

MEDIA RELEASE

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Do you remember the night in 1942 Japanese submarines attacked Sydney?

The Heritage Council of NSW is seeking the help of Sydneysiders who can recall the Japanese submarine attacks on Sydney during World War Two for a proposed new online exhibition.

The wreck of the missing *M24*, the midget submarine responsible for the loss of *HMAS Kuttabul* at Garden Island, was finally located off Bungan Head near Newport in November 2006.

Chair of the Heritage Council of NSW, Mrs Gabrielle Kibble, today invited the community to come forward with their personal recollections of the Japanese attack. The stories will be included as part of a future online presentation entitled "*Unlocking the secrets of the M24 Japanese Midget Submarine*" featured on the Heritage website www.heritage.nsw.gov.au .

"There are so many stories of the raid waiting to be shared – we are particularly interested in personal accounts of the action, where people were at the time, how they reacted, and how these attacks affected their perceptions of the enemy and the war," Mrs Kibble said.

"We owe it to future generations to keep alive the memories of one of the home front's most dramatic wartime events.

"The website will be a valuable way of ensuring that the social significance of the midget submarine attack is preserved, together with the physical remains of the *M24* wreck site," Mrs Kibble said.

"I would like to invite people to write in with their stories and photos and where possible, these will be posted on the web site.

"This web exhibition will provide historians and the wider community rapid access to the Heritage Branch's body of survey work at the submarine as well as ongoing research and new insights from the management of this internationally significant ship wreck site," Mrs Kibble said.

To join this important initiative, contact the Heritage Branch via email at heritage@planning.nsw.gov.au or visit its web site at www.heritage.nsw.gov.au.

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Background

The Attack

- The 31 May/1 June 1942 attack on Sydney Harbour involved five large ocean going Japanese submarines, *I-22*, *I-24* and *I-27*, each carrying a midget submarine, and *I-21* and *I-29* providing aircraft support.
- Three Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour – *Ha-14*, *Ha-21* and the midget known as *M24*.
- Two of the Japanese midget submarines were subsequently destroyed - *Ha-14* in the harbour boom net and *Ha-21* in Taylor's Bay.
- Both *Ha-21* and *Ha-14* were quickly recovered by the military authorities. A composite relic of the two recovered submarines is now on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, with *Ha-21*'s conning tower on exhibit at the RAN Naval Heritage Centre, Garden Island.
- It is understood that *M24* had targeted the USS *Chicago* but the submarine's two torpedos travelled past the American heavy cruiser and struck the harbour wall near HMAS *Kuttabul*.
- The *Kuttabul*, a converted wooden Sydney ferry served as a depot ship and quickly sank with the loss of 21 killed and 10 injured.
- The carrier submarine *I-24* later shelled Sydney's eastern suburbs when it failed to recover its midget submarine *M24*. This carrier submarine had also deployed a midget submarine during the attack at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941.

Wreck of *M24* discovered

- *M24*'s disappearance and ultimate fate after the attack had been a source of intrigue and conjecture for more than 60 years until its discovery in waters off Newport in November 2006.
- The discovery was made by a recreational dive club, *No Frills Divers* of Sydney's Northern Beaches.
- In 2007 the Heritage Branch, NSW Department of Planning, completed initial archaeological surveys of the wreck site with the results included in a comprehensive Wreck Inspection Report [at www.heritage.nsw.gov.au]. Archaeological inspections are continuing to assist in the wreck's long term environmental management.
- Heritage Branch investigations suggest that the remains of the *M24*'s crew Sub Lieutenant Ban and Petty Officer Ashibe lie within the archaeological hull. The Royal Australian Navy led a commemorative service over the site of the wreck in August 2007 for relatives of the Japanese submariners.
- During WW2, Allied Intelligence had captured Japanese charts from the recovered wrecks *Ha-14* and *Ha-21* which suggested that the midget submarines had planned to rendezvous with their mother submarines at a northern recovery point, identified as Broken Bay.
- Later intelligence confirmed that the preferred recovery point had been shifted to south of Sydney off Royal National Park. This is where most historians hypothesized where the *M24* would most likely be discovered
- Following the discovery of *M24* off Newport, the Heritage Branch was the first to confirm that in fact the midget submarine had sunk almost half way along the original recovery route.
- The site was declared a Historic Shipwreck under Section 6 of the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* on 24 November 2006 with a no-entry protected Zone around the site.

- The Minister for Planning announced the listing of the *M24* and a 500 metre radius area on the State Heritage Register under the NSW *Heritage Act* 1977 in December 2007, with the wreck initially protected under an Interim Heritage Order (IHO) from the date of discovery.
- Under the NSW *Heritage Act*, penalties up to \$1.1 million apply to any person damaging the site.
- *M24* is protected by 24/7 security monitoring provided under the joint agreement of the NSW and Commonwealth Government and with the support of the Japanese Government.
- The Heritage Branch received a *National Trust/Energy Australia Heritage Award* in April 2009 in recognition for its work in protecting the *M24* wreck site.

Upcoming lecture on midget submarine *M24*

- Deputy Director of the Heritage Branch, and *M24* Project Manager Tim Smith, will present a paper on the Heritage Branch's management of the *M24* work at an international conference on the preservation of 20th Century heritage sites in July 2009.
- The Conference, *(Un)Loved Modern: Conservation of 20th Century Heritage*, is hosted by the Australia ICOMOS organisation. The Heritage Branch paper is a feature presentation of the 'Management of World War Two heritage sites in the Pacific region' stream. For further details: <http://www.aicomos.com>