

OBITUARY

COMMODORE A. H. COOPER

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

(1920-1987)

Commodore Tony COOPER died in Sydney, Australia, on 21st October 1987. He had undergone several major operations for cancer in recent years, all of which he endured with great fortitude and from which he always came back with his zest for life unimpaired.

A graduate of the Royal Australian Naval College in 1937, COOPER had a considerable naval career before he became a hydrographic surveyor. He began life at sea in HMAS *Canberra* before exchange service, for the first time, in the Royal Navy as a midshipman in HMS *Malaya* in the Mediterranean in 1938.

On promotion to sub-lieutenant he continued training in the United Kingdom until the middle of 1940 when he was appointed to HMAS *Hobart* in the Red Sea and later to HMAS *Perth* in the Mediterranean. Severe bomb damage during the evacuation of British troops from Crete necessitated the ship's return to Australia at the end of 1941 for major repairs.

As a lieutenant COOPER was fortunate in leaving HMAS *Perth* at Port Moresby just before her last fatal voyage. He went as navigating officer of HMAS *Nepal* on anti-submarine operations in the South Africa Station.

1943 brought a return to HMAS *Hobart* operating with the U.S. Seventh Fleet until the ship was hit by a torpedo compelling her to return to Sydney. This provided the opportunity for the granting of a long-standing request by COOPER to become a surveyor; and his career as such began in 1943 with his appointment as navigator in the Australian survey ship *Benalla* involved in wartime surveying work in New Guinea. On cessation of hostilities he received a further hydrographic posting to HMAS *Lachlan* in which he served from 1945-46 for surveys in the Philippines and off Borneo, followed by a similar posting to HMAS *Warrego* for surveys off the Australian coast. From 1946-48 he served aboard HMAS *Barcoo*.

In June 1948 he returned to the United Kingdom on a two year exchange during which he served as first lieutenant in HM Survey Ship *Sharpshooter* in British Home Waters.

He was promoted to lieutenant commander in 1949 and returned to Australia in 1950 for his first command, the survey ship *Karangi*. In the period 1950-52 he was Deputy Senior Officer of the Australian Hydrographic Service. This was followed by three years aboard HMAS *Warrego*. He was promoted to Commander in 1953.



From 1956-58 he was a senior officer in the Hydrographic Office and became, for the first time, Australian Hydrographer in 1958, and two years later went to Darwin as naval officer in charge, North Australia, in the rank of captain, before becoming again Hydrographer in 1962.

A further two year period of service with the Royal Navy then followed, during which for a year he commanded HMS *Vidal* carrying out oceanographic and hydrographic surveys in the North Atlantic and the West Indies, and then served as Assistant Hydrographer in London.

On return to Australia at the end of 1967 he assumed the duties of Hydrographer for the third and final time. A year later COOPER returned, after many years, to fleet work in command of the new 17,500 ton maintenance ship *Stalwart*; and then as a Commodore he became Chief of Staff to Flag Officer, East Australia, in 1970.

Commodore COOPER retired from the R.A.N. in May 1971 to form a com-

mercial hydrographic company, Australia Maritime Surveys, largely employed in bathymetric surveys of the continental shelf for the Australian Government.

Tony COOPER came to the I.H. Bureau in 1973 as Head of the Technical Section, a post later designated as Professional Assistant, Hydrography. He then served a full ten year period in Monaco throughout which his contribution to the work of the Bureau it is impossible to over-estimate. Having previously attended the I.H. Conferences in 1962 and 1967 he became Secretary of the 1977 and 1982 Conferences, a post in which he greatly excelled.

For the 1977 Conference we were finally able to dispense with the time consuming complete verbatim Report and introduce a team of precis writers, so that a more concise and readable Report could be published within a few months of the termination of the Conference.

The oversight of this innovation fell to Tony COOPER who was also responsible for the format of the new style Report and a completely revised form of documentation for the conduct of the Conference.

I believe that the Reports of Proceedings for the XIth and XIIth Conferences are in themselves a memorial to Tony COOPER's dedication to the international hydrographic community.

He also contributed greatly to the work of editing the Bureau's Special Publications, including a number on electronic positioning systems.

COOPER was elected President of The Hydrographic Society in 1981. The wide international character of the Society appealed to him and after his retirement from the Bureau in 1983, when he returned to his homeland, he became chief architect in the foundation of the Australasian Branch of the Society. He was also a Fellow of the Institution of Surveyors, Australia; a member of the Australian Institute of Cartographers and a Fellow of the Royal Arts Association.

During their ten years in Monaco Tony and his wife Betty lived in their apartment in the Beau Rivage overlooking the Bureau, and with a fine view of the port of Monaco which Tony loved to paint. Many hydrographers who visited the Principality in those years will recall the warm hospitality dispensed by the COOPERS in their home; whilst others who were fortunate enough to be their day-long guests during the Grand Prix will remember with pleasure those delightful occasions.

Tony COOPER was three times Australian Hydrographer and for ten years a highly competent and devoted international civil servant. It is perhaps a sad reflection on his humility and self-effacement that he did not receive suitable recognition in his native land for his very considerable services to national and international hydrography.

G.S.R.
