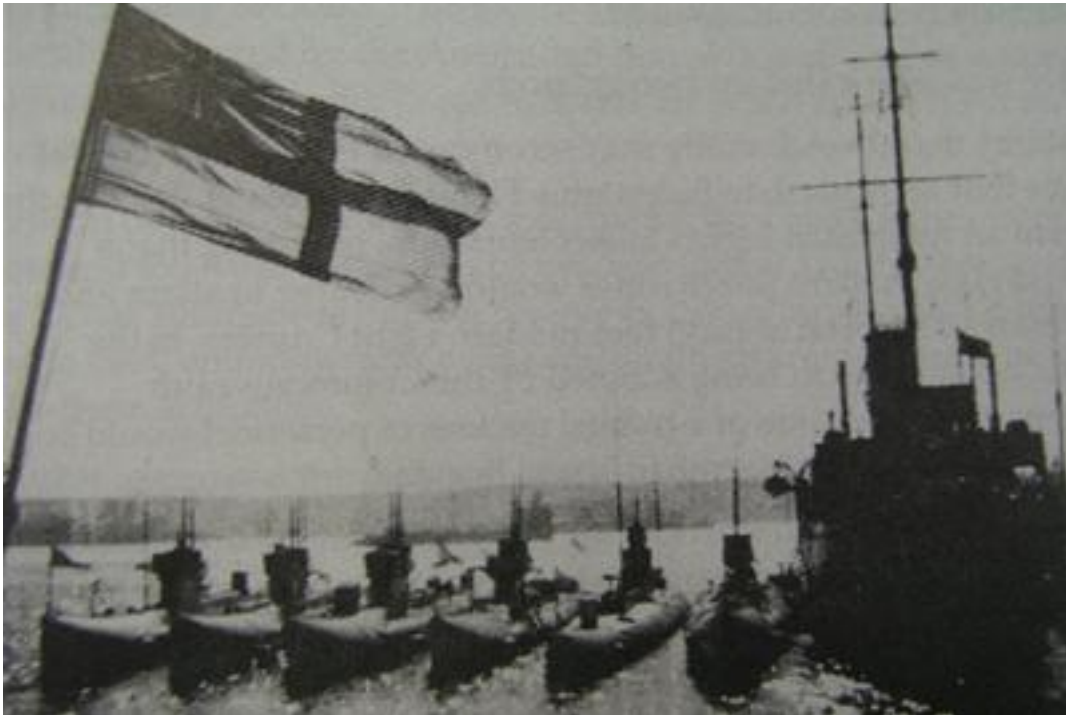


AUSTRALIAN SUBMARINES AT PEACE: J BOATS

Graham Seal

In January 1915 eight *J*-class submarines were commissioned under the United Kingdom War Emergency Program. Only six were constructed though these were able to reach surface speeds of nineteen knots, attained through a triple propeller system powered by three eight cylinder Vickers Diesel engines. This allowed the submarines to operate with the main battle fleet, trapping slow enemy craft between surface vessels and very fast submarines, a technique that led to them being known collectively as ‘The Reapers’. They were around 100 foot longer than the E-class submarines, of which Australia had two during the war, and were also equipped with long-range wireless. Together with their speed, this enabled them to operate effectively as reconnaissance vessels, with a safe diving depth of 300 feet. As part of the 11th Submarine Flotilla, the *J*-class boats were to play an effective role in North Sea Naval operations.



J-boats with HMAS *Platypus*

Life on board a *J*-boat was a cramped and dangerous affair. Leading Torpedo-man Tom, or ‘Taff’, Jones had been among the landing boat crews at Gallipoli aboard HMS *London*. Inspired by the well-reported exploits of VC-winnner Lieutenant Norman Douglas Holbrook in British submarine *B11* in the Dardanelles, he joined the submarine service. Jones subsequently served aboard *J2* and in 1935 published a rare account of the experience in his *Watchdogs of the Deep*. According to Jones, after some brief but intense training in HMS *Thames* at Sheerness, including just one practice dive, he was posted to *J2* under Lt-Commander Cooper, DSO. *J2* was crewed by five officers and forty men. Jones described the inside of *J2* and the living and working conditions as they were in 1916:

‘... it is divided into eight compartments separated by means of strong bulkheads with watertight doors. The first compartment, as we come from the bows, is the torpedo room, or ‘Fort End’, as we call it. In it are four torpedo-tubes, each containing a torpedo; and on each side of us there are two more spare torpedoes, in all eight ‘tin fish’. All round us are dozens of pipes and valves, polished to perfection. The valves are for flooding the tubes and the hundred and one controls for operating the torpedo-tubes. At the back of the tubes are four tanks containing the air-charge for firing the ‘fish’. Leaving Fort End we step through a bulkhead door to the ward-room. The captain and officers feed and sleep in the ward-room. Here again, we find all valves and pipes polished. On one side are the officers’ bunks; on the other the wireless cabinet. At the after end of this compartment is a tiny officers’ pantry.¹

Jones goes on to describe the operating hub of the control room, cramped with pipes, levers and gauges. ‘Just abaft the control room are two beam or broadside torpedo-tubes, with two spare fish on top ready for

loading'.ⁱⁱ He describes the fore engine room with wing Diesels on each side, the main motor room and the after engine-room, with another Diesel making a 'terrific din' and air compression equipment equally as noisy.

The final compartment was the crew space 'where we ate, slept and played patience'. Half the crew would eat their meals here at any one time, 'otherwise the other half would have had to stand on their eyebrows as we termed it.' On deck was a three-inch recessing gun and a telescopic wireless mast. The *J*-boats were notorious for rolling and pitching, with sea-sickness afflicting even the hardest submariners, including Jones. It was not considered good form to show that you were seasick and so Jones, like many others, suffered silently.

In these confined quarters, the submariners worked, ate, slept and socialised as best they could. Some played cards, some read, some talked about their girlfriends or wives. 'The air seems thick, even in the morning', Jones wrote. 'After a very long day of diving, about eighteen hours, breathing becomes very hard, and a sort of mist can be seen over the deck-boards, indicating that the fresh air is diminishing fast.'ⁱⁱⁱ Smoking was officially banned but officers and men smoked pipes and cigarettes surreptitiously^{iv}, no doubt contributing the breathing difficulties. Jones says that the only air supplies on board were used for the operation of the submarine, though he did see engineers occasionally open the airlines to 'put a little kick in the stale air.'^v Apart from this occasional assistance, the only pleasure was the daily ration of rum in the tradition of the British navy.

Despite the dangers of enemy craft, Jones wrote 'I think I voice the opinion of most submarine men when I say that the British Navy was our

biggest enemy'.^{vi} The British warships were frequently so nervous of U-boats that they attacked their own submarines, even after they had given correct recognition signals. The submarines would have to dive rapidly in sixty seconds to escape. Referring to the openly expressed warning by the British destroyers that the submarines must keep out of the way or risk being attacked, Jones writes: 'I don't think I am giving away secrets when I state that a very large number of British submarines never returned through these circumstances'. Jones and his fellow submariners appear to have accepted this situation due to the seriousness of the *U*-boat menace.^{vii}

As well as contending with such friendly fire, the *J* boats were not very manoeuvrable. Commander Norman Shaw recollected many years later that 'Their diving qualities were not the best, it being asserted by one experienced submarine captain that if you could drive a *J*-boat you could drive a bath.' The very flat upper deck and casing of the *J*-boats operated like one large hydroplane if the boat attained an angle of more than 5 degrees.^{viii}

But it was on the surface that *J*-boats seem to have had the most trouble. Jones relates one event that took place as *J2* was returning to Blyth Harbour with one engine and a desultory tugboat. It was late at night but the submarine showed no navigation lights as the tug and the single engine manoeuvred her around a notoriously sharp corner. A large Norwegian freighter suddenly loomed out of the darkness. The tug let go the towrope and sped away, leaving the helpless submarine to be hit behind her bows, damaging the after hydroplane and holing the hull. The freighter then dropped her very large anchor, narrowly missing the

submarine. Fortunately, *J2* was still seaworthy, though she bore the scars of the encounter in the form of a large patch for the rest of her career.^{ix}

It was near the end of the war that the first major disaster befell the *J*-boats, proving the hazards of World War 1 submarining mentioned by Jones. *J6* became the victim of a mistaken attack by a Royal Navy decoy ship, *Cymric*. She was sunk with the loss of sixteen crew on October 15, 1917. A replacement was immediately ordered. Built on an existing K-class hull, the new *J7* had her bridge and control room set further back than the others of the class. She was completed in February 1918.

After the loss of Australia's first submarines, *AE* and *AE2*, the government and the Navy still wanted to have a submarine capability. There were considerable exertions in Australia and in Britain to determine what sort of capability it should be and also to develop facilities within Australia for the maintenance and possibly even the building of submarines. While these investigations and deliberations were wending their way through the government and military, the war itself came close to its end. Prime Minister W M Hughes and Sir Joseph Cook, Minister for the Navy, were both in Britain for the 1918 Imperial War Conference and the peace talks at Versailles. While they were there, engaged in high level talks with the British government and defence forces, they were told that it was possible that the British government might present a number of submarines to Australia.

In January, 1919, it was agreed between the two governments that six submarines and six destroyers would be given to the Royal Australian Navy, a gift valued then at around one-and-half million pounds. *J 1, 2, 3, 4, 5* and *7* were commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy in March,

1919. Lieutenant Commander O H Halifax of *J7* was the senior officer of the flotilla that assembled for the first time at Portsmouth in early April, together with the cruiser *Sydney* and supply ship *Platypus*.

Preparations began to ready and crew the *J*-boats for their long journey to Australia. There were shortages of men in both the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy, though crews for the six submarines were relatively quickly assembled from volunteers from both navies and serving submariners, including some of the crew of *AE2*, now recovered from their lengthy captivity in Turkish POW camps. The plan was for the *J*-boats to voyage to Australia in time for the Peace Day celebrations scheduled for July 19.



Even before the *J*-boats began their voyage to Australia they were plagued with defects. It was not until April 9, 1919, that the six submarines were able to leave Portsmouth, escorted by *Sydney* and *Platypus*. They were followed by three more support craft, an oiler *Kurumba* and the *Australia* and *Brisbane*. As with the earlier voyage of *AE1* and *AE2* from Britain to Australia, the *J*-class boats suffered problems, breakdowns and other disasters. In poor visibility *J5* collided with a French sailing ship, which later sank as a result^x. Further problems

were experienced with the intermediate shafts and the submarines were frequently under tow as they proceed from Gibraltar, to Malta. One of *J2*'s engines failed as soon as she had left Gibraltar and the submarine had to be taken in tow by *Sydney*. But in the evening the tow wire parted. The next day it broke again but they managed to make another engine operable and made a slow passage to Malta, arriving on the 20th.

All the other submarines also suffered engine problems on this stage of the voyage and *J7*, at least, was towed for some days by *Australia* between Aden and Colombo. Aboard *Australia* was a young Australian Midshipman, Norman Shaw. With the rank of sub-Lieutenant and after submarine training in England, he would later be briefly appointed to *J7* in Australia in February 1920. He was one of the second group of Cadet Midshipmen at the Royal Australian Navy College at Osborne House, Geelong, a location destined to play an important role in the Australian history of the *J*-boats. Together with Frank Getting, who had been in the first Royal Australian Navy College intake, he was the first Australian submarine officer to complete the 'Perisher' training course in Britain. In his recollections, Shaw notes that as well as himself and Getting there were another five Australian sub-Lieutenants in the submarines, Calder, Larkins, Sadleir, Showers and Watkins.^{xi}

The flotilla passed through the Suez Canal and on to Colombo by May 16. The heat and cramped conditions caused the crews great distress and there was a much needed few days rest, including leave. From there, the submarines sailed at various times for Singapore, 'Another very welcome port', as torpedo-man Jones recalled. Again they were able to rest and obtain much-needed fresh food. From Singapore the submarines had all departed by June 18 for Thursday Island.

During this final stage of the voyage tragedy again struck the *J*-boats. Due to the oppressive heat of the tropics, the crews had taken to sleeping on the casing. But on the morning of June 20, the men of *J2* discovered the empty blankets of Sub-Lieutenant Larkins. All the submarines immediately conducted a search until late in the afternoon, but without success. *J2*'s captain held a burial service with all the crew mustered – ‘They were a band of downcast men who stood there bareheaded’, Jones wrote.^{xii}

On reaching Thursday Island on June 28, the luck of the *J*-boats did not improve. There was dissatisfaction among the crews about the quality and quantity of the food supplied by the ‘tin pot’, as they called the poorly suited and prepared *Platypus*^{xiii}. Rations were no better at Thursday Island – ‘a few tins of corn dog and a few old biscuits’^{xiv} - and the crews then confronted the pandemic scourging the post-war world, destined to kill more people than the war itself. All the submarines were quarantined, but the influenza claimed Stoker Henry Haggis of *J7* who was buried there.^{xv}

The flotilla sailed for Moreton Bay on July 5 where they rested for three days. However, they could not go ashore, even though they had ‘tons of spondulix’ and *J2*s crew ‘voiced our protest by staging a mild mutiny’. Their officers talked the crew around, however, holding up a vision of the tumultuous welcome they would receive when they reached Sydney. ‘This made us quite a band of good boys again’, wrote Jones.^{xvi}

Most of the submarines finally arrived in Sydney on July 15, 1919. *J5*, still under tow by *Brisbane*, had already arrived in June. They

were welcomed by the Governor-General and, as Jones remembered the scene ‘We received a great welcome: hundreds of boats met us; the ferry steamers cock-a-doodle-dood themselves hoarse.’^{xvii}

The Peace Day celebrations had been planned as a large-scale day of national thanksgiving to mark the end of hostilities. In the event, the day turned out to be a more muted event than envisaged. The influenza pandemic, the seaman’s strike and the threats of the dockers to join, together with haggling over the peace terms with Germany took most of the general public’s attention. As well, large numbers of troops were now returning and it was becoming difficult to repeat the initial enthusiasm each time a new boatload arrived. And people wanted to get on with their peacetime lives after more than four years of war and loss.

On July 19 the event duly took place, featuring a march through Sydney streets by the companies of a number of warships in the harbour, as well as the crews of the *J*-boats. The *Sydney Morning Herald* covered the march only briefly and made no mention of the submarines.^{xviii} But regardless of the indifference of the Sydney press, the men of the *J*-boats were happy to be home and to take part in the march, though they were understandably more interested in the after-march festivities. Jones passes over this event with barely a sentence: ‘After the impressive march, we returned to our ship, where we ‘spliced the main brace’.’^{xix}

But after the celebrations, troubles continued for the *J*-boats. They had not been refitted in England and were in need of serious repair and refurbishment after war service and the gruelling voyage to Australia. The program began at Garden Island from July 30. Unfortunately, there was a lack of expertise in submarine maintenance at Garden and

Cockatoo Islands, nor was the Royal Australian Navy well prepared for the specialised needs of submarines. These difficulties were compounded by the unavailability of necessary spare parts and the long delivery times for their eventual arrival from Britain. As the historian of Australian submarines, Michael White drily observes ‘The refit of the submarines was not noted for its vigour’.^{xx} Jones called it ‘a half-hearted refit’.^{xxi}

From February 16 1920, the *J*-boats were gradually moved to the new submarine base being established for them at Osborne House, Geelong. This had been built as a family residence by a wealthy landowner in 1858 and had been, from 1913 the first Royal Australian Navy College^{xxii}, and subsequently a military hospital and nurses’ convalescent quarters. Despite its heritage value, Osborne House was not very suitable as a submarine base. It lacked many of the storage facilities necessary for maintaining submarines, as well as a suitable deepwater pier for the vessels and their tenders.

Nevertheless, under Commander E C Boyle VC, the submarines and their crews trained hard to reach and maintain the high level of efficiency required for war duty. The submarines also took part in the ceremonies of greeting for the visit of the Prince of Wales in mid-June, 1920. Following this they successfully conducted what would now be called war games against the battle cruiser HMAS *Australia* and four destroyers.

While these enjoyable peacetime activities were being carried out, darker influences were coalescing in official circles. The Navy was being subjected to major cost cutting in the post-war climate and also experiencing difficulty obtaining and retaining personnel, especially

trained men. These influences would gradually come to determine the fate of the *J*-boats over the next few years.

The high point of the *J*-boats' chequered career was probably the voyage of *J 1, 2, 4* and *5* to Tasmania to take part in the summer training cruise and, fortuitously, the Hobart Regatta of 1921. Though even here they were to be dogged by bad luck and poor seamanship. Accompanied by 'our faithful old mother ship'^{xxiii} HMAS *Platypus* and MTB *Swordsman*, *J1, 2, 4* and *5* moored at Prince's wharf on January 16, 1921. The submarines were objects of intense curiosity to the local community, as a reporter for the Hobart *Mercury* wrote: 'Interest in the submarines, novel to the Hobart populace, is widespread and many people made their way to the wharf yesterday and indulged in respectful and fascinated inspection from the wharfside'.^{xxiv} Tasmanians had to wait a few more days before they were able to get aboard a submarine. On January 23rd 'a very large number of people availed themselves of the opportunity to see the vessels.'^{xxv}

A few days later, in Storm Bay, *J2* and *J4* conducted a 'sham attack' on HMAS *Sydney* carrying the Governor –General, Lady Forster and their staff to dock in preparation for the Hobart Regatta. Using dummy torpedoes, *J4* scored a hit beneath *Sydney's* bridge, while *J2* registered another between A and B funnels.^{xxvi} On the 30th large numbers again flocked to inspect the submarines, twenty at a time, and were titivated with the exciting news that *J2* would perform a demonstration dive during the next day's Regatta program.^{xxvii} This proved to be the highlight of the regatta, enthused the *Mercury's* reporter: 'It is not too much to say that this event alone was the biggest draw of the regatta.' The article also

acknowledged that ‘The wonderful work performed by this kind of vessel during the great war is now a matter of history.’^{xxviii}

But even this triumph was to turn to disaster for the J boats. As *J4* left for her daily practice run up the river on February 18 she unaccountably rammed the stern of a wooden schooner loading timber for New Zealand. When the vessels were parted the damage to the schooner, *Omega*, was a large hole, fortunately above the waterline. *J2* broke her flagpole and put a slight dent in her bow. Repairs to the damaged schooner were estimated at ten pounds.^{xxix}

Other peacetime activities turned out better. The Governor of Tasmania and Lady Allardyce were dived for forty minutes in Sandy Bay, as were the Bishop and Dean of Tasmania at another time. The *J2*'s crew also had the satisfaction of beating *Sydney*'s cutter in a two-mile race during the 83rd Annual Regatta. As Jones writes: ‘Three weeks later our visit to Hobart terminated. All had enjoyed their stay and it was with reluctance that we left.’^{xxx}

The submarines sailed for Geelong on February 24. Their stay in Tasmania had been lengthy, eventful and, especially for the crews, enjoyable. They had the leisure to see the sights, climb Mt Wellington, play cricket and generally enjoy the festive atmosphere of the Hobart Regatta, even as they attended to their routines and duties. But things were not to remain so rosy for very long.

In April an inquiry into the costs of the submarines revealed the lack of preparedness for submarines within the Royal Australian Navy. As well, there was the usual need to cut costs and the cost of the submarines

compared with their strategic value was considered by the Australian Naval Board to be too great and would preclude keeping the light cruisers Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney in commission. As a result, three *J*-boats were placed in Reserve and their crews paid off from Oct 4, 1921. Even then, bad luck followed the remaining submarines. The following February, *J1* collided with the River class torpedo boat destroyer HMAS *Huon* during routine exercises off Hobart. There was no damage to the submarine, but *Huon* was holed below the waterline and kept afloat through temporary repairs until her scheduled visit to Sydney the following month.

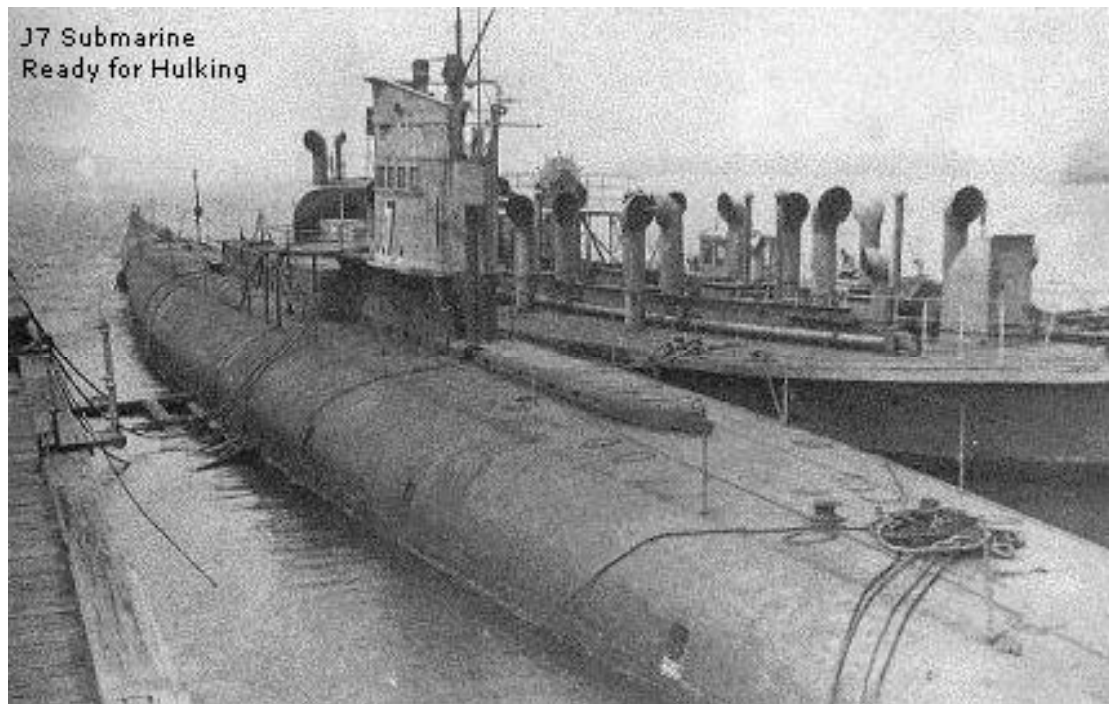
By this time it was only possible to fully crew two of the submarines, with an almost complete reserve crew. In November 1922 a naval conference concluded that the *J*-boats were too obsolete, too worn out and too expensive to be retained. From that time they were progressively scrapped.

J3 was the first scheduled to go, but had a brief reprieve. In December 1922 the submarine was moored near Swan Island so that she could be used as an auxiliary power generator for the Mine Depot. In February the following year, the Australian Naval Board gave permission for the hull to be sunk though this was apparently not carried out until 1926. In January that year *J3* was sunk near the northeastern tip of Swan Island to do further peacetime duty as a pier and breakwater.

J1 was sunk with *J2*, *J4* and *J5* off Port Phillip Bay between May and June 1926. *J1* was the only one of the boats to have a winged lookout on its conning tower and is also thought to have been the only submarine ever to have attacked another using depth charges, for which she was

uniquely fitted out. *J2* was stripped and left on the mud banks near the Flinders Naval Depot pier, then towed to sea and sunk together with *J1*, *J4* and *J5* off Port Phillip Bay. The day that Torpedo-man Jones's beloved *J2* was towed to the mud banks he went sick.^{xxxix} *J5* was sunk with *J1*, *J2* and *J4* off Port Phillip Bay. Prior to sinking *J5* was used for aerial bombing practice, but the bombs fell short and her seacocks were opened to sink her.

J7 was the only one of the submarines in operational condition by 1923 after a thorough and expensive refit. She was used as a power supply for the Flinders Naval Depot and at one point was under consideration to be retained in service. After various reprieves and continued use as a source of cheap electricity, *J7* was stripped, sold for further stripping then finally sold to the Melbourne Ports and Harbors SPG Department for sinking at Hampton as a breakwater near the Sandringham Yacht Club in August 1930.



Even after their scrapping. Misfortune haunted the *J*-boats. *J4* had been sold to the Melbourne Salvage Syndicate but was still in the possession and care of the Commonwealth while items of value were stripped from her as she lay along the outer west berth of Dock Pier, Williamstown. Around 4.30 in the afternoon on July 10, 1924, she mysteriously sank. The inquiry and report into the incident were unable to find a cause for the sinking. The possibilities canvassed were rough weather, damage to a sea connection during stripping and the possibility of a prank by a party of schoolboys shown over the submarine earlier in the afternoon. None of these explanations was thought to be very likely and the exact cause of *J4*'s sinking remained a mystery. She proved difficult to raise, though efforts were finally successful on December 6, 1926. The Harbour Trust then made her seaworthy again at a cost of over 2500 pounds, though this sparked a legal battle between the Trust and the Commonwealth over who was to pay this bill. This was eventually settled and SS *Minah* towed *J4*'s hull outside Port Phillip Heads, where she was sunk on April 28, 1927.

J1 and *J5* also caused trouble. After they were stripped they were moored at Williamstown Pier, along with the *Cerberus*. Here they were considered a nuisance, as the space they occupied was required for more important matters. On March 22 1926 *J1* and *J5* both broke their mooring ropes during bad weather and had to be re-moored to prevent them drifting dangerously into the harbour.

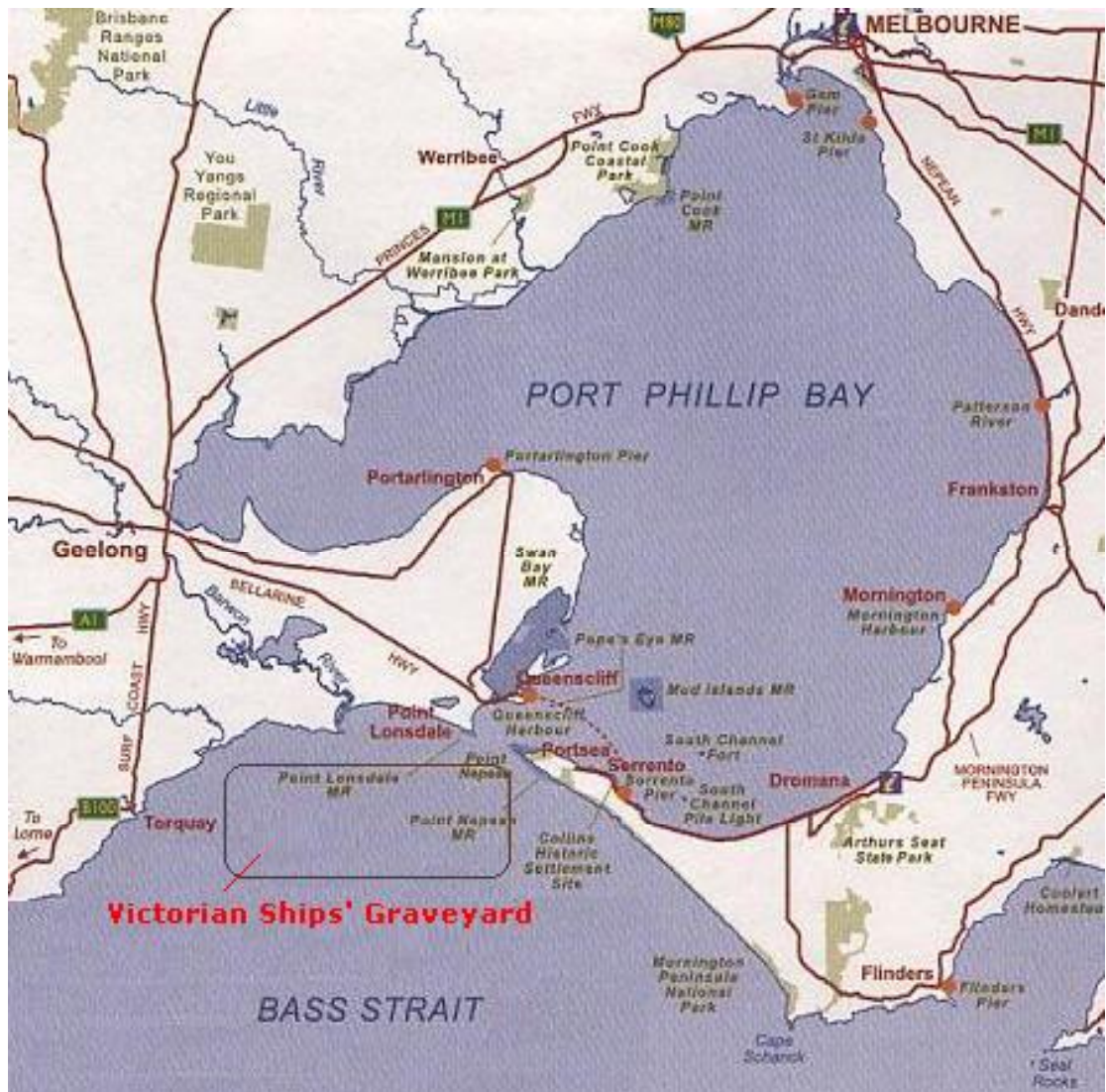
After his sick leave, Torpedoman Jones, along with many other of the *J*-boats' crew members transferred to *Platypus* which had been re-designated as a depot ship for destroyers. The routine and discipline aboard the ship were in sharp contrast to that of the submariners and

Jones was not happy until the second-in-command of *J2*, Lieutenant Lowther, came aboard as first lieutenant. ‘From then on the crew were a happy crowd. Our new ‘Jimmy the One’ understood us.’^{xxxii}

In 1923 Jones’s time with the Royal Australian Navy ended and he returned to England, by liner, to take leave and then rejoin the British Submarine Service. But, ‘during my holidays I felt a keen desire to return to Australia’. This he did and became quartermaster of the depot at Flinders Naval Base until joining the *S*-class destroyer HMAS *Tasmania*. He served aboard her until February 1926 when he was discharged to try and fit himself into civilian life after what he called ‘a fair amount of experience’ as a sailor, including training in a wooden ship, serving on a battleship, in submarines and finally in destroyers, together with ‘a fair amount of land fighting’.^{xxxiii} Jones then worked in Sydney as a painter. After a serious fall in 1929 he spent several years in recuperation but at the time of writing his undersea classic published in 1935 felt ‘as fit as ever’.

BONES OF THE *J*-BOATS

Apart from a few surviving craft displayed in museums, there is little record of the whereabouts of much of Australia’s tangible and intangible submarine heritage. The *J*-boats and their supply ship are an important aspect of that heritage, with their remains scattered around the Victorian coast and a less tangible but significant echo in the name of the submarine base in Sydney.



The remains of *J 1*, *2*, *4* and *5* lie in ‘the ship’s graveyard’, as the area off Port Phillip Bay is known. Here they serve as recreational and training sites for divers. According to the *Newsletter of the Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology* (AIMA), March 2005, 24(1): 14

‘ ... divers have reported that *J5* (also known as the ‘Yellow submarine’ for its spectacular colony of yellow zoanths) in the Ships’ Graveyard has suffered significant collapse similar to the damage to *J1* following storms in 1995. Most of the bow is reported to have collapsed down to the torpedo tubes, the debris being scattered below. Outer plating has

been ripped away from much of the hull, leaving gaping holes apparent on large sections of the outer hull. The conning tower and stern do not appear to have been affected, although divers have reported concerns about the integrity of the pressure hull. The *J1* broke aft of the conning tower after the 1995 storm, and a similar situation has emerged on *J5* where a fracture in the pressure hull is letting light in just aft of the hatch. Therefore *J5* previously an ‘intact sub’ is now a ‘broken sub’. Also in an identical fashion to the *J1*, the bulkhead forward of the control room has shattered, with debris also scattered over the floor.’

J4’s conning tower was placed on St Kilda Pier and used as a starting tower for the local boat club until demolition of the pier in 1956. (though there has been a suggestion that this was the conning tower of the torpedo boat *Childers*).

J3’s upper deck and superstructure are visible from the sea above about 6 metres of water off Swan Island. Her two bronze battery-driven propellers were placed on display in the park opposite the Queenscliff Maritime Centre. The Victoria Chapter, Naval Historical Society of Australia erected a plaque near to the submerged hulk of *J3* in the early 1980s and this is visible at low tide.

J7’s hull appears above the water at low tide near the Sandringham yacht Club.

Battery casings from the scrapped *J*-boats were used to build squash court walls and copper fittings were made into wardroom candelabra at Flinders Naval Depot.^{xxxiv}

As of 2006, it is thought that two Vickers Diesel engines from the *J*-boats are located at Radio Australia in Shepparton.

The tender, or 'mother ship' of the *J*-boats, *Platypus*, saw service in World War 2, including the bombing of Darwin. She did not go out of service until the 1950s. The Sydney submarine base is named after *Platypus*.

CONCLUSION

What can be learned from the history of Australia's peacetime submarines? It is clear that by the end of World War 1, the exploits of Australia's first submarines *AE1* and *AE2*, together with the activities of British and German submarines had convinced the Australian government and navy that submarines had a role to play in naval strategy. What that role might be was much less clear. As the urgencies of war receded and the days of peace continued to heal a badly shattered nation, matters of naval offence and defence received less and less priority. The difficulty and expense of maintaining the *J*-boats as their once up-to-date technology became inevitably obsolete were increasingly apparent to a cash-strapped Royal Australian Navy. But even while the *J*-boats were being consigned to oblivion over the period 1923-24, funds were provided for their replacement by the O class *Oxley* and *Otway*. Thanks largely to the presence of the *J*-boats, the Royal Australian Navy had sufficient numbers of qualified officers and crews to continue a Submarine Service.

Another dimension of the story involves the Australian public. Ever since the arrival of *AE1* and *AE2* in May 1914, the national community had

demonstrated a strong fascination with submarines. The officers and crews of *AE1* and *AE2* were lauded in the press and feted in Sydney. The inexplicable and still unexplained loss of *AE1* was deeply mourned throughout the country in 1914. When the *J*-boats finally arrived in Sydney they were considered by many to be the main attractions of the Peace Day March and associated celebrations. They were certainly a hit at the Hobart Regatta and in their various ceremonial peacetime duties. This interest would continue in relation to the *J*-boats' successors, *Oxley* and *Otway* and is apparent today in the intense media and general interest in the search for *AE1* and the rediscovery and possible raising of *AE2*. While such popularity does not figure in the strategic and tactical considerations involved in naval warfare it certainly has an impact upon the elected politicians who control the defence budget. It is also an indication of the importance that many in the community attach to the country's maritime and naval heritage.

More metaphorically, the story of the *J*-boats in many ways parallels the experience of large numbers of Australians. Figuratively 'born' in Britain, they subsequently 'migrated' across half the world's oceans along the most common route of migrant ships, 'crossing the line', and experiencing the discomforts of tropical passages, poor food and disease. They received a less-than-perfect reception and early experience of Australia when they arrived and were only gradually being incorporated into the naval community at the time of their scrapping. Brief though their Australian 'lives' were to be, the *J*-boats and their crews enjoyed a period of participation in many aspects of Australian society, including the Peace Day celebrations and the Hobart Regatta. When they finally 'died', victims of cost-cutting and an absence of will, their remains were broken up in various ways and distributed around Victoria in practical

and visual forms – breakwaters, power generators, dive wrecks - to become part of the largely taken-for-granted fabric of the community's material culture.^{xxxv}

Through this process, the remnants of the *J*-boats became unacknowledged artefacts of the fundamental Australian experiences of war and migration. Forgotten by the Navy and most of the community, a few individuals and organizations have been the unofficial curators of the *J*-boats. Naval historians and scuba divers have discovered, or re-discovered, these rusting relics, carefully recording their last resting places in the vast outdoor museum of the nation. Finding and using these remains compels people to investigate their histories and attempt to understand something of their significance during their days of glory, and after. Troubled though they undoubtedly were, the *J*-boats of peace played an important role in the history of the Australian submarine service.

And they continue to do so. In 2007, these wrecks were again put to good use. Preparations for a survey of *AE2*, lying still at the bottom of the Sea of Marmara, included training dives on the *J*-boats as the only World War 1 submarines still able to be accessed.

APPENDIX

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF J-BOATS

1210 tons surface, 1820 tons submerged; "J7" 1760 tons submerged; length 275 feet; beam 22 feet; draught 14 feet; machinery diesel engines, triple screws: speed 19 knots, submerged 9-15 knots: complement 44; range 4,000 miles at 12 knots, armament: six 18 inch torpedo tubes and one 4 inch gun.

During R.A.N. service "J7" differed in appearance from the other vessels in that her conning tower was placed further aft and the 4-inch gun mounted in a lower position. *Sabretache*, July-September 1980.

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ⁱ Jones, T. M. (Thomas Michael) *Watchdogs of the deep: life in a submarine during
the Great War*, Angus & Robertson, 1935, pp. 7-8

ⁱⁱ Jones pp. 8-9

ⁱⁱⁱ Jones, p. 60.

^{iv} Jones p. 29

^v Jones p. 84

^{vi} Jones p. 18

^{vii} Jones, pp. 55-56. British submarines were also often attacked by American craft
when the USA entered the war, Jones, p. 159. He describes *J2* being depth-charged by
British ships, pp. 102ff. Celebrating their survival in a pub ashore, the crew sang 'our
little ballad', a version of a war ditty known usually as 'Fred Karno's Army':

We are the crew of old *J2*,
What earthly good are we?
We cannot dive, we cannot trim,
We cannot go to sea.
But when we get to Berlin,
The Kaiser he will say,
'Hock, hock, mein Gott,
What a jolly fine lot
Are the crew of the old *J2*. P. 111.

^{viii} Shaw, N., 'Recollections of Commander N H Shaw at
<http://upperiscope.com.au/indepth.html> accessed Jan 08.

^{ix} Jones 73-75. *J2* also collided with the destroyer *Melampus* in a Dover Straits fog in
early 1916, p. 76

^x The report of the incident is reproduced in White, Michael D, *Australian
Submarines: A History*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, pp. 89-90

^{xi} Shaw. Shaw was in his seventies when he recorded his recollections in 1972.
Also referred to by White, p. 88.

^{xii} Jones, p. 202

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- xiii Jones, p. 202.
- xiv Jones p. 202. See also White, fn 28 p. 94 quoting from diary of LTO Harry Person of *J3* and attesting to similar dissatisfaction.
- xv Haggis is reported to have died on July 7 and is buried in Grave No. C E Section No 1109. There is a memorial plaque to Haggis on Thursday Island, though it appears to mis-state the date of his death. (Thanks to LtCdr Barrie Downer, RN (ret) of the Submarine Association Barrow-in-Furness for providing a photograph and details of the memorial.)
- xvi Jones p. 203
- xvii Jones p. 204
- xviii *Sydney Morning Herald* June 18, 1919, pp. 10, 12.
- xix Jones, p. 205.
- xx White, p. 96
- xxi Jones p. 206
- xxii Osborne House was the first training facility for Australian naval officers. The first Australian to become Chief of Naval Staff in 1948 was Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins, one of the first intake at the college.
- xxiii Jones p. 210
- xxiv (Hobart) *Mercury* Jan 19, 1921, p. 4.
- xxv *Mercury* Jan 24, p. 4.
- xxvi *Mercury* Jan 25, 1921, p. 5. See also Jones, T., *Watchdogs of the Deep*, p. 211
- xxvii *Mercury* Jan 31, 1921, p. 4.
- xxviii *Mercury* Feb 2, 1921, p.6
- xxix *Mercury* Feb 19, 1921, p. 6
- xxx Jones p. 212
- xxxi Jones pp. 213-214
- xxxii Jones p. 215
- xxxiii Jones p. 223
- xxxiv White, p. 118.
- xxxv See Appendix 'Bones of the *J*-Boats'.