



All Hands



Issue 85

December 2013



Tall ships depart Port Jackson

New Zealand-bound, after
International Fleet Review 2013



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The three Dutch Tall Ships 'Tecla', bark 'Europa' and 'Oosterschelde' are sailing around the world, wandering the oceans and following the old trade routes of historic times. In October 2013 the ships finished the Tall Ships Race from Sydney, Australia to Auckland, NZ.	
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Director's Log:

Kevin Sumption
Director and CEO

What a fantastic spring it's been at the museum! Not only have we had a wonderful response to our major new exhibition, *Vikings – Beyond the legend*, but we were delighted that we could play a key role in the Royal Australian Navy International Fleet Review. The museum was an amazing sight playing host to 11 tall ships from around the world and was abuzz with visitors, particularly on the Tall Ship Open Days when thousands of people visited the museum. I'd like to thank all of you who volunteered throughout the festival for making it such a success.

And as we take a moment to look back on our achievements this past year, I would personally like to say a very warm and heartfelt thank you to all our volunteers who help make these programs and the museum such a success. Your support and dedication throughout the year make it possible for us to provide such a wonderful and varied set of experiences and activities enjoyed by all our visitors.

It's been a big year with the launch of a variety of new initiatives heralding a new chapter at the museum. In January we used the museum's iconic roof as an extension of the galleries for our first curated projection show – *Waves of Migration*. Launched on Australia Day, *Waves of Migration* brought migration stories from the museum's collection to the many people who visit Darling Harbour each evening.

Later in the year the museum continued its outreach and embedded itself further in Sydney's cultural landscape by becoming part of the renowned Vivid Sydney festival. This provided the museum with the opportunity to promote its fantastic exhibition, *East of India*, through another roof projection and gave a taste of what the museum has to offer to the many festival goers who passed through our site.

This last year has been a wonderful experience for me as I got to know you more and I have been greatly encouraged by your enthusiasm and positivity as the museum engages in new projects. In 2014 I look forward to seeing the first stages of the museum's Master Plan take shape as we start to build a new Royal Australian Navy Pavilion on South Wharf alongside HMAS *Vampire* and HMAS *Onslow*.

I look forward to working with all the museum's volunteers to ensure we continue to be a place for the community to celebrate Australia's maritime heritage.

On behalf of the council and staff of the Australian National Maritime Museum, I wish you all the very best for the festive season and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

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Be amazed at the life of Petty Officer Ray Parkin, Navy trained sailor, prisoner of war, slaving on the Thai-Burma Rail Line along with "Weary" Dunlop, then in Japan, coal mining until atomic bombs dropped. And living to age 95

Q & A at the Model Ship Building Bench

What Are You Reading?

A rather odd question to ask a volunteer model ship builder on duty, or so some readers might think. But that question came from a volunteer knowing about the model I was building, and also that I had several hours each way on the train to come on duty and thus time to catch up on my reading list - so, perhaps not so odd.

The short answer: I had just started reading a biography on Ray Parkin.

The following answer to that question is **not** meant to be a book review. It is simply an explanation as to why I decided to read it. Essentially, there were two main reasons.

First reason. Several years ago I read Ray Parkin's book on HMB *Endeavour*. Ever since I have referred to it as a reference, especially when asked curly questions on that vessel. I found it the most complete and accurate record published on HMB *Endeavour*. Volunteers would be well acquainted with this book, especially those with guide duties aboard *Endeavour* replica. Any who are not - details as on the cover follow:

Second reason. Considering so highly that book by Ray Parkin, I wished to learn more about the author, the man himself, and his background, especially when I discovered that book had taken over a decade in researching and writing. Obviously, not one of those journalistic efforts written over a month or so, just prior to, and intended for sale at Christmas!

Col Gibson

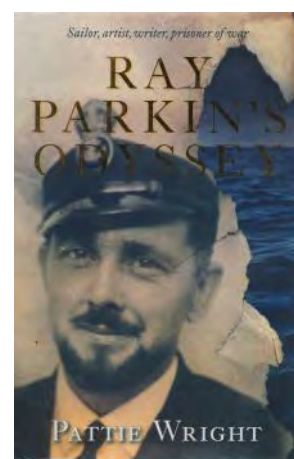


Exhibit 1
Wright, Pattie, *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*.
(for publication details see End Note 1)

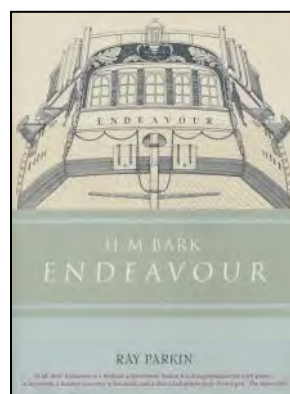


Exhibit 2 -
Parkin, Ray, *H.M. Bark Endeavour*:
(for publication details see End Note 2)

I wanted to know more. When I discovered the existence of Pattie Wright's biography: *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*, I had to read it. But discovered also, that I had to join the queue at my local library to do so.

Having now completed reading that biography, what can I report of interest to readers? As I read the "yarn" it amazed me. I suspect many volunteers will be just as amazed at the life of Petty Officer Ray Parkin, Navy trained sailor, prisoner of war under the Japanese, serving on the Thai-Burma Rail Line along with Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop, and then in Japan, coal mining until those atomic bombs were dropped. And living to his 95th year! Truly amazing!

Ray Parkin's life outlined. Ray was born 6 November 1910 in Melbourne, joined the Navy 1928 serving on HMAS *Australia*, *Canberra*, *Adelaide*, and finally on HMAS *Perth*, until sunk (March 1942) by the Japanese in Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra. Then after about a 10 day voyage in one of the boats (they christened *Anzac*) to south Java where they surrendered to Japanese forces and became part of Bandoeng POW camp, Java. He ends up working on the Thai-Burma Railway and when that was completed was taken to Singapore and shipped to Japan, Ohama POW camp - to work in their coal mines. That was for about a year until the atom bombs were dropped. Back in Melbourne, with his family, after almost 18 years in the Navy, he begins work as a tally clerk on the wharves. At the same time he wrote of his war experiences.

Exhibit 3 - HMAS *Perth*, Commemorative coin issued 1 March 2002 to mark the 60th anniversary of sinking of HMAS *Perth* together with USS *Houston* in the Battle of Sunda Strait.



Ray's war experiences were published as a trilogy:

Out of the Smoke (1960) - the story of the sinking of the HMAS *Perth*;

Into the Smother (1963) - the story of a POW working on the Thai-Burma rail line;

The Sword and the Blossom (1968) - the story of working as a POW in Japan;

since reprinted in one volume (for publication details see End Note 3).

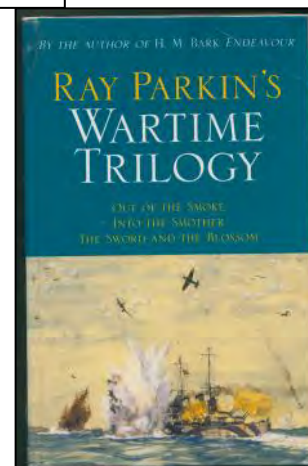


Exhibit 4
Ray Parkin's Wartime Trilogy

The Foreword by John Clarke, Melbourne, in July 1999, says, "... I am delighted that this remarkable trilogy is once again available. I know of no other books about the experience of Japanese captivity which so impress and inform the reader of today." (Trilogy, p. xi).

Sailors customarily build models of ships on which they serve. Since those modellers, both officers and men, can be presumed to know their ships thoroughly, those models can be presumed to be accurate, and accurate models sought by museums. Ray Parkin built models, about half a dozen models including *Perth*, and presumably others on which he had served, viz. *Australia (II)*, *Canberra*, *Adelaide*.

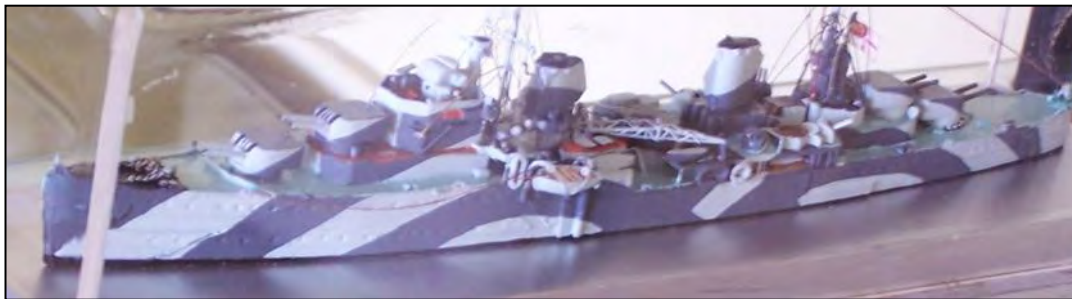


Exhibit 5 - Ray Parkin's model of HMAS *Perth (I)* - (photo: Pattie Wright)

After the wartime trilogy, Ray published his research on Cook's *Endeavour*: *HMB Endeavour* (1997): the story of his research into and discovery of the "real" HMB *Endeavour*.

For this latter title, in 1999, he was awarded the Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction and the Book of the Year at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Fittingly, on Australia Day, 26 January 2000, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia "... for service to Australia war literature through autobiographical works and to historical research as author of *H.M. Bark Endeavour*."

Ray's views on that book: "The years 1968-71 marked the bicentenary of James Cook's extraordinary voyage up the east coast of the Australian continent. Cook's ship, HM Bark *Endeavour*, was a natural subject for Ray's annual Christmas card, but since this nautical artist was a stickler for accuracy, he found himself with a job of research on his hands: 'I wanted my card to be accurate and there was a sudden flood of information about her. When I came to examine the validity of this stuff, I found it most misleading. It took me twelve years of diligent research to finally resolve the question between fiction and fact.'" (Pattie Wright's biography of Ray Parkin, p. 537).

In addition to "...his role as the chronicler of *Perth* ..." (Biog. p. 536) Ray was indeed a great storyteller. Pattie Wright did justice to that too, in a most interesting biography of an amazing man. She allowed him to speak for himself, as she quoted him as much as possible, and did so in such a manner that it was not obvious in reading of his incredible experiences in an amazing career.

So much for the two primary reasons.

A Third Reason. Another reason emerged as I read, and it enticed me on. I wanted to discover, if possible, what led that man to survive when so many did not, and to do so with a philosophy that kept his mind going when his physical frame was barely able to. He managed somehow to survive the worst of the POW experiences imaginable. Many did not, giving up mentally, including his best mate Alf! Why? A question that plagued Ray to the end.

Why should that plague me? I didn't go to that war, being too young, although some of my classmates did - one was a driver in the deserts of North Africa. And many of my friends after WW2 had been to that war. A close friend was one of the "Rats of Tobruk". They seemed 'reasonably' comfortable talking of their experiences. However, none had fought the Japanese, and none had been POWs of the Japanese.

I remember my father, who survived the First World War, and his attitude to war. He was never comfortable mentioning that war, let alone discussing it. He served in front line field hospitals and experienced the casualties of war - but afterwards - "war" was a 'taboo' subject!

Ray and his *Perth* mates seemed happy enough to talk to others who would understand, but others who had not experienced **that** War with the Japanese, would not understand. How could they understand the brutality of the Japanese for instance! How would or could others understand how some of the POWs could have sympathy for the Japanese people when they met them when working as a POW in Japan. You see (perhaps you do!) that we see Japanese as Japanese, when Ray saw a difference between the people in the Japanese Navy and those in the Japanese Army or the Japanese *kempeitai*, and later the people he met at Ohama, where he worked in their coal mines as a slave. Why? What was the difference?

Young Harry Mee, one of the *Perth* men working on the Line noticed and noted how Ray coped. He explained it thus: "Ray wasn't on the Line -- he was in the jungle looking at butterflies. He was working on the Line all right, but his mind was on birds and such. He cut himself right off from it. When we were walking back to camp that night I said, 'remember those hundreds of monkeys running across the tops at the camp when we went in first time?' He said, 'They're still there, Harry.' You see, I had forgotten, whereas he noticed them all the time." (Biog. p. 407).

He puts it this way, according to Pattie Wright, his biographer, who is quoting from an interview (13 April 2004) with Ray, a year before his death: "We are ignorant of the truth of nature. We deliberately ignore it ... Everything out there knows what they have to do and they do it. We can't admit that something knows more than we do ... The only force is nature. It has no good and evil. And it is a strong force."



ell what was Ray's Secret?

He also attempted to describe it in his diary from time to time, and his biographer having discovered his secret, described as follows:

"He looked into one of the wells and saw a toad. ... 'On a small ledge, eighteen inches up, a large brown toad with gold flecked eyes looked inscrutably and unmoving at the wall opposite. He was there yesterday. He was there for ever.' It was characteristic musing from a man who had just survived a battle at sea and a long dangerous night in the water. It was Ray. His way of looking at the natural world, holding the darkness of his personal circumstances outside the circle of his vision, was the key to Ray's wartime writing. In the midst of death was life." (p. 218), "He was wholly humble before Nature: ... an eternal wisdom." (p. 235). "Nature, not Christianity, was the mainspring of his religion." (p. 252).

All perhaps best demonstrated by Ray in his paintings:

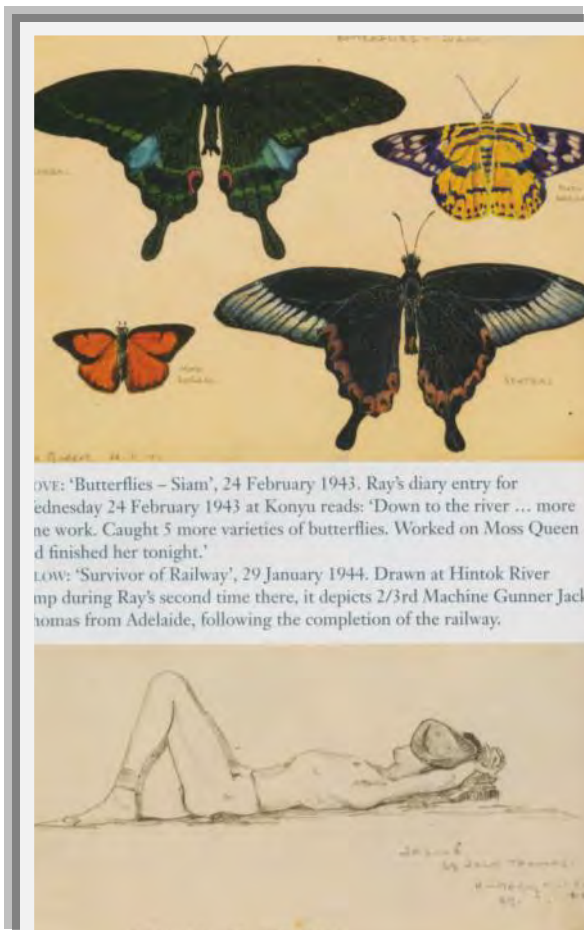


Exhibit 7 - One page from Pattie Wright's biography, *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*, illustrating well Ray's thoughts soaring above with the butterflies (nature); while the lower illustration shows his feet firmly on the ground recognizing reality all around him.



Exhibit 6 - Painting of beetle (nature) by Ray from Pattie Wright's: *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*.

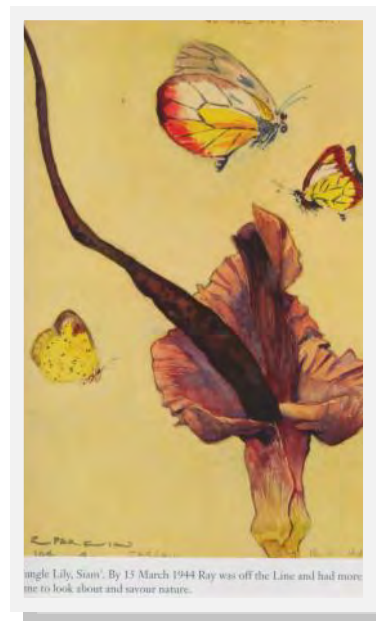



Exhibit 8 - Painting of butterflies and flower (nature) by Ray - from Pattie Wright's: *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*.

As I said at the beginning this was not meant to be any kind of review of this biography of Ray Parkin. It is not. But ... I hope I have answered the two main questions as to why I wanted to read it. And perhaps more - the secrets of survival as Ray had concluded after experiencing life under the most difficult of circumstances and survived when many others did not.

Just read the 'Prologue' (Trilogy, p. 677) in *The Sword and the Blossom* to get some inkling of the nightmares and demons that persisted long after that war and POW experience that couldn't and wouldn't ever be shared even with family - noting here the experience of Boof and Harry long after the war.

Of course one has to realize that Ray was not only a POW of the Japanese but also a sailor trained in the Australian Navy, who later became a writer, and a published author. He was also a painter of note and all of these come together in his books. All good reads. This includes Pattie Wright's biography of Ray Parkin. I found it hard to put down until finished. Indeed a good yarn, a very good yarn! 

Acknowledgments

Appreciation to Pattie Wright: for permission to quote from her biography; and arranging with the Parkin family, for permission to use the illustrations.

End Notes

- 1 Wright, Pattie, *Ray Parkin's Odyssey, Sailor, artist, writer, prisoner of war*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 2012.
- 2 Parkin, Ray, *H.M.Bark Endeavour, Her Place in Australian History*, The Miegunyah Press, An imprint of Melbourne University Publishing Ltd, Carlton, Victoria, 1997, 2nd edition 2003, paperback 2006.
- 3 Parkin, Ray, *Ray Parkin's Wartime Trilogy, Out of the Smoke, Into the Smother, and The Sword and the Blossom*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1999, paperback 2003.

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All Hands Catalogue of Stories. second edition December 2013

The *All Hands* catalogue provides readers with the opportunity to explore the vast and diverse range of stories that have been published in the magazine over twenty years since its inception in 1992. It appears on the volunteer's Ning site in the right hand column at the head of past issues of *All Hands*.

The catalogue lists all the published stories from volunteer contributors over those years, providing access in one place to all their amazing experiences and knowledge of things maritime. Also listed are the wonderful covers of each issue, some of which feature original drawings by volunteer illustrators, some are original photographs, and others capture the spirit of a particular story or theme of an issue.

Searching for stories on the volunteers' Ning website.

Open the electronic pdf copy of the catalogue, and use the Search tool to search for stories that may contain a particular subject keyword, or for stories by a particular author. Alternatively, you can simply scroll through the listings and pick out a story that catches your eye and interests. The issue numbers in this edition of the catalogue have individual links to the issues themselves which are also stored in pdf form on the Ning website. The story is then just a few mouse clicks away, by links from the Contents page in the latest issue, or by scrolling through the earlier issues from the Contents page.

At the time of publication of this second edition of the catalogue, all the issues from number 1 through to number 84 of the magazine have been posted electronically on the Ning website, and stories in those issues can also be directly accessed there. 

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All Hands Committee

Editorial: David van Kool, Alex Books, Bob Hetherington, John Lea, Neale Philip, Janet Pagan, Ian Stevens

Design: Jenny Patel, Hailey Mannell

Ditty Box: Alex Books

ANMM All Hands Committee
2 Murray Street, SYDNEY NSW 2000
E-mail: allhands@anmm.gov.au
Phone: 9298-3772

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The *All Hands* Committee thanks all contributors for the time and effort taken in preparing articles. It may be necessary to edit material provided. *All Hands* Committee have attempted to contact owners of copyright material published in *All Hands*. If you believe you own copyright please contact the editor.

The *All Hands* Committee is always happy to discuss any ideas or comments regarding *All Hands*. Articles for the enjoyment of all volunteers are always welcomed.

