



Commander James Hume (37-40)

James Hume grew up in Scotland with an adoptive family. By the time he left Conway, the world was at war. His first ship was the SS *Clan Chattan*. On the third voyage, when they arrived in Durban, the captain told him his entire family had been lost in the Blitz. He was not yet seventeen.

In 1942, the *Clan Chattan* was hit by several bombs. James, involved in fighting the fires, was amongst the last to leave the ship. For his role in the hazardous Malta convoys, he was awarded the Memorial George Medal in 1994. He then joined SS *Dafila*, a munitions supply ship, sailing between Alexandria and Tobruk, to supply the Army in North Africa. During one run, she was hit by two torpedoes and exploded. James was on the bridge and saw the torpedoes but it was too late to do anything but watch them hit. He was one of only five survivors.

After hospitalisation, he joined SS *Star of Alexandria*, involved in secret work in the Indian Ocean. He navigated the ship to Melbourne where he was transferred by agreement into the Royal Australian Navy, joining HMAS *Kanimbla*, an armed merchant ship deployed as a troop carrier. She was involved in amphibious landings throughout the Pacific campaign in New Guinea, Borneo and into the Philippines, often under enemy fire and threat of kamikaze attack.

After the war, he needed a year to recover from wounds, after which, in the early 1950s, he carried out duties clearing wrecks and mines in New Guinea waters. He served twice in Korea. Following three years as Director of Operations in the Navy Office, he was posted as Executive Officer of the RAN Apprentice Training Establishment near Sydney. James had a reputation for being stern but fair and saw himself as a father figure. In later life, one apprentice said: 'Jim Hume was the epitome and yardstick by which I judged all naval Commanders.' In 1966, he was appointed Commanding Officer of KD *Malaya* in Singapore, on loan to the fledgling Royal Malaysian Navy, and set about ensuring that administration and discipline were improved to a satisfactory level. His final appointment was as Defence Attaché to South Korea where he was the Australian Representative on the Military Armistice Committee at Panmunjom. When he left, General Richard Stillwell, the US Army Commander, said: 'My colleagues and I have been constantly impressed by your competence, your diplomatic talents, your resourcefulness and your unflinching co-operation. You have performed in the best traditions of the Royal Australian Navy and have represented your government in superb fashion.'

He retired in 1974 and spent the next 13 years as Senior Research Officer for an Australian Senator. There followed a third career of community service, often as an office bearer, actively involved in Rotary, the RSL (Returned and Services League of Australia), and the PC Users Group. He supported fellow veterans as an advocate, hospital visitor and friend. Proud of his Scottish heritage, James is survived by his wife of 60 years, Sue, four children and five grandchildren.

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