

Captain Stanley Darling OBE DSC + 2 Bars VRD RANR
17th August 1907 – 18th November 2002
Roll No.74



Australian War Memorial

Stanley Darling was born in Bellerive, Tasmania on 17 August 1907. His father was a keen yachtsman and often took his family on sailing activities. Stanley was educated at The Hutchins School, Hobart and joined the RAN Reserve cadets in 1921 and was appointed as a Midshipman in the RAN Reserve on 1 July 1925. He was promoted Sub Lieutenant in April 1927 and Lieutenant in April 1929. He completed a Bachelor of Civil Engineering at the University of Tasmania in 1929 and in 1931 became a radio announcer with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in Hobart.

Stanley was transferred to ABC head office, in Sydney, in 1936 as a civil engineer and in 1939 studied acoustics in the United States. He undertook annual RAN Reserve training for HMA Ships *Adelaide*, *Albatross*, *Australia*, *Canberra*, *Stuart*, *Success*, *Sydney*, *Vendetta* and *Yarra*. He was noted

as having above average ability, initiative and zeal as well as having "good influence both on junior officers and the men". Stanley was promoted Lieutenant Commander in April 1937 and shortly after the outbreak of war he was mobilised for full time service, on 5 September 1939, and appointed as Assistant Staff Officer Operations to the Naval Officer in Command - Sydney.

His interest in acoustics saw him selected for anti-submarine training at HMAS *Rushcutter*, in early 1940, and in August of that year he was loaned to the Royal Navy as an anti-submarine warfare officer. His first command was the Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) trawler HMS *Loch Oskaig*, which he commanded from 18 October 1940 to 30 September 1941. Despite his limited sea experience he was, as a senior Lieutenant Commander, also given command of a group of ASW trawlers operating off the British east coast escorting east convoys through the dangerous waters of 'E-Boat Alley'. Apart from the peril of enemy attack other dangers included sand banks, strong tides, fog and British and enemy minefields.

In late December 1941 he took command of the minesweeping trawler HMS *Inchmarnock* then operating in British waters. On 30 August 1942 Lieutenant Commander Darling took command of the Flower corvette HMS *Clarkia*, which saw service as a convoy escort in the Atlantic, West Indies and the run from Britain to Gibraltar.

On 22 November 1943 he was appointed in command of the frigate HMS *Loch Killin* and it was in her that Darling was to make his name as part of Captain Frederic 'Johnnie' Walker's 2nd Escort Group of anti-submarine frigates. This group of six frigates became renowned as a deadly and greatly feared submarine killer group in the Atlantic campaign. *Loch Killin* conducted anti-submarine patrols of the English Channel during the Normandy landings in June 1944 but Darling's first victim was *U-333*, which was sunk west of the Scilly Isles on 31 July 1944. After initial detection and a well-directed attack using Squid anti-submarine mortars by *Loch Killin* and HMS *Starling* the submarine was destroyed. A week later on 6 August, in the Bay of Biscay, *U-736* attacked *Loch Killin* with torpedoes but was counter attacked using Squid mortars and forced to the surface.

Unable to avoid a collision, *Loch Killin* ran over the bow section of the U-boat but managed to prevent damage to her ASDIC dome and propellers. For a few minutes the two vessels were locked together which enabled 19 members of the U-Boat crew to scramble onto the frigates quarterdeck before the submarine sank, taking 28 of her crew to their deaths. Darling transferred the prisoners to another vessel and continued the patrol and on 11 August attacked *U-385*, which was later sunk by a RAF Sunderland. Stanley Darling was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) (London Gazette, 7 November 1944) for sinking *U-333* and a Bar to his DSC (London Gazette, 14 November 1944) for the sinking of *U-736*.

Loch Killin was transferred to the 17th Escort Group and operated in the North Sea in the latter part of 1944 and then in January-February 1945 operated as a convoy escort in the English Channel. On 5 January 1945 while passing an escorted south-bound convoy *Loch Killin* collided with the Dance Class trawler HMS *Quadrille*. The trawler was badly damaged and towed to Portsmouth by *Loch Killin*, which also required a period in dock for repairs.

In the closing stage of the European war Stanley Darling claimed his third U-Boat. On 15-16 April *Loch Killin* attacked *U-1063* off Start Point, Devon. Three Squid salvoes forced the submarine to the surface where 17 survivors were rescued before the U-Boat sank. Darling was awarded a 2nd Bar to his DSC "For courage, outstanding efficiency and devotion to duty while serving in HMS *Loch Killin*, in a successful engagement with an enemy submarine off Start Point on 16th April 1945" (London Gazette, 21 August 1945).

With the war in Europe ending on 8 May 1945, Stanley Darling took command of the frigate HMS *Loch Lomond* (a sister ship of *Loch Killin*) on 27 June 1945 and was directed to join the British Pacific Fleet. He was promoted to Commander on 30 June 1945. *Loch Lomond* reached Ceylon in early September just as the Japanese surrendered. Commander Darling relinquished command of the frigate in Singapore in November 1945 and then managed to 'hitch a ride' in a British destroyer to Batavia (Jakarta) in order to embark in the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* that steamed to Australia enabling Stanley Darling to be home for Christmas.

Commander Darling was demobilised at HMAS *Rushcutter* on 13 March 1946 and resumed his work with the ABC. He also continued with his yachting interests, joining the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in 1948, thus beginning a long and successful ocean-racing career, navigating five Sydney-Hobart winners between 1954 and 1970. He crewed first for the Halvorsen brothers, and then for Sir Robert Crichton-Brown.

In the 1954 race he skippered the *Solveig*, when the Halvorsen brothers were ill, and went on to become the first yachtsman to complete 25 Sydney to Hobart races. He also navigated Australia's earliest Admiral's Cup challenges, the *Freya*, in 1965 and in Crichton-Brown's yacht *Balandra* he won 1967 event. Five years later, Darling was coaxed out of retirement to sail Jack Rooklyn's boats, the *Apollo* and then the *Ballyhoo*, navigating them on races, and on delivery trips from Australia to the west coast of America and to Britain.

He displayed all his skills in *Apollo* during the 1973 Fastnet race. The fog was so thick that the bows could not be seen from the cockpit. Other boats became lost, and sailed straight past the Fastnet Rock to Ireland; but Darling sat calmly operating an old wartime direction-finding radio, calling: "Fifteen minutes to go, let's get ready...10 minutes to go...there it is." One crew-member recalled that, as Fastnet Rock appeared out of

the fog, they dropped the spinnaker and turned *Apollo*, but before they had cleared away the sail the Rock had vanished.

Darling's seamanship and ocean-racing skill also enabled *Ballyhoo* to win the China Seas race from Hong Kong to Manila; the round-the-state race in Hawaii; and the California Cup. *Ballyhoo* returned to Australia to take line honours in the 1976 Sydney-Hobart race, and then went to England for Cowes Week the following year. By now Darling was living on board the *Ballyhoo*. When she was sold after winning the 1977 Fastnet Race, Darling accompanied the new owner to the Mediterranean, the West Indies and America. He continued to sail even after breaking eight ribs in the disastrous 1979 Fastnet race, which saw only 86 yachts from a field of 303 complete the race. At least 75 yachts capsized in the fierce weather conditions and five sank with the loss of 15 crew-members.

Darling also resumed training with the RANR and was promoted captain on 31 December 1952. He was appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List (11 June 1960) and retired from the RANR in 1961, completing a distinguished naval career spanning 40 years. He was a modest individual and remained in contact with fellow members of the Anti-Submarine Officers' Association and for many years presented the annual prestigious Captain Stanley Darling Award to the most outstanding anti-submarine specialist student at HMAS *Watson*.

Stanley Darling never married and died in Sydney on 18 November 2002. Many who knew him recalled he had the ability to converse with anyone, was modest and quietly spoken and rarely mentioning his wartime exploits. Just prior to the 2003 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race his ashes were scattered at sea, off Sydney, from the RAN diving launch *Seal*.

Sea Power Centre Australia

Stan Darling joined the League of Ancient Mariners after his return from the War