

A SAILOR'S STORY



Service No.: PA3276
Name: Douglas Colin FERGUSSON
Nickname: Doug



Medals and Decorations

1939 - 45 Star

Pacific Star

Defence Medal

War Medal 1939 - 45

Australian Service Medal 1939 - 45

Rank: Able Seaman

Service: RAN

Enlisted: 14 Oct 1942

Discharged: 26 Mar 1946

Doug was born on 29 Apr 1925 at Cowell (SA) to Thomas Fergusson and Olive Florence Fergusson (nee Merry). There were 6 children in the family, 3 boys and 3 girls, of which he was the second eldest.

He started school in 1931 at Kimba, and transferred to Tumby Bay school in May 1934 when his family relocated here; he completed his schooling in Tumby Bay, leaving in Nov 1939 and went to work for Phil McCracken, the butcher.

Doug enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy in Port Adelaide on 14 Oct 1942 at the age of 17 years. He was then sent to HMAS "*Cerberus*" for training, undertaking sea time on HMAS "*Manoora*", before being allocated to HMAS "*Hawkesbury*" on 14 Mar 1944, where he was to remain throughout his service.

HMAS "*Hawkesbury*" was a "River class" frigate, one of 12 built for the RAN during WW2. She was commissioned in 1944 and saw service throughout the Pacific, mainly as a convoy escort based out of Manus Island and later Leyte Gulf. In late 1944 she was lucky to escape serious damage from the explosion of the munitions ship USS "*Mount Hood*".

In Apr 1945 she supported the landings at Tarakan (Borneo). In June 1945 "*Hawkesbury*" took part in the Brunei (Borneo) landings and supported supply operations from Morotai (PNG). She then spent a period collecting intelligence in the Moluccas and bombarded Japanese positions on Jariffi Island.

"*Hawkesbury*" sailed on 29 Aug 1945 escorting the repatriation transport "*Duntroon*" from Darwin to Singapore. She remained in Singapore until 20 Sep, awaiting the embarkation of Australian prisoners of war. Then back to Darwin, arriving on the last day of Sep; the following day "*Hawkesbury*" sailed for Timor to take part in the Japanese

surrender ceremony at Koepang (Timor) on 3 Oct 1945.

Doug recalled that one of the worst noises he had ever heard whilst he was in the service was the sound of mine cables scraping down the side of the ship; it certainly would get your attention!

After discharge from the Navy he remained in Adelaide for a few months to become reacquainted with Valma Ivy Newell, a young lady whom he had met earlier in his service. It must have been a successful mission as they were married on 25 May 1946 in Adelaide. The newly married couple then returned Tumby Bay where Doug again worked as a butcher before moving to Cummins where he bought the butcher shop. It was here that they raised their family of 4 girls, 2 of whom were born in Tumby Bay and the latter 2 of whom were born in Cummins, because Cummins had its hospital at this later stage.

After 10 years at Cummins the family moved to a station at Mt Freeling (Flinders Ranges) where they remained for 6 years. It is hard to imagine a more remote area to raise a family! They again relocated to ensure that their younger children received schooling rather than relying on "school of the air".

Thus the family moved back to Tumby Bay in 1962 and purchased the lease on the Ritz Cafe. After a time, with the business operating smoothly, Doug decided to undertake share farming on Murray Oswald's farm at Lipson Cove. He and his family continued to reside in Tumby at Dutton Terrace.

He was also very involved in training and racing trotting horses, achieving some notable success. One of his horses, "*Mini Minute*", won a number of races at Whyalla.

In 1990 Doug and his wife decided to retire and travel around Australia in their campervan. They did this for several years, always returning to Tumby. Unfortunately Valma became ill and Doug was also experiencing poor health. This put a stop to their travels. After the death of his wife in 1993 he would regularly visit his daughter, Pam Brougham, at the farm. The "call of the land" was still strong.

Doug died on 13 Apr 2003 and is buried in the Tumby Bay Cemetery beside his wife.



Carting
hay as
a lad.