

My Uncle – Able Seaman BENJAMIN JOSEPH HERBERT BARKER joined the Navy for the war effort on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1940. His family lived in West Perth W.A., father Benjamin was in the Home Guard on Rottnest Island after being wounded in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, Mother Ruby Olive was at home with Ben's sister (my Mother) Olive aged 19years and younger brother Ronald 13years.

Uncle Ben served on the HMAS SYDNEY 11 as a Torpedo Man until that fateful day in November 1941 when she was lost with the loss of 645 Souls.

All our lives we were brought up with “ WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HMAS SYDNEY” Olive had 3 girls and 1 boy as did my Uncle Ron – books have been read and just about every article on the Sydney have been looked at, always with a silent prayer that one day she would be found and the truth about her known.

Sadly my Uncle Ron died at the age of 42 and my mum Olive will be 87years old on her next birthday – every year on Anzac Day I have watched her tears for the Sydney, her brother and the crew of which she knew quite a few.

Uncle Ben had only the 1 lot of leave from when he joined the Navy and was home for the 2 weeks prior to the Sydney being recalled – sadly that's the last time his loving family saw him. I feel very privileged to be holding his Medals and Fob Dog Tag chain etc. for future generations of his family. After Uncle Ben's death Olive joined the Army and became a Corporal in the Ordnance in Perth.

We have done the Pilgrimage quite often to the Memorial in Geraldton and also to Memorial Drive in Carnarvon, where we put flowers on Uncle Ben's grave and his 6 mates but also on as many others as we can. The people of Carnarvon have to be thanked for giving us a grave stone we can go to – it is a truly beautiful and very haunting drive and one that you cannot do without a lot of tears falling.

The Memorial in Geraldton really has to be seen to be believed – the thought and pride that went into its creation is beyond words and we have been to quite a few memorials there since it was built – to all of those people involved in the Memorials- how can you say thankyou for giving the relatives somewhere to grieve in such beautiful peace and tranquility.

My mum has waited for 67 years to find the HMAS SYDNEY as have the rest of the family and a huge thankyou has to go to all those involved in finding her. It is such a heartfelt relief to know where she lies and in time hopefully her full mystery and story will be told.

For right now I can only pray that the souls of my Uncle and his 644 mates are sailing on in Peace and to let them know they will always be remembered.





Australian Service Medals and Dog Tag of  
Able seaman Benjamin Joseph Herbert Barker  
Service on HMAS Sydney 2