

## ROBERT NICOL McCONNELL

Robert Nicol McConnell was born in Hamilton, Scotland on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1922. He was the youngest of the 11 surviving children of Agnes and David McConnell and, as such, was greatly adored by his older brothers and sisters who referred to him as “Bobby”.

Agnes and David McConnell and all 11 children migrated from Scotland in 1926. They arrived in Sydney on the SS Ballarat on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1926 and settled, for a short while, in Cessnock, NSW.

After some months the family settled in Arncliffe. Robert McConnell was educated at both Bexley and Arncliffe Public Schools and then attended Tempe High School. He loved his dog, Flash. He enjoyed running, playing cricket and Boxing. Two of his older brothers, Henry and David, had been champion boxers in Scotland so they had tutored their little brother in the art of boxing.

After leaving school he was employed at a mint in Alexandria. It is believed that he was a friend and workmate of fellow crewman, James Blackwood. Both boys were of Scottish heritage, both grew up in the same area of Sydney, and both enlisted in the same month.

When war broke out in 1939 Bob was keen to enlist but his parents refused to sign his enlistment papers. His brother, John, joined the army in July 1940 and his brother-in-law, Fred Gosbee, joined the RAAF in July 1940. This made Bob even more eager to do his part and he enlisted in the Navy on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1940.

Robert was appointed to HMAS Rushcutter for basic assessment and then transferred to HMAS Cerberus on 23/12/1940. He was appointed to the crew of HMAS Sydney II on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1941.

The loss of their little brother on HMAS Sydney prompted David McConnell (then aged 39) to enlist in the RAAF and Henry McConnell (aged 37) to enlist in the Army.

Robert Nicol McConnell is survived by many nieces and nephews, some of whom have fond childhood memories of “Uncle Bob”, and many others who were brought up with the story of “The Sydney” and the unresolved grief that ensued.