

Traditions of 'The Trade': The Folklore of Australian Submariners

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ABSTRACT: The Royal Australian Navy submarine service began in 1914. The submariners constitute an especially well-defined military-occupational folk group and have developed a distinctive body of esoteric traditions that distinguish them not only from the broader community but, in many ways, from the larger naval entity of which they are, nominally, an organisational element. Based on fieldwork and relevant archival research in Australia and the United Kingdom, this article highlights some significant aspects and elements of Australian submariner folklore and life, including narrative, custom, speech, song, verse, foodways, and the centrality of submariner humour.

Based on these observations, the study argues that Australian submariners have developed a distinctive view of the world, reflected and reinforced through their unique historical experience and traditions. They balance a shared sense of nation with an equally strong transnational outlook and strong camaraderie with the submariners of other nations, including those previously enemies. This suggests that they have become especially adept citizens of a globalised world.

Australian submariners form an especially well-delineated and strongly cohesive occupational folk group. This group did not exist before 1914 and has since had a sometimes uncertain survival as a result of shifting government thinking on naval and general defence strategy.¹ Independent of these vagaries of official policy, submariners have developed a solid body of speech, custom, legend, song and verse that reflects their experiences and identifies them as a distinct collectivity, even within the Royal Australian Navy, of which they are nominally a part.²

¹ In February 2009 the federal government announced that Australia would spend \$25 billion to build its largest ever flotilla of 12 new submarines. This comes at a time when there were barely sufficient submariners available to crew three of the existing six vessels. See, for instance, the *60 Minutes* story 'Battle Stations', September 17, 2008 at <http://sixtyminutes.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=632736> [accessed 25 October 2008].

² I would like to thank Lloyd Blake in Australia, George Malcolmsen at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum Archives, Gosport, and Barrie Downer of the Barrow-in-Furness Branch of the (UK) Submariners Association and, more broadly, the Submarine Institute of Australia, for their assistance with this project.

This article is based on continuing fieldwork and related research on Australian submariners conducted by the author in Australia and the United Kingdom since 2006. It has also benefited from related oral history interviews made by Rob and Olya Willis with submariners in Brisbane and Perth in 2009, the results of which are now part of the National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklore collection.³

Many of the characteristics and concerns of Australian submariners are shared with submariners from other countries, particularly those from the United Kingdom, as Australia and Britain's submarine histories have been closely entwined through training and swapping of personnel, wartime experiences and the inevitabilities of colonial and post-colonial relations. Submariners of all nations consider themselves a kind of international brotherhood that transcends national barriers and historical moments during which they may have tried to destroy, or at least out-manoeuvre, each other, as during the Cold War. There is thus both an unusual national and international dimension to the folk aesthetic of the submariner that transcends war and peace.

A large number of international periodical publications, websites and organizations of serving and, mainly, ex-submariners, as well as an active round of national and international conferences and similar events, maintain contact between the many groups and individuals involved. Submariners also have an intense interest in their own history, maintaining a large a number of websites, periodicals and publications of reminiscences and mostly amateur histories. This interest is also behind many individual research efforts undertaken in archives and libraries around the world by usually retired submariners keen to preserve and present this material to their contemporaries and successors, a form of cultural succession planning also found in other military groups.

As with other areas of military history and tradition, the family history boom is creating a broader interest in aspects of submarine history and culture as descendants seek out service and other records of ancestors. Allied with this is the intense public interest that submarines have always generated, from the arrival of *AE1* and *AE2* in 1914, through the ill-fated J-boats and their almost equally unfortunate successors, *Oxley* and *Otway*, on to the more recent controversies over the Collins class submarines and their upcoming replacements.

Together, this all provides a rich field for folkloric interest and a useful case study of an Australian military-occupational group with global reach.

³ 'Submariners Oral History Project', NLA bibliography numbers: 4699923, 4700415, 4700401.

The Australian Trade

The development of diesel-electric technology in the last years of the nineteenth century quickly led to the development of the first serviceable submarines for military purposes.⁴ The Royal Navy was slow to warm to submarines as a serious weapon, a situation reflected in the early Royal Australian Navy and, some submariners would say, still so today.

Australia's first two submarines, *AE1* and *AE2*, were built in Britain and arrived here after a lengthy and troubled voyage in May 1914. *AE1* was lost in still unexplained circumstances off New Britain in September 1914, becoming the first Australian casualty of World War 1.⁵ *AE2* was the first submarine to breach the Dardanelles passage into the Sea of Marmara to harass Turkish shipping from April 25, 1915 and thus has a place in the foundation of the Anzac mythology.⁶

These ill-fated but illustrious originals were followed by the problematic *J*-boats gifted to Australia by Britain in the aftermath of World War 1.⁷ After ongoing technical and crewing problems, these six craft were progressively decommissioned and scrapped, *Oxley* and *Otway* were commissioned and purchased by the Australian government during the late 1920s. These submarines were gifted to the Royal Navy by the Australian government in 1931. Apart from the Dutch submarine *K9*, obtained via the Dutch naval activities in Indonesia and used mainly for training purposes, Australia did not have a separate submarine presence during World War 2. However, many Australians, including Max Shean mentioned below, served in British miniature submarines known as *X* craft and in some other Royal Navy submarines. The Oberon class submarines often known generally as 'O-boats'⁸ were commissioned from 1960 and served until superseded by the still-controversial Collins class submarines from 1996 to 2003.⁹ Australia's next generation of submarines is in the process of being developed, a situation in which many submariners, past and present generally maintain a keen interest and, often, involvement.

While always closely aligned with the Royal Navy, and more recently with the Netherlands Royal Navy, for training, construction and maintenance, Australian submariners have developed a distinctive folk

⁴ Though the earliest attempt at a military submarine goes back to the late eighteenth century and experiments with submersibles to the early seventeenth century.

⁵ Seal, G., 'Finding the Lost Submarine: The Mystery of *AE1*', *Australian Journal of Naval History* 5.1 (2008), 53-70.

⁶ Brenchley, F. & E., *Stoker's Submarine* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2001).

⁷ Seal, G., 'Australian Submarines at Peace: The *J*-Boats', *Australian Journal of Naval History* (forthcoming).

⁸ Not to be confused with the earlier *Oxley* and *Otway*, these members of the Odin class are also sometimes referred to as 'O-boats'.

⁹ White, M., *Australian Submarines: A History* (Canberra: AGPS, 1992) is the standard reference. See also Peter Yule and Derek Woolner, *The Collins Class Submarine Story: Steel, Spies and Spin* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

life and lore over the last ninety-odd years. Their official existence has been terminated on three occasions due to lack of expertise, resources and finance, experiences that have further strengthened their sense of identity. This article aims to give some insight into this particular military-occupational folk group and to provide some representative examples of their traditions and the broader heritage of Australian submariners.

Tales of 'The Trade'

The 'apartness' of submariners can be seen in some of their legends, especially those told of their foundations and most particularly on the originary tale of the term 'the trade'.

Submariners in the English-speaking world refer to their calling as 'the trade'. This apparently demeaning term is worn with pride, much in the same manner as oppressed ethnic and other groups often adopt the slurs made against them by others. In the case of submariners, the story usually goes that when an elderly Admiral of the Royal Navy first saw a submarine and the typically dishevelled dress that was an inevitable consequence of service aboard early submarines, he declared that submarines must be manned by a group of 'tradesmen'. At that time (c. 1910) the term was still a pejorative. There are various versions of this story, which is still actively retailed today by submariners when explaining the folk term for their occupation. Officially, the designation in Australia is the 'Submarine Service'.

Another well-worn anecdote emphasises the cunning that submariners prize – and fear:

The captain of a submarine, in a manoeuvre with an enemy surface ship, asks his chief engineer to give him the speed of the target. The Chief replies 'Twelve knots'. The Captain says in disbelief 'but we are doing 12 knots and the target is gaining on us!' 'Ah, replies the Chief, when the enemy is travelling faster than you are, you ARE the target!'¹⁰

Submariners, like many occupational groups, have also produced a pantheon of their own heroes. Some of these are decorated heroes, while others, sometimes decorated sometimes not, are best known within the group. One of the most famous is Lieutenant Commander (Retd.) Max Shean (DSO and bar, Bronze Star), a World War 2 veteran known to all Australian submariners, whether they have met him or not. Max's North Sea exploits in the British miniature X-craft submarines and, later, in the Pacific are certainly eye-popping, and include the 'invention' of the

¹⁰ May, S. 'The Multi-Genre Materials and Rituals of Submariner Associations in Western Australia', Western Australian Folklore Archive, 1997. (Slightly edited for punctuation),

snorkel, long before the official German innovation appeared in submarines.¹¹ Other noted and highly decorated Australian submariners of the World War 2 era include Ian Macintosh MBE, eventually to be a knighted Vice-Admiral of the Royal Navy, Lt. Kenneth Hudspeth RANVR, Lt. Brian Mahoney McFarlane RAN, S/Lt. W J Jack Marsden RANVR, Lt. Henty Henty-Creer RANVR, Dr D. C. Lt. Jackson RANVR and Lt. Ken Briggs RANVR, all of whom served in X-craft. On July 31, 1945 Shean and Briggs aboard *XE4* were involved in the cutting of the underwater cables linking Tokyo, Singapore, Saigon and Hong Kong through which the Japanese high command were sending intelligence signals. This forced the messages to be sent via radio in codes the Americans had broken—yielding information which later confirmed the decision to attack Japan with nuclear weapons. Another Australian, Captain George Hunt, served in eleven British, Dutch and Polish submarines, carried out thirty-two patrols and claims to have sunk twenty-eight enemy ships.

Terms of 'The Trade'

The folk speech of Australian submariners is a combination of technical jargon, including:

- acronyms for technical aspects of submarine warfare (e.g. *DSEA* – Davis Submerged Escape Apparatus)
- terms derived from Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy argot (e.g. *Pusser* – all things naval from the folk name of a ship's pay officer, the *Pusser* (from Purser); *Slush* – RN slang for the cook)
- a number of unique terms, such as *aftendy* for a sailor who lives in the rear of a submarine, *forendy* for one who lives at the other and *snake pit* for the forward lower section of a diesel submarine's engine room, among many others given in the glossary appended.
- A few items of general civilian folk speech, such as *Bloggs* for any male person and *cane-cutter's cordial* for rum, the submariner's traditional beverage.

Taken together, these elements of folk speech reveal the lineaments of submariner identity, reflecting their esoteric activities of work and play, as well as their exoteric prejudices and worldview in general. These aspects of submariner identity are colourfully apparent in their derogations of other sailors. Those who are not submariners may be referred to as *fish heads*, *mullets* and *deck apes*, while surface ships are

¹¹ Shean, M., *Corvette and Submarine* (Claremont, WA: M. Shean, c.1992). See also S. May, WA Folklore Archive 1997 and <http://www.wv2australia.gov.au/farflung/cuttingcables.html>

dismissed as *skimmers*, as are those who sail them. And, again in contradiction to the traditions of the Navy, submarines are not referred to as *ships*, but as *boats*.

As in most military groups there are formalised nicknames for officers. *The bloke* is the captain, the *Second dickie* is the second-in-command, while *Jimmy the One* is the First Lieutenant, usually just *the Jimmy*. The distinctions reflected in these and other terms for officers go back to the earliest days of submarining when *tight trousers* referred to officers and *slack trousers* were the crew—because crew wore bell-bottoms at that time, while officers did not.¹² And although officers and crews necessarily work and live closely together while aboard, generating an especially powerful camaraderie, the formal distinctions of rank and authority are nevertheless subtly reinforced through the use of folk terms like these. (See Appendix for full glossary). Personal nicknames are also widely used, another reflection of submariner camaraderie.

Humour

The strong esoteric-exoteric character of submariner culture is also reflected in many aspects of their humour. The following example is a submariners' version of a widely encountered item of reprographic lore, common towards the end of the last century and since.

In The Beginning

In the beginning was the word, and the word was God and all else was darkness and void without form. So God created the heavens and the earth. He created the sun and the moon and the stars, so that the light might pierce the darkness. And the earth, God divided between the land and the sea, and these he filled with many assorted creatures.

And the dark, salty, slimy creatures that inhabited the seashore, God called ROYAL MARINES, and dressed them accordingly, and the flighty creatures of the air, he called AIRY FAIRIES, and these He clothed in uniforms which were ruffled and foul. And the lower creatures of the sea, God called SKIMMERS, and with a twinkle in His eye and a sense of humor that only He could have, God gave them big gray targets to go to sea on. He gave them many splendid uniforms to wear. He gave them many wonderful and exotic places to visit. He gave them pen and paper so they could write home every week, and He gave them make-and-mends at sea, and He gave them a laundry to keep their splendid uniforms clean. When you're God you tend to get carried away.

And on the 7th day, as you know, God rested, and on the 8th day at 0700, God looked down upon the earth and God was not a happy

¹² See Jones, T., *Watchdogs of the Deep: Life in a Submarine During the Great War* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935).

man. So He thought about His labours, and in His infinite wisdom, God created a divine creature and this He called a SUBMARINER.

And these SUBMARINERS, whom God created in his own image, were to be of the deep, and to them He gave a white woolly jumper, He gave them black steel messengers of death to roam the depths of the sea, waging war against the forces of Satan and evil. He gave them hotels to live in when they were weary from doing God's will. He gave them subsistence so they might entertain the ladies on Saturday nights and impress the hell out of the creatures called SKIMMERS.

And at the end of the 8th day, God looked down upon the earth and say (sic) all was good, but God was not happy because, in the course of His labours he had forgotten one thing. He did not have a submariner's white woolly jumper. But he thought about it and thought about it and finally satisfied Himself knowing that NOT JUST ANYBODY CAN BE A SUBMARINER.¹³

Cartooning by submariners about their way of life is prolific and greatly appreciated. Certain individuals are noted and esteemed as producers of cartoons that, from the submariners' point of view, are able to cleverly balance the humour and the dangers of the trade. In the 1960s generation of submariners, for instance, L.G. Freeleagus aka 'Sandy/Hi Rob' is a celebrated exponent. His work includes humorous evocations of the submariner ethos, attitudes, interest in well-endowed young females and the occasional critical comment on perceived failures of officers and the Royal Australian Navy.¹⁴ The Western Australian Folklore Archive also has some World War 2 cartoons that display the same humorous treatment of the dangers of the submariner's work, including being attacked by one's own side (also a problem in World War 1), failure to adjust a vital item of equipment causing water to flood into the boat and trying to bring a submarine up to the required depth or being unable to stop the craft descending.¹⁵

As with the occupational humour of many other military groups, these 'make light' of the realities, functioning to raise a smile and relieve the tensions that inevitably arise in a submerged submarine in wartime, or even in peace.

Customs and Beliefs

Submarines may fly the pirate flag of a skull and crossbones, or 'jolly Roger', on some occasions, especially when returning to port after a

¹³ Barrow-in-Furness Branch of the (UK) Submariners Association website <http://submariners.co.uk/index.php> [accessed February 2008].

¹⁴ A representative selection of his work is in Freeleagus, L.G. (Sandy Hi Rob), *AAROOOGAH!: Australian Submarine Squadron Reunion 23 September 1988* (Everton Park, Qld: L.G. Freeleagus, 1988). See Shean, M., *Corvette and Submarine*, for examples of World War 2 cartooning.

¹⁵ May, S. See also Barrow site for other examples, mostly since the 1960s.

‘kill’. In this case they may display one white bar for each enemy ship sunk. This practice is definitely frowned upon by the naval authorities whose forebears, in the case of the Royal Navy, spent a great deal of time and energy pursuing pirates. This disapproval, though, is satisfying for submariners, another reflection of their ambivalent relationship with the navy/ies of which they are, nominally, an organisational unit. During World War 1 it was the custom to fly the pirate flag in British submarines as these were frequently attacked by their own surface ships and so the submariners felt that ‘every man’s hand was against them’.¹⁶ The jolly Roger may also be carried by submariner units when participating in Anzac Day parades.

As with the broader English-language population, submariners tend to think of the number 13 as unlucky. However, perhaps surprisingly given the dangers of the trade, there does not seem to be any appreciably greater intensity of folk belief among submariners than in the general community. An ex-submariner described submariners as ‘not superstitious—probably the opposite. Decisive/confident/capable’.¹⁷ These practical characteristics are perhaps more essential to the intensities of living and working aboard a submarine.



Australian Submarine Service Badge—‘The Dolphins’.

¹⁶ Jones, T., *Watchdogs of the Deep: Life in a Submarine During the Great War* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935).

¹⁷ Lloyd Blake by email March 10, 2009.

The distinctive double-dolphin badge of the Australian Submarine Service was introduced in 1966, against some initial RAN opposition. The Australian Submarine Service was expected to adopt the British submariner's badge, known without fondness as the *sausage on a stick*. A group called the Submarine Project Team formed in 1964 under Commander Alan McIntosh. He was not a submariner, but is credited with designing the new badge. When a submariner has finally earned the right to wear it after extensive and intensive training, the custom is to *drink the dolphins*. This involves the newly initiated submariner placing the badge at the bottom of a large glass of beer and sculling the liquid contents. Considerable satisfaction is evinced among Australian submariners at the Royal Navy's 1972 replacement of its *sausage on a stick*, with a badge based on the Australian design.

Drinking the dolphins symbolises entry to the esoteric military-occupational group of submariners. In accordance with the strong identification of submariners with their group, this connection does not cease when a submariner leaves the navy for civilian life, as an ex-submariner expresses it: 'Submariners [sic] Dolphins leave a mark on your chest, right over your heart long after the uniforms have gone. You earned them, you always wear them. You will always be recognized as a Submariner by the Submarine community at home and anywhere else in the world.'¹⁸

The maritime custom of 'Crossing the Line' is also an initiation custom connected with occupational activities, in this case, nautical. While not a strictly Australian custom, most migrants to Australia experienced this ritual during the period when passenger ships crossed the equator until the 1970s. It was old then. In 1865 Elizabeth Anketell, en route to Victoria, described the custom as it was in those days. She referred to the practice of *shaving* those who had not previously crossed the equator:

the victim is placed on a stool [and] is held by 2 men blackened all over to represent Negroes. Neptune and his wife dressed up in a most hideous manner sit in [?] a large brush dipped in pitch and tar is put all over the face and into the mouth. If possible they put dirty oil in the first boys mouth; he is then rolled into a tank of see (sic) water and nearly smothered by the 2 negroes, coming out half suffocated like a drowned rat ... [I had to] actually shake hands and *kiss* Mrs Neptune.¹⁹

By the 1950s and 60s this event had been made more user-friendly and institutionalised as an item of shipboard entertainment and diversion

¹⁸ From document titled 'The Submariner: Some Anonymous Comments from Submarine Veterans', date unknown, supplied by Lloyd Blake, February 2009.

¹⁹ Anketell, J., *Walker in the Wilderness* (Perth, WA: Hesperian Press, 1998, p. 8).

from the monotony of the voyage. King Neptune still presided, of course, though the *shaving* was now purely symbolic and first timers crossing the line were simply dunked in the ship's swimming pool.²⁰ But in the submarine work sphere the custom seems to have retained its harder edge. In 1999 a video of a crossing the line initiation aboard the Royal Australian Navy's submarine *Onslow* was aired on the TV program *A Current Affair*. Taken in 1994, the video showed naked sailors suffering physical and verbal abuse, including having their bodies smeared with foul-smelling substances and being playfully whipped.²¹ The Royal Australian Navy acknowledged that the custom was widely practised but this particular incident had gone too far. One sailor interviewed for this article also mentioned another naval custom of social levelling involving flogging of the ship's officer hierarchy by the crew, from the captain down.²²

Submariners also engage in a busy round of memorial services and commemorations for lost boats and their crews, reunions, dinners and similar convivial and memorial events. These extend to local, national and international conferences, as well as occasional events involving serving boats of various navies. Anzac Day is a significant day, though the emphasis here is seen to be on *soldiers*, as submariners refer to their army comrades. The Anzac mythology is seen to privilege the digger, the footsoldier, over *sailors*. This is a point of irritation in the Royal Australian Navy generally and among submariners in particular as it overlooks the vital naval contributions to the Dardanelles campaign and to the Gallipoli landings of 1915, as well as those in subsequent theatres of war.

Song and Verse

Like most other all-male military groupings, submariners have an extensive repertoire of male bawdry. This is composed of old and new items, predominantly parodies of popular songs of various periods, drinking songs and nonsense songs. One relatively mild example has an Australian connection and is to the tune of the World War 2 era Andrews Sisters' hit *Rum and Coca Cola*:

Have you ever been to Trincomalee,
Where the women wear a white sari

²⁰ Colic-Peisker, V., *Split Lives: Croatian Australian Stories* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2004, p. 91) for an account of one such ceremony in 1956. See Jenner, S. (ed), *Down Under Downunder* (n.p.: privately published, c.2009, p. 146), on RN Fourth Submarine Squadron in Sydney 1949-1969, for a photograph of a crossing-the-line ceremony aboard HM submarine *Tapir*, c.1969.

²¹ *The Australian*, 7 July 1999, p. 5.

²² *Guardian Express* (Perth), 13-19 July 1999, p. 5. Older submariners of the Cold War era generally maintain that there were no initiation rituals in their day.

They lift sari above the knee,
And Jiggy Jiggy Jack for 10 rupee

chorus

Drinking rum and Coca Cola
Stick it up your fat ar**la
Junior seaman, and Stoker
Working for the Aussie dollar

Have you ever been to old Hong Kong,
Spent all night with Susie Wong,
She will give you - all night in
For a can of Herrings in

chorus

Have you been to Singapore
Spent a night with a Chinese whore,
I love You darling, I love you dear
And loads you up with Gonorrhoea

chorus

I Was Champion Farter of Her Majesty's Submarine provides another example of submariner humour:

I joined the navy, took the plunge, no common job for me
I'd see the world' which! (can be hard from underneath the sea)
But my career has blossomed with rewards for being keen
For I was Champion Farter on Her Majesty's submarine.

It happened first by accident, I made my first impression
In training, you might say it was just, bodily de-compression
I passed the tests quite easily and though I've often said it
I passed in drill, I passed in tides, I passed wind with a credit.

Oh, I remember training days, 'twas back to sail for me
With mainsail up and bended stance and cabbage soup for tea
They'd point me at a limp-hung sail, and when we were inspected
Others would salute with pride, but me, 'twas not expected.

I had my special uniform, I basked in fleet's renown
Others dressed in sparkling white, but me, I dressed in brown
And others slept in tiered bunks, could barely toss or turn
But I had air-conditioning in my cabin in the stern.

And then to submarines for me, what status I enjoyed,
And no-one else could match us when my talents were employed
On exercise they'd seek us out with depth charge, think they'd won!
When bubbles came from down below, my duty I had done.

So we were feared, avoided, and shunned by friend and foe
Of course New Zealand banned us, the treaty had to go

I never got my knighthood, the way it might have been
They say they couldn't trust me if I bowed before the Queen.²³

As well there are a few ballads reflecting the submariner's working life that once were known widely throughout the submariner community, though nowadays are rarely known or heard in their full versions.²⁴

Foodways

The nature of life aboard a submarine, until more recent times, meant that every crew member was able to perform all tasks required, an early example of 'multi-skilling'. This included cooking meals for all. Consequently, food and drink play an especially important role in the consciousness of submariners. This is reflected in the considerable number of items of folk speech referring to food, such as the following in use since c.1960s:

Fray Bentos – general term for canned food, after large canning company

Soggies – breakfast cereal

Scran – food

Kye, ki, ky – hot, unsweetened cocoa drink

Duff – steamed pudding, dessert

England water – tea

Babies' heads – individual tinned steak and kidney puddings.

Earlier terms included *red lead* for tinned tomatoes and *pot mess* for corned beef stew

There is also an intense interest in recipes, especially those able to be created from a very restricted range of available ingredients, much of them not fresh, particularly in the early days of submarining when refrigeration was unknown. *Pusser's (Purser's) Pot Mess* well reflects the dependence of submariner cuisine upon tinned food:

2 Tin, stewed Steak.

1 tin Potatoes.

1 tin Arigonis (Tomatoes).

2 tins mixed vegetables.

²³ Collected from Jeff Fry, ex-RAN, by Rob Willis.

²⁴ See Barrow-in-Furness Branch of the (UK) Submariners Association website for an excellent insight into submariner traditions, past and present.

1 tin baked beans, cannellini beans, butter beans, or all three.
1 tin spaghetti.

Recipes may carry colourful folk names, such as *Better Than Sex Cake*, *Cheese Ush*, *Elephant's Footprints* and *Shit on a Raft*, the latter depending mainly on lambs kidneys and Worcestershire Sauce and eaten for breakfast.²⁵ In Australian submarines during the 1960s and 70s, a meal of mixed vegetables and mince was a *Train Smash*.

Submarine Heritage

Submarines have also become part of the folkloric fabric of Australian maritime heritage, their discarded and obsolete bones being used as piers, dive wrecks, power sources, even starting towers for boat races and ornaments. As well there are memorials around Australia and abroad that are also part of the folk heritage of submariners and the wider communities they have either served or fought. These are variously, maintained, dived on by scuba divers or otherwise known and noted in their local areas and within the submariner community.²⁶

While these aspects of submarine history are not seen by submariners as an element of their esoteric *raison d'être*, they have a small but important purchase in the broader community, linking particularly with popular perceptions of nation through the loss of *AE1* in the first action of World War 1 off New Britain and the deeds of *AE2* in the Dardanelles on April 25, 1915.²⁷ Both these submarines are currently attracting considerable community and media attention as well as being of ongoing naval and government activity.

As well as the tangible remains and sites associated with Australian submarines, there are also intangible traditions and stories that, regardless of their historical accuracy, are often important elements of local folklore and related sense of place. These traditions do not belong to Australian submariners but to the local communities who have originated and perpetuated them over time. For example, Albany (WA) legend has it that a secret submarine base was established at Emu Point

²⁵ The late Cyril Tawney, folksinger and songwriter, served on British submarines and wrote a number of highly-rated songs from these experiences, including 'Sammy's Bar' ('The Last Boats are Leaving'), 'Diesel and Shale', and 'Chicken on a Raft', referring to the British submariner name for this ad hoc dish, also known as 'shit on a raft'.

²⁶ For details, see Seal, G., 'Australian Submarines at Peace: The J-Boats', *Australian Journal of Naval History*, forthcoming.

²⁷ The submarine has a strong purchase in popular culture, stemming mainly from Jules Verne's perennially popular classic *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (and its iterations in film) first published in 1870, just as modern submarines were being developed. The Australian public has exhibited a fascination with submarines ever since the arrival of *AE1* and *AE2* in 1914. It is not the purpose of this article to investigate these aspects, but see Seal, G., 'Australian Submarines at Peace' for some aspects of this during World War 1 and into the 1920s.

during World War 1. Submarines were supposedly hauled out of the water for repairs and maintenance. However, Australia's World War 1 *AE2* was at Albany only briefly, under tow as part of the second convoy that took the First AIF to European waters. No other of Australia's early submarines are known to have visited Albany. Nevertheless, the story persists locally.²⁸ Also in Western Australia, it is not unusual to hear stories of World War 2 Japanese submarines surfacing along the coast to recharge their batteries. Some of these accounts also claim enemy crews came ashore for water and, it is often hinted, perhaps other purposes.²⁹

Conclusion

Submariners in general, and Australian submariners in particular, are an occupational group that did not exist before the early twentieth century. This provides a not unique, but unusual, opportunity to track the lore, language and legendry of such a group from its origins into the present. The findings tend to confirm studies of other occupational folk groups, particularly those of an all-male, military type.³⁰ The powerful esoteric and exoteric dynamics observed here are also characteristic of such warrior collectivities, contained within the formal hierarchies of a masculinist military tradition, in this case, naval. Despite and no doubt because of this, much of the folk practice and expression of the group is concerned with reinforcing the sense of shared identity and with defining and projecting themselves against significant 'other' groups, most obviously the Royal Australian Navy, of which submariners are officially a part but to which they clearly feel they do not entirely belong.

However, as a folk group, submariners are an interesting case of complex national, occupational and transnational relationships. On the one hand, each of the national submarine services has a distinctive warrior identity related to notions of national duty, service and, if necessary, sacrifice. Around this is a powerful occupational bonding that identifies them as a special fraternity, even within their own navies. Extending beyond these bonds, and further complicated by various

²⁸ Les Johnson, *Armed Forces Albany, Heritage Aspects*, (n.p.: privately published, 1994, pp. 19-20).

²⁹ Western Australian oral tradition, coll. G. Seal, late 1980s ff.

³⁰ Sandels, Robert, 'The Doughboy: The Formation of a Military Folk', *American Studies*, 24.1 (Spring, 1983), 69-88; Underwood, Agnes Nolan, 'Folklore from G.I. Joe', *New York Folklore Quarterly*, 2 (1947), 285-297; Linton, Ralph, 'Totemism and the A. E. F.' *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 26.2 (Apr-Jun 1924), 296-300. See also Byington, Robert H., (ed.), *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife*. Smithsonian Folklife Studies, no. 3 (Los Angeles: California Folklore Society, 1978); Carol Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004). A useful international overview of the field can be found in Thomas A. Green, *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art* (Santa Barbara/Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 1997), under 'Occupational Folklore/Folklife' pp. 596ff.

colonial and post-colonial relationships, as well as some of relatively recent conflict, is a powerful sense of global comradeship with the submariners of all other nations. These bonds are actively maintained through a busy round of national and international conferences, publications and formal and informal communications and connections. Transnational ties of this kind coexist comfortably even between past, present and possibly future enemies. Submariners are at once strongly nationalistic and patriotic but also pan-national in their essential relationships and attitudes, a situation that makes them comfortable inhabitants of a globalised world.

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Appendix:

Glossary of Submariner Folk Speech, World War 1 to c.1970s

A: The following are from Jones *Watchdogs of the Deep* and so of WW1–1920s vintage, although some terms are still in use.

Billet – submarine’s patrol area

dugout – bunk

Fort Blockhouse – submarine headquarters, Portsmouth

fort end – torpedo room

Harry Tates – free and easy lives

Hoodoo on number 13 very prevalent on submarines

hooker – a submarine, or perhaps any vessel?

(to be) in the rattle – in a report (with negative connotations)

Lover’s point – the bow of the submarine

number ones – best uniforms

oily wad – appearance of a submarine returning from patrol

one-eyed death brigade – mines

oppo – mate

pills – depth charges

(too) pussers – too much discipline

screw – a look through the periscope

shot (at), a – to shoot the sun for navigation

Skull and crossbones flag – flown at Harwich by submarines as they considered themselves ‘everybody’s enemy’, due to being frequently attacked by their own surface ships.

stunt – patrol

target – enemy ship

The dead room – a room at Harwich where crews had to stack and label their kit not needed at sea so it could be easily found for next-of-kin if they did not return.

The graveyard – Harwich, a port from which many submarines left, never to return

Tin fish, fish – torpedoes

trimmed – sleeping in one's bunk

B: The following are from the collections of the Australian Submarine Museum at Spectacle Island, Sydney and/or collected from submarine veterans by G. Seal, from 2006.

Aftendy – submariner who lives in the aft end of the boat

AMP – Assisted Maintenance period

Asdix – sonar officer

Black cat – to outdo a fellow sailor's story or actions

Bloggs – mythical name used in the service

Blue liners – duty free cigarettes for naval personnel, from the thin blue line in their paper

Boat – submarine

Bunting tosser – communications branch rating, signalman

Cane cutter's cordial – rum

CERA – Chief Engine Room Artificer

Cinderella time/leave – midnight. From time when junior sailors required to return to base by 2359 hours.

Clockwork mouse – submarine used to train surface ships and aircraft in anti-submarine warfare

CME – Chief Mechanical Engineer

CNS – Chief of Naval Staff

CO – Commanding Officer

Co Dock – Cockatoo Island Dockyard, Sydney (decommissioned)

Commander S or S/M – CO of submarine flotilla or squadron

Cox'n – Senior seaman on a submarine responsible for discipline and victualling (known in RN as the Grocer)

CPO – Chief Petty Officer

Crusher – member of the Regulating Branch (ship's police_

Day hand Waller – a submariner who works at daytime and is not required to stand watches

Dhobbying – washing

Dink – RN generic term for an Australian

Dit, ditty – book or story told by a sailor

Donks – engines

Donk shop – engine room

E – Engineer officer

ERA – Engine Room Artificer

Evap – evaporator

Fish – torpedoes

Fore-ends – forward section of a submarine, torpedo compartment

Froo froo, foo foo – talcum powder
Greenies – sailors from Electrical Branch from time when Electrical Engineer officers wore green stripes with their gold braid
Guzz – naval base at Devonport. From wartime signal letter group of the port's call sign.
Her Majesty's recreation Camps – military prisons
Jimmy – first Lieutenant
Jolly – pleasant trip with no serious purpose
Jossmen – Master at Arms in a warship
Jaunties – *ibid.*
Killick – a leading seaman. From the sleeve badge of a single fouled anchor
Klaxon – submarine siren, from its brand name (but generic?)
L – Electrical Officer
L P blower – low pressure air compressor that brings a submarine to full buoyancy after surfacing.
Lunatic soup – beer
LWE – long weekend
Malaga – sweet fortified dessert wine from Malaga region, Spain
Make and mend – the afternoon off. From previous practice of setting aside a period of time for repair of personal kit and clothing.
Mob – Australian sailor's term for the navy
NAFFI – Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NUSHIP – New Unit Ship, naval vessel under construction and not yet commissioned
Oppo – originally meaning one's opposite who was on watch while you were not. On board a ship means a friend.
ORE – Operation Ready Evaluation
Outside wrecker – a tiffy (artificer) who looks after everything mechanical other than in the engine room
Part Three – officer or sailor under tuition aboard a submarine. On successful completion of the third section of hands-on training and passing the examinations he will finally qualify as a submariner.
Pick – anchor. To drop the pick is to anchor.
Planesman – helmsman aboard a dived submarine
PO – Petty Officer
Pompey – folk name for Portsmouth
PP1a – personal service records
PULHEEMS - Acronym for medical assessment of Physique, Upper and Lower Limbs, Hearing (R&L), Eyes (R&L), Mental Capacity and Stability.
Red dicks – frankfurter sausages, hot dogs
RO – radio operator
Rum rat – sailor who will do anything for an extra tot of rum
SAW – senior rating Systems Artificer Weapons
SBS – Special Boat Service

Scratcher – bosun, also second coxswain on a submarine

Sin bosun – navy clergy

S/M – abbreviation for submarine

Snorting – running diesel engines at periscope depth to charge batteries while air is drawn into the boat through the ‘snort mast’, or snorkel.

Snort mast – snorkel-like device for drawing in air while submerged

Sparker – radio operator

Steppas – RAN term for stepping ashore or for one’s best uniform or civvy clothes worn ashore

Stokers – engine room sailors

Submiss – when a submarine is overdue in reporting pre-arranged signals.

Tels – telegraphist, radio operator

Tiffy – an Engine Room Artificer

Train smash – meal of mince and vegetables

Trim – submerge to lower conning tower depth to check manholes etc., secure.

Also as ‘a trim’.

Winger - friend

C: Those below from *Oxley Outlook*, produced aboard *Otway* on a voyage from Australia to England in 1931, 30s with a Royal Navy crew.

oilybacks - stokers, ERAs? (Engine Room Artificers). See above.

dabtoes – surface sailors

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