAAF, but this was refused. The request probably related to his suffering from severe sea-sickness on most of his ships.

In January and May 1940 Bill received references from Earle Page MP (later Sir Earle Page) and his Sydney bank manager supporting his application for officer training School.

On 16 August 1940 Bill was transferred to the training ship HMAS Bingera, an auxiliary anti-submarine vessel built in Scotland in 1935 and requisitioned for the RAN in December 1939.⁴ It was Bingera that was responsible for submarine searches and patrol in Sydney Harbour the night the Japanese midget submarines entered, almost two years later on 31 May 1942.⁵ It was noted that Bill had been issued with his life jacket and 'boner' (a gunner's anti-flash hood) while on Bingera.

Bill next spent four months, November 1940 to March 1941, at HMAS Cerberus, the navy's historic training establishment, 70 km from Melbourne, near Crib Point on Western Port Bay. This replaced Jervis Bay as the Royal Australian Naval College between 1930 and 1958, and it is possible Bill was undergoing officer training here.⁶ It is noted on his record card that he 'QAG' (Qualified as Acting Gunner) on 5 March, was 'rated SG' (Rated for Seaman Gunner) on 8 March and qualified for Leading Seaman on the same day.



The rail ticket pictured on the left is a Naval weekend ticket to Crib Point from Bill's collection and recently returned to Don Winkley by Nancy Collins. While at Cerberus, Bill and his friend Bruce Elder were billeted for several weekends with the Chenoweth family of Hawthorn where among other things they played tennis. After news of the sinking of the Sydney became

public Mrs Nance Chenoweth wrote to Bill's mother saying how attached to Bill and Bruce her family had become and enclosing Bill's tally (cap ribbon) that he had given their daughter Isabel. Having a son in Tobruk she was able to share in their anxieties.

While Bill was stationed at Cerberus Dorothy Adams travelled to Melbourne for a week's holiday and introduced him to her parents who immediately liked him.

In March 1941 Bill was based for a month at HMAS Rushcutter, a 'stone frigate' or naval base established on Rushcutters Bay, Darling Point, on 1 August 1940. During World War 2 this site housed the Anti-submarine school, the Radar and Gunnery School and served as a base for the mosquito fleet, Harbour Defence Motor Launches, the Fairmiles and the Naval Auxiliary Patrol Boats.⁷

He transferred the following month for three months to 'Penguin (Bombo)', probably HMAS Bombo, a steamship that formerly transported blue metal from Bombo Quarry between Kiama and Sydney. In February 1941, the month before Bill joined it, it was requisitioned by the Royal Australian Navy and on 28 May 1941 was commissioned as HMAS Bombo, an auxiliary mine-sweeper. She was said to have served between Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart.⁸

Before joining Bombo Bill was visited, while on guard duty at Naval Headquarters, by his brother Colin who had just joined the RAAF and was stationed at Richmond. They subsequently enjoyed several leaves together.

For six weeks in July and August 1941 Bill was based at HMAS Kuttabul, a converted ferry that was used as sailors' accommodation at Garden Island. This is the ship that was sunk in June the next year by the midget submarine that entered Sydney Harbour.⁹ Possibly his stay here related to an Interim Medical Survey on 21 July which reported that Bill was suffering from sea-sickness, the reason for his earlier request to change to the RAAF. Was this exacerbated by his service on HMAS Bombo in the previous few months? Approval was given to discharge him from duty and draft him to a cruiser.



Bill on a boom at Snapper Island

On 28 August 1941 Bill Menzies was, as promised transferred to a cruiser – fatefully HMAS Sydney.



Bill and Col Menzies in Sydney

At some stage, either before or after joining Sydney, Bill took a last leave trip to Dorrigo to see his family, staying with his parents in Tyringham Street. On this leave he was delighted to see for the first time his new niece, Laurel, born the previous March, and her five year old brother Robert. His sister Ivy confided in him the news that she also was expecting a baby – Geoffrey, born the following July.

Nancy Collins recalls that the day he was returning to Sydney he told her about his friendship with Dorothy Adams and asked her to help him pick pansies to take back to Sydney for Dorothy. He had come up to Raleigh by train but on the return trip was offered a ride in their car by the Merson family who were driving to Sydney. The ticket on the right is Bill's unused return ticket from Raleigh.





HMAS Sydney

Bill joined the cruiser just three months after Captain Joseph Burnett assumed command of Sydney on 15 May 1941 and six months after it had returned to Fremantle (5 February 1941) following its outstanding service in the Mediterranean. On 10 February there had been a triumphant march of its officers and ship's company through the streets of Sydney. In the period from the takeover by Burnett the cruiser had carried out convoy escort work in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and had a brief period for Docking and minor maintenance in Sydney.



HMAS Sydney II

Bill's tour of duty with the cruiser started on its return from escorting the troopship HMT Awatea to Auckland and Suva. He was with it when it left Sydney to escort Convoy US 12A, consisting of the transports Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, from Jervis Bay to a rendezvous with HMAS Canberra in the Great Australian Bight. It returned to Fremantle at the end of September after a maintenance period in Williamstown and a series of fleet exercises with main armament firings. The convoy then rendezvoused in the Bight with Convoy US 12B of four ships which she escorted into the Indian Ocean.



*Photograph of Bill Menzies' Tally Bands
(Bands in the Collection
of Joan Menzies)*

On Sunday 2 November 1941 Bill wrote to his brother Earle and his wife Al to express his delight on hearing of their expected baby – later to be his namesake ‘Bill Menzies II’. (Bill Junior now owns the letter). Bill wrote, with almost a premonition of what lay ahead:

Today you probably would not recognise me as I am sitting out on deck in the sun with the pad on my knee, the old ship plowing along through the blue waters of a fairly steady sea. The only thing I can see except for the sea and sky is the accompanying ships. The particular area I am in now is usually very turbulent and stormy but this is the smoothest trip I have ever had through it although I must not speak too soon as storms can come up in a few hours.

On Sundays apart from working our four hour watches we do a minimum amount of work at sea and [it] is the only day of the week we are not required to work. It is then we have our washing, ironing, mending and letter writing to take up our time and [it] is one day during the week we always welcome. Sunday mornings the whole ship's company except those actually on watch are mustered on the quarterdeck down aft where church is held and the boys are apt to curse getting dressed up for this occasion and we get a rigid inspection into the bargain.

It seems strange being away out here so far away from everything and writing home to you folks where everything goes on just the same. It also seems hard to imagine when one looks over the side into the blue depths that unknown perils ever await and that the same water is swallowing up ships every day. The horizon is the most intriguing thing to watch as one never knows just what may appear over the top at any moment. There is always a certain amount of thrill attached to leaving harbor as one never really knows to what new part we may be going or what adventures lurk in our path.

When we are not employed at scrubbing and cleaning the ship during the week (which I may say commences at 6 am) there is always gun drill, action stations, anti-aircraft stations, gas attacks, collision and fire stations amongst many other things to be exercised so you can see a sailor's life is a pretty busy one.

The life would not be too bad if a fellow had a decent stomach but unfortunately mine is a Japanese make and sometimes I go through hell, particularly in rough weather...

HMAS Sydney then sailed from Fremantle to the coast off Albany where it relieved the cruiser HMAS Adelaide of escort duty for the troopship HMT Zealandia with nearly 1000 men, of the Australian 8th Division reinforcements and RAAF, from the Bight to the Sunda Strait. Here it was replaced by two other cruisers¹⁰ which completed the escort to Singapore. Sydney was expected back in Fremantle on the afternoon of November 20 following an incident-free passage to Sunda and detaching Zealandia on 17 November.¹¹

However on 19 November, 1941, on a south-easterly course in the Indian Ocean south-west of Carnarvon, Sydney sighted the unidentified merchant ship on the horizon, which subsequently proved to be its nemesis, the German raider HSK Kormoran. Both ships were sunk

in the action which followed, and HMAS Sydney lost its total ship's company of 645. Only one body of a crewman from the Sydney was found, drifting in a damaged Carley float near Christmas Island, some months later.

It is not certain where exactly Bill would have been on the ship the day that it encountered the Kormoran, but as he was a gunner, it was probable that he was in one of the gun stations. It was said that the noise of the guns was so great it could burst their eardrums, so the gunners would have to lock themselves in to deaden the noise. Although Bill was a very good swimmer, it appeared that there may have been little opportunity to use this skill.

Family members have treasured mementoes which he sent for Christmas 1941, from Fremantle, possibly on the ship's last call there. Laurel Winkley, Minnie's daughter, has the shell slippers and a box (pictured below) and there was a hot water bottle in a soft rayon case resembling a rabbit for her brother Robert. A 2009 ABC television programme on the work of aboriginal shell artist, Esme Timberly, and of her mother nearly 70 years ago, of La Perouse, Sydney, has identified the origin of these keepsakes. It is probable that the Sydney sailors would be happy customers for these souvenirs.



In addition to the letter received by Earle and Al the family still holds three letters sent by Bill to his mother in the last month before the Sydney sank.

The first was sent on 19 October and Bill's description of the town would indicate it could have been from Geraldton. This is supported by a paragraph by Lt John Perryman in David Mearns recent book which states that:

*'Over the next few weeks (from the 6 October) Sydney engaged in exercises off the West Australian coastline and conducted short visits to Geraldton and Bunbury. Throughout 1941 she had become a familiar sight in West Australian waters and with each visit the bonds between the cruiser and the citizens of Western Australia were further strengthened.'*¹²

Bill's descriptive letter which follows demonstrates the hospitality provided for our servicemen by townsfolk during the war.

Mess No. 11, HMAS Sydney
G.P.O.

Sunday 19th October

My Dear Mother,

Well today is a beautiful warm, sunny day and we are laying at anchor in a harbor with the shore about one mile away. There is a fair sized town but the country looks like very sandy barren wastes rising in low hills behind the town.

Last night the Ship's company gave a concert in the local town hall and as we have quite a few artists on board it took very well and the hall was crowded.

I went ashore yesterday afternoon and it being Saturday the bank was closed and Mr Bensley the Manager lived on the premises so I made myself known to him. Well Mr & Mrs Bensley took me in and after a cup of tea they drove me all around town, out to the lighthouse and round the beaches. This was very good of them because they are very severely rationed with petrol and can ill afford to spare it. They have no family but are very homely people and after the drive we all went back to their place for dinner at night. Most people in this state are very genuinely kind if a fellow only gets to know the right people but I can't seem to pluck up courage to call into head office like I did last year. These two people could not have been kinder and they were only too pleased to do anything they possibly could for me and it is a visit I am sure I will not forget. I left their place at eight o'clock and went on to the concert but not before they had asked me to come again tomorrow for lunch or anytime, but unfortunately I had to be duty and stay aboard. Mrs Bensley took your address and said she would write to you, so when she does I would like you to acknowledge her letter and thank them for their kindness to me because I think she would appreciate it.

This town is quite a big exporter of wheat, and has other industries [such] as a crayfish canning factory, tremendous super phosphate works supplying great areas of the wheat belt. They also send large consignments of beautiful tomatoes all the way to the Eastern States when they are scarce round there.

The beaches here are very poor and great heaps of seaweed are mounted up on them and the stench is terrific. There are great rocky shoals and reefs all along the shore but I understand there is wonderful fishing here. The town is quite a busy one particularly as a large Air Force camp is situated quite close to the town.

The last letter I received from you was dated the 8th Oct so I get mail fairly often. I was pleased to hear that Col had been home again and if he will be happier in the Air Crew he should by all means take it on. I know if I was in the Air Force I would want to be Air Crew.

You mentioned Jim Lavender's visit, well he left the ship in Melbourne and is going to a corvette. If you had spoken to him he would have told you that I was talking to him the day he left.

You also mentioned picking some green peas. I wish I could help you eat them as you have no idea how I enjoyed the meal with the Bensleys last night off a nice clean tablecloth in decent surroundings.

Must close now. With love & XXXX

From your affectionate Son, William XXX

Bill wrote a further letter to his mother on 30 October 1941 probably following a visit to Bunbury. Three days later HMAS Sydney left Fremantle for just off the coast of Albany where it relieved HMAS Adelaide of its escort duty for the troopship Zealandia.

My Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know that I received your letter yesterday and your big parcel today. It was a beautiful cake and arrived in perfect order and is the nicest cake I have ever tasted. In fact it is the first cake I have tasted for ages, and the biscuits and coffee is just what I would want in a parcel.

I have been to another new place since I last wrote but unfortunately I only had a few hours ashore because I was on duty. There were hundreds collected on the wharf in the afternoon to see the ship as we were the first warship of any size to visit the port in two years. The people gave us a great time but I missed out most of it because I was duty. It was a beautiful clean town and nice green grass made the whole town appear beautifully fresh.

There is a slight possibility of me returning to Sydney for a short visit before Christmas but of course nothing definite. I wonder if you and dad could spare a few days to come down and see me and perhaps spend a little holiday at Manly or Bondi. Of course there is nothing definite and I may only be there for one or two nights and I would not see very much of you but I thought you may be able to work in a little holiday for you both.

Today I am terribly tired as I have been working a lot of night watches and the ship has been doing certain manoeuvres which are hard work and very tiring.

I had a nice letter from Hazel Ashby yesterday and she is having a few days at Redcliffe so she enclosed a few grains of Redcliffe sand. The solicitor she works for in Brisbane has gone away in A.I.F. and she is working for a new man who took over the business.

You mentioned that Al is extremely happy about her condition and if you mean she is going to have a baby this is a pleasant surprise and that is the first I have heard of it and I think it is great so I will write to them as soon as I can. It will be funny to see Earle when he is a Daddy but I am sure Al will make a perfect Mother.

Thank you too for the pressed pansy it arrived in a perfect condition and I will keep it in my writing tablet. I often think of the lovely flowers at home and how well the gardens grow in good seasons and how you always seem to have a bed of pansies when there is nothing else and they nearly always have pretty faces.

Dad will have to be watched with these nose bleedings because too much of that may do anything. He is too fat and too old to take things like that lightly especially with the summer coming on.

As I have fallen asleep three times while I was finishing this letter I will close now and thank you once again for that cake and all that parcel. I wish I could find something to fill the tin.

Your affect son.

William XXXX

The last letter surviving from Bill to his mother was written on 8 November just eleven days before Sydney sank. It must have been posted from Fremantle where the cruiser docked the next day – its final port of call. It left two days later for the Sunda Straits, signalling that it would return to port on Thursday 20 November.

mess No. 11
H.M.A.S. "Sydney."
G.P.O.
Sat. 8th Nov. 1941.
Somewhere at sea.

My Dear Mother,
I don't know when you would receive my last letter or when you will get this one but as I am not working this afternoon I thought I would write home.

The weather has been fairly calm lately which is most unusual in this part of the world. This trip I have only had one day when I was sick so I seem to be improving although I guess the good weather has something to do with it.

That parcel you sent was very much appreciated as the cake was a beauty and I shared it with Bruce and a few other coppers who thoroughly

2.

enjoyed it too. The Comforts Fund parcel which arrived during the week has not been fully depleted yet. The whole ship's company received one each and contained tinned tinned fruit tinned cake & pudding amongst other things.

There is a possibility I may come home for a few days leave before Christmas although there is nothing definite. We are all hoping to get some more leave soon as it may be the last for some time. Of course you can't take that as definite it may be only a wishful surmise on my part.

The sun is shining although the weather is cold today and I am wondering what you are doing at home today. It being Saturday afternoon you are probably doing some gardening or out at the farm. That pressed parlay arrived perfectly and I have it in my

writing ease. There is certainly a great difference between where you folks are and where I am today.

If I should come home on leave I wonder if you would like to have Bruce too. He is a real good sport and I don't think you would find him too much trouble, in fact I think he would want to be out at the farms most of the time. I haven't heard from Bob for a few weeks so I suppose he has not been in port much either.

Well I hope there is a letter waiting for me when I get back to port as they are about the only thing we look forward to these days.

There is very little for me to write about because one day is much the same as another so I'll now close.

With Love,

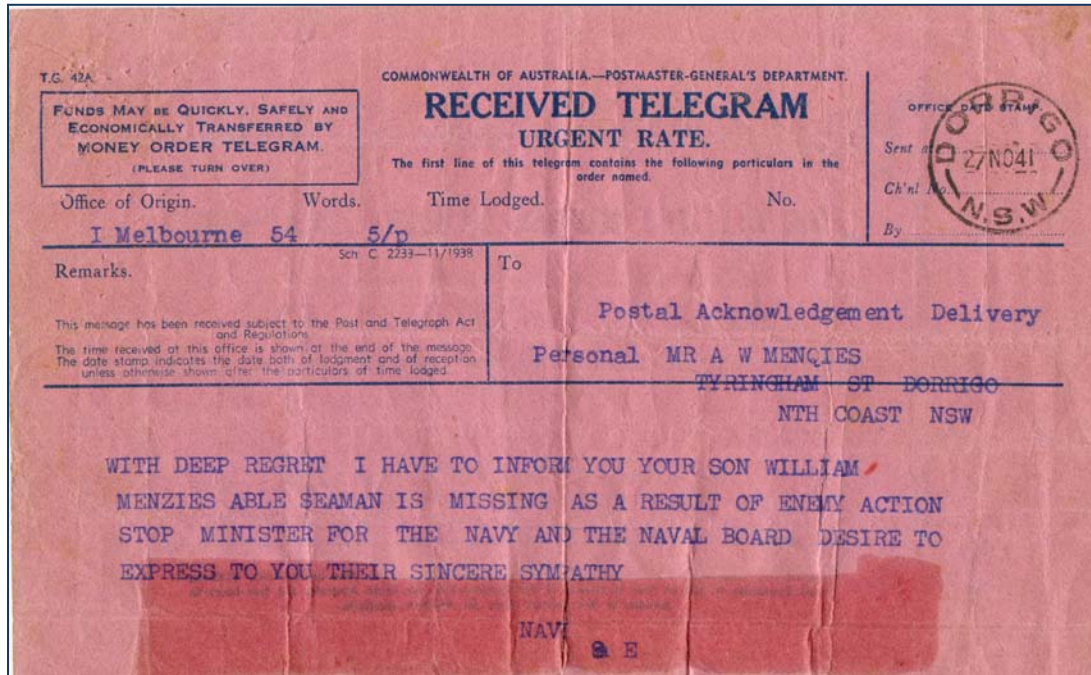
I am your affectionate
William XXXX

'Bob' mentioned in the letter was Robert Klippel, a friend of Bill, who left the Sydney before its last fatal voyage. Robert later became acknowledged as Australia's premier sculptor. Throughout his career he produced some 1,300 pieces of sculpture and approximately 5,000 drawings. In 1988 Robert was awarded an Order of Australia medal for his services to art. Two members of the Menzies family have small ships carved by Robert Klippel, gifts from Bill to his sisters Minnie and Ivy (See photograph on page 26).



Bill's Family Hears of the HMAS Sydney Tragedy

The news that Bill was 'Missing in Action' was first conveyed in a telegram delivered to his mother, Rebecca, at her front door in Dorrigo on 27 November, eight days after the sinking.



Nancy Collins who was with Rebecca Menzies at the time said she completely folded initially, but then took the strain very bravely. She told Nancy to 'always remember God was on your side and he would give you the strength – keep going by thinking of someone else'. Andrew Menzies arranged for Nancy to stay and help his wife. Nancy said that Bill's father did not want to believe or talk about his son's death at first and was very bitter about the loss. Gradually he raised the strength to face it and return to work.



Rebecca Menzies, Bill's Mother

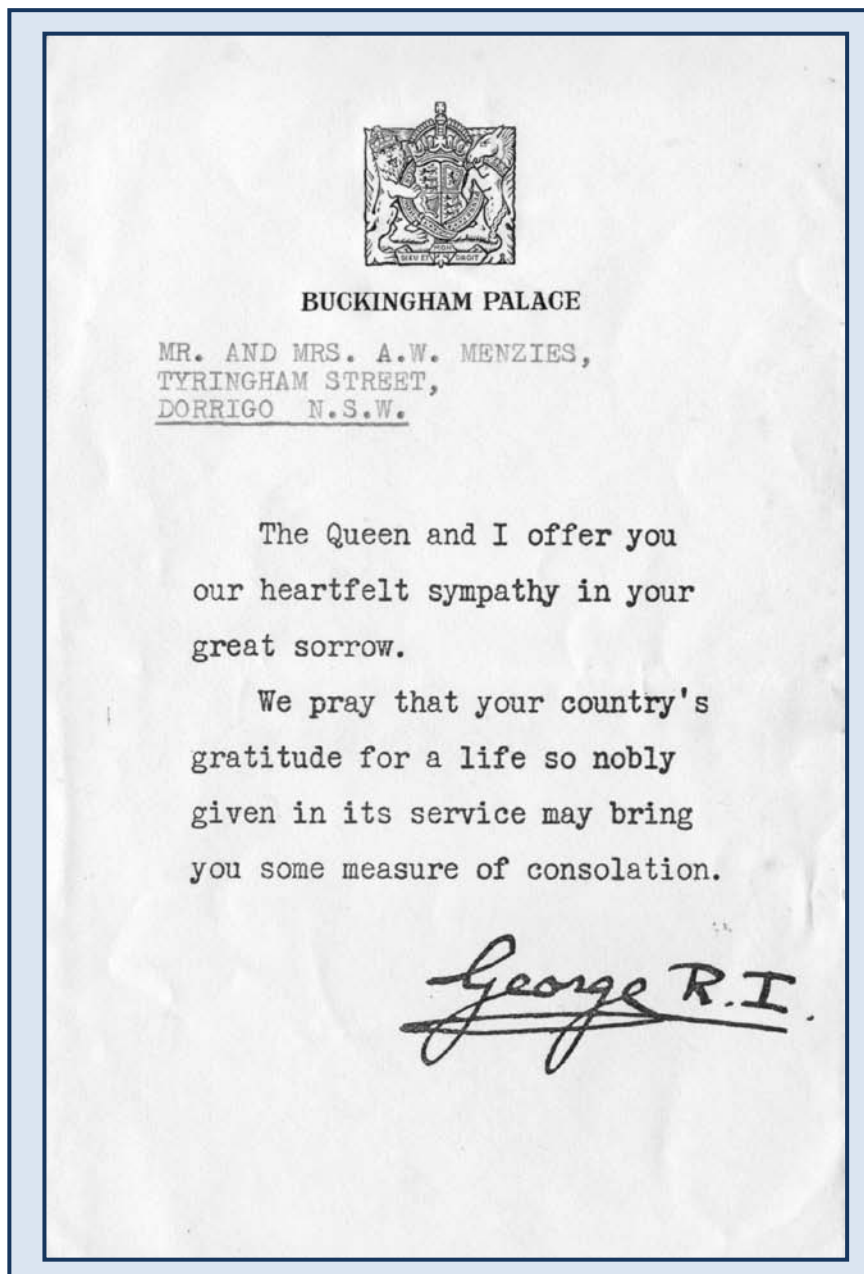


Andrew Menzies, Bill's Father

People called to the Menzies home to offer sympathy in great numbers and from everywhere – a number from the Clarence River. The family would cook and make trays of sandwiches for their callers every morning.


Later Bill's mother would say to Joan and Col Menzies that the worst part was that there was never any official word from the Navy to say that the Sydney sailors had died. The many condolence letters and cards that continued to arrive from all over the country over the subsequent weeks have been kept by the late Col Menzies and his wife Joan. The wording of the earlier ones particularly reflected the uncertainty about the fate of the ship and the lingering hope of the family and their friends that survivors would be found.

Among the letters of condolence received was the following from King George VI. The loss of the Sydney is said to be one of the rare occasions that condolence letters were sent from Buckingham Palace to families of war casualties.



Two articles appeared in National Bank of Australasia publications which mentioned that Bill was the first casualty in the War from their staff. Subsequently, in January 1944, the bank sent an Honour Roll, on which Bill was included as one of the seventeen staff from throughout Australia who had given their lives in the service of their country.

OBITUARY



In the tragic loss of H.M.A.S. "Sydney" the National Bank sustained its first casualty from N.S.W. staff in the loss of William Menzies, whose photograph appears above.

Universally known to his friends as "Bill" he was a native of Dorrigo and joined the service of the Bank's Brisbane Office in 1936, but came to Sydney Office early in 1938 where as a junior he ran the gamut of exchanges, statements, cables and the like until commencing war service on 25/9/1939.

Thus it was he became an "old soldier" despite his 23 years of age, and the shock of his passing has left a damper on his many friends, and a space that will be hard to fill.

He was the type of man we can ill afford to lose—a fine physical specimen—popular—and above all, the quintessence of a gentleman. A quiet man, with a quiet smile. Such is the memory we cherish of our friend "Bill."

"Greater love hath no man than this—
That a man lay down his life for his friends."

NATIONAL BANK NOTES

(By "LIZZIE")

Members of the staff at Sydney Office and elsewhere who knew Bill Menzies were doubly saddened when the loss of the Sydney was reported.

Bill, our first N.S.W. casualty, was 22 years of age and joined the Navy at the commencement of the war. He undoubtedly represented the best type of Australia's young manhood—his worth and character being recognised by all.

To Mr. and Mrs. Menzies and family is extended the sincerest sympathy of all his fellow officers. In their sorrow, it will be a consolation to know that he was held in high esteem by them.

Article in The New South Wales Banker, 15 December 1941, p.20

Bill's mother could never bear to look at the painting of HMAS Sydney engaging with the Bartolomeo Colleoni that they had hanging on their wall. It is also probable that the special publication recording Sydney's encounter with this Italian cruiser (excerpt below) that was sent to families of those lost on the Sydney (by McDowells Ltd Department Store in Sydney) was unlikely to have been of great comfort to the family. Additionally distressing must have been the two letters Bill's mother posted to him from Dorrigo on 10 and 15 November, which were returned to her on Navy instructions on 18 December.





The Finding of the Sydney



In March 2008, amid much speculation about their location, the wrecks of both the Sydney and the Kormoran were found off the coast of Western Australia by the search ship SV Geosounder. Following their discovery three very special memorial services were attended by Bill Menzies' family.



The first was at St Andrews Cathedral in Sydney which was attended by Bill's friend Dorothy Adams (now Allen) and aged 93. There were also his sister Minnie's grandchildren - Rebecca McDonald and Jonathon Asimus; his brother Colin's daughter Heather and son Andrew, and Colin's grandchildren - Guy, Tyler and Ebon; and his sister Ivy's son Geoff, and granddaughter Michelle and great-granddaughter Elinor from London.

Above: Andrew Menzies (wearing Col Menzies' medals), Heather Menzies, Dorothy Allen (wearing Bill's medals), Ebon Menzies and Geoff Washington

Below: Heather Menzies, Dorothy Allen, Ebon Menzies, Rebecca McDonald at St Andrews Cathedral

Also present at St Andrews was June McCluskey of Canberra. June was the granddaughter of Bill Menzies' aunt, Lilly Youman, sister of his father Andrew. Throughout the period of the search for, and finding, of HMAS Sydney II June has acted as the family's stalwart and informative contact with members of the Finding Sydney Foundation and other researchers. June also marched with the HMAS Sydney II descendants and relatives in the 2008 Sydney ANZAC march, attending the subsequent lunch.



June McCluskey (right) with Hazel Blair at the last day of the HMAS Sydney II Commission of Inquiry

June was the only family member present at the HMAS Sydney II Commission of Inquiry held in 2009, attending hearings over four days. June was very unhappy with the findings of the Commission feeling that they unfairly vilified Captain Burnett and his crew.



The second service was on Anzac Day 2008 at the war memorial in Dorrigo. This was attended by Bill's brother Earle's family – Earle's son and Bill's namesake, Bill Menzies Jnr, Earle's son Alan, and Earle's grandsons Peter and Chris Menzies and Chris' daughter Ally and son Callan.

Chris (with his children Callan and Ally), Bill, Allan and Peter Menzies at the special wreath-laying for the Sydney at Dorrigo War Memorial

The third memorial service was held on 19 November, the Anniversary of the sinking of the Sydney, on HMAS Manoora, at sea over the site of the Sydney's final resting place. This was approximately 112 nautical miles off the coast of Geraldton, Western Australia. It was attended by Bill's sister Minnie's daughter, Laurel, and his sister Ivy's son, Geoff. The poignancy of the occasion was magnified by the presence of HMAS Sydney IV which drew up beside the Manoora for the service.



Laurel Asimus scatters pansies, Bill Menzies' favourite flowers, over the resting place of the HMAS Sydney II



HMAS Sydney IV over the site of HMAS Sydney II

On land in Geraldton, Laurel's husband Peter and Geoff's wife Judy attended two further very special commemorations. The first was the Memorial Service and videoed Burial Service for the unknown sailor, the only HMAS Sydney sailor found after the loss, washed up in a Carley float near Christmas Island. The second was the HMAS Sydney II Commemorative Sunset Service at the outstandingly beautiful and evocative HMAS Sydney II Memorial dedicated on Mt Scott in November 2001.



Evocative HMAS Sydney II Memorial, Geraldton



Laurel and Geoff at HMAS Sydney II Memorial, Geraldton

The finding of the wreck of HMAS Sydney and the several very special memorial services in these scattered parts of Australia have provided a closure for surviving family members that was not possible for the parents of Bill Menzies. The provision of the HMAS Sydney II Virtual Memorial will ensure that his great sacrifice and that of all his fellow crew will always be remembered.

Bill Menzies' name on the Memorial Wall at Geraldton. At the conclusion of the memorial service red poppies were placed next to his name by his family.





References

1. Letter from O.F. Wallace, Headmaster, Grenfell Public High School and former Headmaster, Dorrigo Public School, 27 May 1936
2. Undated cutting from National Bank of Australasia magazine
3. Letter of recommendation from Lt Commander Whitemoor (signature not clear), a fellow bank officer
4. Naval Historical Society. On this day: 1940-WW2: 5 Feb (<http://www.navyhistory.org.au/category/navy>)
5. Australian War Memorial. Encyclopedia: Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour, 30-31 May 1942. (<http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/midgetsub/doc.asp>)
6. Royal Australian Navy. HMAS Cerberus. (http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas_Cerberus)
7. Davis, Graham. Rushcutter dances to a new tune. Navy [n.d.] p.4 (<http://www.defence.gov.au/news/navynews/editions/4604/FEATURE/feature01.htm>)
8. Michael McFadyen's Scuba Diving Web Site, p.1 (<http://www.michaelmcfadyenscuba.info.viewpage>)
9. Royal Australian Navy. Commemoration services for HMAS Kuttabul, 4 June 2007 (http://www.navy.gov.au/Commemoration_services_for_HMAS_Kuttabul)
10. Tom Frame, cited below, p.34, says that the cruisers HMS Danae and HMS Durban were to escort TSS Zealandia on the final leg of its trip to Singapore, while John Perryman cited below on p.21 states that Sydney 'rendezvoused with HMS Durban which assumed responsibility for escorting Zealandia on to Singapore'.
11. Information from Frame, Tom. HMAS Sydney : Australia's greatest naval tragedy. Hachette, 2008
12. Perryman, John. Prologue...the loss of a legend in Mearns, David. The search for the Sydney: how Australia's greatest maritime mystery was solved. Harper Collins, 2009, p.21





Appendices

World War Two Service



**ABLE SEAMAN
WILLIAM MENZIES
S3345**

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| SERVICE | ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY |
| DATE OF BIRTH | 13 APRIL 1919 |
| PLACE OF BIRTH | DORRIGO, NSW |
| DATE OF ENLISTMENT | 25 SEPTEMBER 1939 |
| HOME PORT/PORT DIVISION | SYDNEY, NSW |
| NEXT OF KIN | MENZIES, ANDREW |
| DATE OF DEATH | 20 NOVEMBER 1941 |
| POSTING ON DEATH | HMAS SYDNEY |



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

World War 2 Nominal Roll Service Record for Bill Menzies



This scroll commemorates
Able Seaman W. Menzies
Royal Australian Navy
held in honour as one who
served King and Country in
the world war of 1939-1945
and gave his life to save
mankind from tyranny. May
his sacrifice help to bring
the peace and freedom for
which he died.

| Laces 1.0 ₃ | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 2 Neck Mufflers | 2.0 |
| 2 " " | 1.1 |
| 2 Ties | 2.6 |
| Handkerchiefs | 2.4 |
| 3 Blue " | 1.1 ² |
| 5 Red " | 11 ² |
| Soap | 4.4 ² |
| Cocoa | 1.3 |
| Bin | 3 |
| Bluchers | 6.11 |
| Laces | 1.9 |
| Medicines etc. | 10.3 |
| Sea Stockings | 2.6 |
| Jersey | 4.11 |
| Bin Straps | 3.0 |
| Foot Polish | 10 |
| Dublin | 3 |
| Slippers | 3.11 |
| Note B. Pens Ink Pen | 6.0 |
| Gloves 2.6 Coat. 2.2 | 2.2.6 |
| 5 Shirts | 14.6 |
| 3 rd Socks | 3.0 |
| 3 Collars | 1.6 |
| 1 Suit | 1.14.6 |
| Lowels | 6.6 |
| Boots | 4.11 |
| 1 Shirt | 3.11 |
| 2 Shirts | 5.0 |
| 4 Pants | 18.0 |
| 4 Vests | 18.0 |
| 4 Pants | 11.8 |
| 4 Vest | 11.8 |
| 2 ^m Pyjamas | 10.10 P |
| Collars | 5.6 |
| 4 Socks | 4.0 |
| 1 Socks | 1.6 |
| 2 Socks | 2.6 |
| 4 Caps & Badge | 16.6 |
| 2 Wool Scarves | 5.5 |
| 3 Cap Covers | 3.0 |
| | <hr/> 5 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Wool Needles Tape etc | 1.6 |
| Oilskins | 10.5 |
| Sourwisher | 2.0 |
| Sea boots | 1.6.0 |
| Brown boots | 9.9 |
| Patrol suit | 1.1. |
| Braces | 3.6 |
| Knife Dishes etc. | 4.4 ² |
| Keifer boat | 6.6 |
| Collar 6 Tie 11 - Sush 1 - S. E. | 2.10 |
| Comb Bore 6 2 S. Bore 6 2 | 1.1 |
| Brushes Combs etc | 4.9 |
| 1 ^m Blanks | 4.11 |
| 1 Quilt | 3.9 |
| 2 P. Slips | 5.0 |
| 2 F. Sops | 1.4 ² |
| 1 Bed | 5.6 |
| Mattens | 1.6 |
| 4 Serge suits | 1.14.3 |
| 2 Dongaree Jack | 12.6 |
| 3 " Trousers | |

Naval Equipment List Written by Bill Menzies



**His mother wondered, waited and wept,
That last farewell she always kept
Deep in her heart – to treasure.**

**Special thoughts were always there,
When the pansies bloomed with their faces fair,
Those expressions of youthful love he gave
- such pleasure.**

**Her answers came some time ago,
Leaving us to watch and know
That this sacrifice is now at rest
- what measure?**

*Written by Laurel Asimus
Following the finding of HMAS Sydney II
April 2008*



Ship carved by Bill Menzies' friend, sculptor Robert Klippel, during World War II, referred to on page 13

Previous Page:

Photo of the sculpture of 'The Waiting Woman' at the HMAS Sydney Memorial in Geraldton, which was to represent all the women who waited in vain for the return of their loved ones aboard the Sydney

Back Cover:

Bill Menzies' name on the Australian War Memorial Wall of Remembrance, Canberra



MAXWELL I. M.

MAYNARD T. F.

MAYO E. E.

MEDLEN L. J.

MELANDRI P. E. V.

MENZIES W.

MILLER G. J.

MILLER J. D. H.

MILLER K. R.

MILLER M. P.

MILLER R. A.