

HMAS SYDNEY II MEMORIAL

By Rosemary White in memory of my uncle, Robert Henry Hill, E.R.A. 24227

Robert Hill and his brother Flgt Sgt Ronald Hill have always been an important part of my life as the two uncles who gave their lives in WWII.


I was born 3 weeks before the loss of HMAS Sydney II and the last contact the family had with Bob was a note from him to his sister, my mother, "Congratulations Gwen". It is hard to imagine the mixture of emotions felt by my mother and grandmother at that time. My grandmother had lost her husband in WWI and had raised her 3 children as well as fostering another family of 6 children and then had proudly watched her sons go off to war. She was very proud of Bob and went to Sydney to be part of the welcome home to the crew of The Sydney as they marched through the city streets early in 1941.

As a family we always spoke of "the boys" with fondness and treated Remembrance Day each year with reverence, pausing to remember all those young lives lost in war. As a child I remember my grandmother proudly telling me stories of Bob and Ron and the happy childhood they had enjoyed and the fine young men they had become. Bob was employed by the Municipal Tramways Trust before he enlisted and he joined HMAS Sydney II in March 1940, serving on her in the Mediterranean where he saw much action including the sinking of the Bartolomeo Colleoni.

I have proudly kept the old battered suitcase of my grandmother containing all the important papers and documents related to the family. These include the telegrams with news of the deaths of her husband and both her sons, the old newspapers with stories of HMAS Sydney II and the photos of those 645 young men lost. I have the diaries of my grandfather, Harry Rogers Hill and of my Uncle, Ronald James Hill. I have now obtained copies of the medals of Robert Henry Hill which I proudly wore at the Memorial Service for HMAS Sydney II held in Sydney on 24th April 2008. One of the most treasured possessions that I have is the engagement ring Bob Hill gave to his fiancée before he sailed on that fateful voyage. His fiancée always kept in touch with our family although she had gone on to marry another after the war. Not long before she died she gave me this ring, which she had always worn and which I now proudly wear in memory of my uncle.

The discovery of HMAS Sydney II has meant a lot to me and my brother as next of kin, it has brought a feeling of closure and peace and it would have meant so much to our grandmother and mother to know where Bob rests.

The sacrifice made by the men of HMAS Sydney II will never be forgotten.





ROBERT HENRY HILL
E.R.A. 24227

HMAS SYDNEY II

Lost 19th November 1941