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### **Japanese submarine attacks on Australian merchant shipping in 1942–1943**

I was interested to read in the December journal Captain B. L. Swan's paper on Japanese submarine attacks on the Australian coast, 1942–1943 [*United Service* 63 (4), 23 – 25]. At different periods in my career I was involved in the operation and management of two of the ships mentioned, *Allara* during my time with The Adelaide Steamship Company Limited, and *Barwon* with Associated Steamships Pty. Ltd.

It was of particular concern to me to note at the foot of page 23 the statement that *Barwon* and *Iron Crown* were sunk around Montague Island on 4 June 1942, when in fact both ships were attacked on that day in Bass Strait south of Gabo Island. [Montague Island is just off Narooma on the south coast of New South Wales]. *Iron Crown* was torpedoed and sank with a heavy loss of life.

The attack on *Barwon* resulted in only slight damage to the ship at deck level and the crew were unharmed. *Barwon* then remained unscathed throughout the rest of the war. I had an involvement in the operation and management of *Barwon* until she was sold to an overseas buyer in 1969.

Also, at the bottom of page 24, there is a reference to a sugar carrier, *Konarra*, torpedoed on 25 April 1943 on her way from Brisbane to Townsville. I believe that should be the *Kowarra*, a vessel of Howard Smith Ltd., sunk on 24 April 1943 off Bundaberg.

In regard to the *Allara*, I can provide the following additional information. *Allara* was on a voyage from Cairns with a full cargo of bagged raw sugar destined for processing at the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's refinery at Pymont. She was not in convoy when, at about 0500 hours on 23 July 1942 about 20 miles off Newcastle, a torpedo which struck, but almost missed the ship, caused extensive damage to the stern section and caused the radio aerial to break and fall. A second torpedo was fired and missed the target. The submarine then circled the ship and a voice in English shouted "Abandon ship", and that was followed by a warning shot fired overhead. The Master obeyed; and crew, including those injured, left the ship in the lifeboats. After sunrise, the submarine had disappeared and the Master reboarded the ship with the crew. The Radio Officer repaired the aerial and sent a distress message.

At 0945 hours, two naval vessels arrived and one of them took *Allara* in tow. The tug, *Heroic*, from Newcastle took over the tow at about noon and *Allara* was safely anchored outside Newcastle by midnight. The ship was down by the stern but was not making water. The damage was surveyed and it was deemed that the integrity of an after bulkhead which was keeping her afloat was such that she could be towed to Sydney to discharge the sugar and undergo repair. Two tugs of Waratah Tug and Salvage Co. Ltd., *St. Aristell* and *Warang*, towed *Allara* to Sydney. After discharge of the sugar cargo, *Allara* was repaired in Morts Dock.

The then Master of the *Allara* was Captain Colin McLellan. Before his elevation to Master he had been Chief Officer of the *Manunda* and in that capacity received the Bronze Medal of the Royal Humane Society of Australia for diving off *Manunda* into the shark-infested sea off Flat Top Island in Queensland to rescue a woman passenger who had fallen overboard.

**Keith Pryor**

Chatswood NSW, 5 December 2012