

HMAS SYDNEY 11 MEMORIAL CONTENT INFORMATION  
RELATING TO STOKER ARCHIBALD JAMES THOMSON  
COMPILED BY HIS NEPHEW GRAHAM ARCHIBALD THOMSON  
NOVEMBER 2008

My Uncle "Archie" Thomson was born in South Fremantle Western Australia on 19 January 1919. His father James Simpson Scott Thomson had migrated from Scotland in 1912 and saw service in France in WW1. He was a Gunner with the Field Artillery Brigade 2 and was repatriated to Australia in April 1917 as the result of complications from being gassed. He also served in the Australian Army for three years during WW2, attached to the Citizen Military Forces.

Archie's mother Margaret (Meg) Thomson (nee Simpson) was born in the Shetland Islands and had moved to Perth Western Australia, via Scotland, in approximately 1910. Two of her brothers (Malcolm and Archie) who had joined the Australian Army in 1915 and served in France were sadly killed in the battles of Pozieres and Mouquet Farm in 1916. Little did she know at the time, that she would later on lose a son in another conflict.

In approximately 1924 the Thomson family moved to live in Pemberton Western Australia. At the age of 14, Archie left school to work in the local timber mill in the section making timber for the construction of fruit cases. During his time working in the Mill his interests included playing Aussie Rules Football for the "Jays" team as well as being a member of the local cycle club. His football experience would later on stand him in good stead as a member of H.M.A.S Sydney 11 football team.

One of his Uncles (Jack Cole) was a guard at the Fremantle prison and was instrumental in pointing out the advantages of joining the Navy. As a result, Archie enrolled in Night School to further his education in preparation for making application to enroll in the Royal Australian Navy.

Archie enlisted in the Navy on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1938 and did his training at H.M.A.S Cerberus in Victoria. He was transferred to H.M.A.S Sydney 11 as a Stoker in April 1939. He was with the ship throughout its actions in the Mediterranean and fortunately left behind with his family, his photo album and his diary listing brief details of the ships encounters in that field of action.

His eldest brother being my Father, Thomas (Tom), who is a sprightly 94 year old, joined the A.I.F in December 1940 and saw service in the Middle East with the 2/Nd 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion and later on joined the 2/Nd 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance Regiment. He last saw Archie in June 1941 when he was training in Perth and was invited on board "The Sydney" for lunch whilst it was berthed at Fremantle. Some of Tom's old army mates tell the story of seeing him in his tent in Palestine with his head in his hands. It was soon after the news of the loss of the Sydney had been advised to him and the first time that they had seen him with tears in his eyes. Tom and Archie were very close brothers.

One of Archie's younger brothers Alex, saw action in Timor, New Guinea and New Britain whilst attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Squadron and was similarly upset over the loss of his brother, as was his whole family. Archie was a good looking young sailor and had a close relationship with a young lady who for over twenty years after the loss of the Sydney, continued to place memorial notices in the West Australian Newspaper on the anniversary of the sinking.

Archie's father Jim, was a guard at the Harvey Western Australia Internment Camp, when some of the sailors from the HSK Kormoran were being held there. It is said that Jim's army mates took his rifle

off him as they were afraid that he would do harm to the sailors, as he was so upset over the loss of his son.

Archie's mother Meg would not accept the fact that she would not see him again and for many years whilst doing her house work, she would say to other family members " I wonder if today is to be the day that Archie will walk in through the door ".

Alas, this was not to be the case.

My father Tom, has passed down:

- Honour Scroll and condolence message from the King.
- War Service Medal.
- The commemorative medallion of the victory over the Bartolomeo Colleoni.
- Archie's photo album and diary.

I proudly bear the second Christian name of "Archibald" in memory and honour of my Uncle

One of my sons, Peter, holds a glass framed photo of Archie which incorporates:

- A photo of H.M.A.S Sydney 11
- Copy of the Honour Scroll and condolence message from the King
- Replica War Service medals
- H.M.A.S Sydney sailor's cap tally band.

This memorabilia will be handed down to future generations of my family and as a result, the history of H.M A S Sydney 11 and its brave crew will not be forgotten.

