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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES: AFTERMATH OF JAPANESE SUBMARINE ATTACK: SYDNEY HARBOUR

The following are accounts of individual contributions made by two remarkable people in the aftermath of the Japanese midget submarine attack in Sydney Harbour on 31 May 1942. Actions by these two brave individuals at significant risk to themselves ensured others were protected as the damaged midget submarines were recovered and ordnance rendered safe. The first account is that of Able Seaman William Herbert Brian Marr who dived on a Japanese midget submarine. His typed report on the dive was provided by his nephew ex Leading Seaman Radio Operator Peter Goodchild. The second account is that of the efforts made by Mr Frank Lindgard a highly experienced and valued torpedo Fitter employed in the RAN Gunmounting & Torpedo Depot Garden Island.

Diving on Japanese Midget Submarine M22

By Able Seaman H.E.B. Marr

This is an unpublished episode which occurred during salvage operations carried out by naval divers from the Royal Australian Navy on two Japanese Midget submarines which were recovered from Sydney Harbour in June 1942. There were five Naval Divers employed in the operation and their names were, Spencer, Bullard, Coots, Marr and Martin. We were finishing off the construction of the submarine net, spanning the main entrance of the harbor when the Midget subs came in.

We had left after a days work and the subs came in during darkness. The net was to protect warships at anchor and merchant shipping moored at wharves. One submarine was caught in the net and it blew itself up. There was an internal explosion of some sort and it finished up in two pieces. Its two torpedoes were still in firing position in the fore-part. A second submarine managed to find its way into Taylors Bay, a small inlet on the starboard side of the Harbor going in. It was probably worried by the harbour defence vessels which were mostly luxury launches commandeered by the Navy and converted to carry depth charges and light armament.

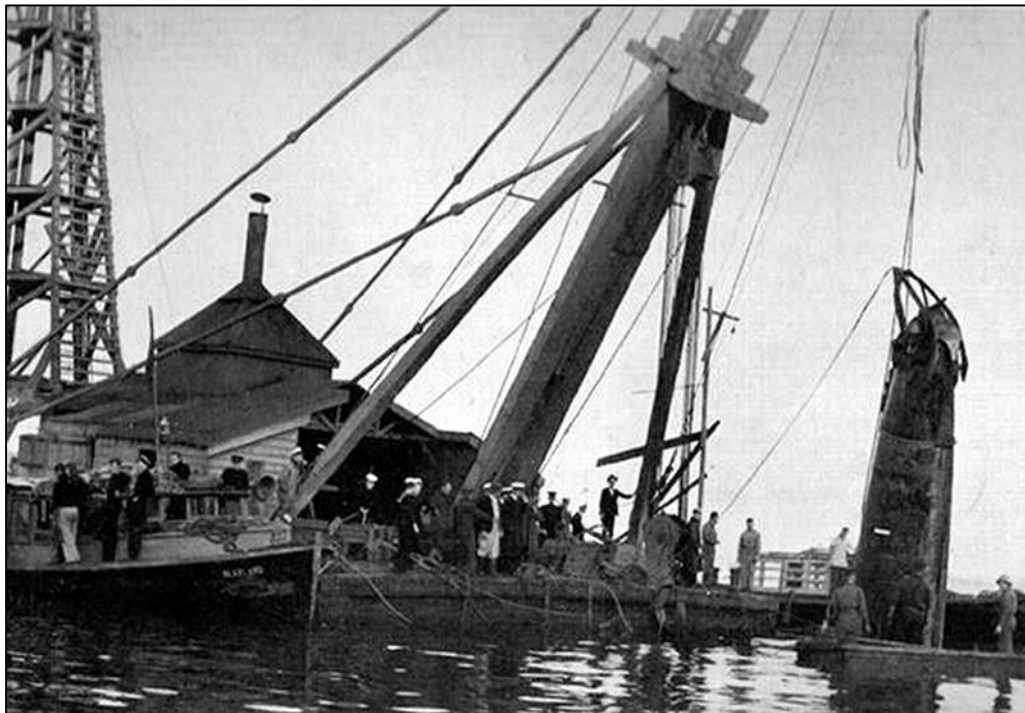
After the alarm was raised they were very busy dashing about the harbour looking for the subs and dropping depth-charges. Actually the Midgets never had ballast tanks like normal submarines, they carried a lot of lead ingots for ballast and had to keep moving to keep under the surface. The third sub which fired two torpedoes must have lined up USS *Chicago* (a six inch cruiser) which was at anchor just of Bradley Head. The first torpedo ran up on the shore of Garden Island. The second also missed *Chicago* but went under HMAS *Kuttabul*, hit the sea wall on Garden Island and as it exploded it broke the back of *Kuttabul* trapping sailors asleep in their hammocks. As she sank twenty one lives were lost.

While salvaging the submarine in Taylors Bay I was working with diver David Spencer at the time. Spencer was on top of the sub and the two armed torpedoes had their noses jammed by a malfunction in the doors not letting them leave the tubes after being fired. I was threading the eye of the wire sling under the sub to pass it up to Spencer so he could attach it with a shackle to the main lifting wire, ready for the crane to begin its lift, when my two 56lb lead weights attached to my corselet came loose and fell on to my knees. I couldn't move, and if the weights fell off my knees I would have shot toward

the surface out of control as the nearer the surface the faster I would have travelled. We were approximately 85ft down, almost two atmospheres of water and the air would have expanded very quickly in my suit and bloated me. I could have come up under the lighters which held the crane and our diving equipment. I called through my microphone to the surface to call Dave Spencer to come down the bottom to help. Each time he lifted the weight I started to take off. He somehow wrapped his legs on to me and after a lot of very hard work managed to attach the weights to my corselet, which weighed 8 stone.

Had I blown up under the lighter and torn my suit, the air would have escaped and the weight of my boots and corselets would have sent me down the 85ft to the bottom and I would have experienced a "fatal squeeze" from the water pressure. It was Dave Spencer's experience and skill that saved me from a very serious mishap.

The third submarine which fired the torpedoes was never found. As far as we were concerned it remains a mystery. With all the activity going on in the harbour at the time and the small opening in the net, it would have to be a miracle for the submarine to have left the harbour.



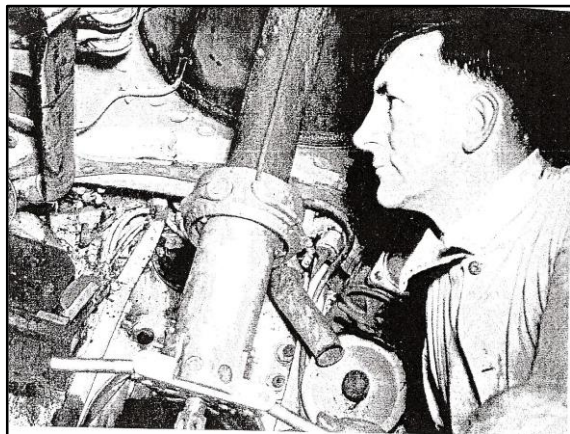
Lifting Japanese Midget Submarine, Sydney Harbour, June 1942

Mr Frank J. Lingard

A remarkable employee of the RAN Gunmounting and Torpedo Depot on Garden Island in early June 1942 during the attack was Mr Frank J. Lingard. Following the attack his considerable skills rendered safe the remains of two midget submarines for further handling and recovery.

He removed the armed pistol from the warhead of a torpedo fired from Japanese midget submarine M24. This torpedo had run ashore on Garden Island without exploding. It had been intended for the American cruiser USS Chicago anchored nearby. Frank Lingard also removed the unarmed pistols from the torpedoes recovered from the two submarines sunk that night, as well as disarming their scuttling charges.

Mr Lingard was a civilian torpedo fitter at the time and volunteered for this task. He received little recognition for his efforts other than the letter of appreciation below from the then Rear Admiral-in-Charge, Sydney, Rear Admiral Gerard Charles Muirhead-Gould DSC. In his report Rear Admiral Muirhead Gould, noted that Lingard had diffused a total of five the unexploded torpedos and three demolition charges which remained unexploded in the Battery Rooms of two submarines. The method of firing these charges was not known until the first charge had been removed' after the midgets were brought ashore at Clarke Island'.



Frank Lingard in Midget Submarine

Lingard was well qualified to undertake the disarming task. In addition to his Torpedo Depot experience, he had formerly been an RAN Engine Room Artificer. In July 1935, whilst posted to HMAS *Canberra*, he qualified as a Torpedo Coxswain and Artificer Diver 2nd Class (Commonwealth Navy Order 118/1935).ⁱ

Although Frank Lingard is named in reports of the time as being solely responsible for the disarming of the torpedo warhead, other sources say that Ern Florence was also involved.ⁱⁱ Mr Florence also served with the RAN and then, as a civilian, at the Torpedo Depot, Garden Island from 1929-1942. Ern Florence was Frank Lingard's supervisor at the time.



Japanese Torpedo on Garden Island, Sydney, June 1942



Salvaging Damaged Japanese Midget Submarine, Sydney Harbour, June 1942

TELEPHONES—
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Department of The Navy.

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

No. B.S. 201/37/34.

H.M.A. NAVAL ESTABLISHMENTS,

SYDNEY, 16th July, 1942.

Mr. F. J. Lingard,
Torpedo Fitter.
(Through Engineer Manager.) *at 21/7*

JAPANESE MIDGET SUBMARINES.

The Engineer Manager has brought to my notice, in the following terms, the special work which you carried out in connection with the Japanese Midget Submarines:-

" On Monday the 1st June, when it was known that an unexploded Japanese torpedo had beached itself on Garden Island, Mr. Lingard immediately volunteered to carry out any work necessary in rendering the warhead safe, by removal of the pistol. At that time the operations and condition of the pistol was not definitely known.

The removal of this pistol was successfully carried out by Mr. Lingard under supervision and the pistols of the four torpedoes recovered from the tubes of the Midget Submarines were also removed by him.

The Midget Submarines when landed at Clarke Island, were found to have three demolition charges remaining unexploded in the Battery Rooms. The method of firing these charges was not known until the first charge had been removed.

The removal of all three charges was carried out by Mr. Lingard.

Mr. Lingard's work in assisting in the investigation of technical details of the submarine has been very well done. In the early stages the interior of the submarine was an unpleasant place to work in, due to the confined space and the fact that in one submarine, small portions of the bodies of the crew were still being found in odd corners."

I am very grateful to you for this work of supererogation as I appreciate that the potentially dangerous duties you performed were outside the normal scope of your employment.

I have brought your valuable conduct to the notice of the Naval Board.

D. Fairhead, R.A.N.

Rear-Admiral-in-Charge,
Sydney.

ⁱ Tim Smith, M24 Project Manager, NSW Department of Planning, Preliminary Archaeological Survey Report on WRECK OF THE JAPANESE TYPE 'A' MIDGET SUBMARINE M24, available at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/m24/m24prelimsurvey.pdf>, accessed 30 July 2017

ⁱⁱ A. RAN Armament Depots website, http://users.tpg.com.au/borclaud/ranad/about_td_gardenislandnsw.html, accessed 30 July 2017