

## Lt. Cdr. Donald Rupert Wilson DSC RANVR Biography

*(This biography was compiled with the kind assistance of Mrs. Joan Mary Wilson OAM, the second wife of Lt. Cdr. Wilson) <sup>1</sup> © G.J. Mellon, February 2021*

*At the outbreak of World War II (WWII), all new entry enlisted Australian personnel were entered through the RAN Reserve (RANR), signing an agreement for the duration of hostilities instead of the customary 12-years engagement. Officers and potential officers, meanwhile, were entered as members of the RANR (Sea-going) or the RAN Volunteer Reserve (RANVR). During the war, the Royal Navy drew most of its Australian loan personnel from the ranks of the RANVR. In June 1944, out of 500 Australians serving with the Royal Navy, more than 400 of them were members of the RANVR. Up to September 1941, the RAN had also supplied the Royal Navy with 96 Reserve officers and 172 Reserve ratings with their initial anti-submarine qualifications gained at HMAS Rushcutter. In all, Rushcutter trained 20 per cent of those anti-submarine personnel serving in the critical Battle of the Atlantic. When the War ended the total RAN Reserve force numbered 2863 officers and 26,956 ratings. This represented 80% of the personnel serving in the RAN. <sup>2</sup>*

*Of the 400 or so RANVR's serving with the Royal Navy in 1944, a small number had volunteered for submarine service. Of these, just three RANVR submarine officers were subsequently selected to undertake the Submarine Commanding Officer's Qualifying Course (COCQ), also known as "The Perisher". Lt. Cdr. Donald Wilson was appointed in command of HMS Voracious, on 23 May 1945.*



**Lt. Cdr. D.R. Wilson DSC RANVR**  
Image supplied by Mrs. Joan Wilson OAM

Donald Rupert Wilson was born at Chatswood, Sydney on 09 June 1917, the eldest of three children to Donald Errol Wilson and Hilda Nellie Wilson (nee Green)<sup>3</sup>. Lt. Donald Errol Wilson served with the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> AIF, at Gallipoli, where he was wounded in June 1915. The family had been original settlers in the Oberon District until the Great Depression, when the family grazing property was sold. <sup>4</sup> When Donald Rupert Wilson was a child, they lived at the home of his maternal grandmother, Mrs. Ellen Jemima Green, in Mowbray Road,

Chatswood. Wilson was educated firstly at Mowbray Road School in Chatswood and later at Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) at North Sydney, however the continuing constraints of the Great Depression forced him to leave school in 1933, at age 16. Thereafter he completed his Leaving Certificate part-time, through night classes at Mr Vince Blight's College, at Bligh Street in the city. To help support himself and his family, he took a day job delivering gas bills for the Australian Gas Light Company (AGL) around Sydney, being paid one pound per week, and learning much about the streets of Sydney in the process. In the evenings, after finishing his studies in Bligh Street, he twice scaled the small fence and walked across the upper arch of the (then) quite new Sydney Harbour Bridge.<sup>5</sup> For variety, he would occasionally use the pathways underneath the bridge's roadway instead. Wilson was a keen rugby player and he played for Gordon Rugby Union Football Club in some of their first matches.<sup>6</sup> Around this time, he had the opportunity to go with Mawson's last expedition to Antarctica as a sled dog handler, but as he was still well underage at 17 or 18, his parents would not hear of it and he could not go.<sup>7</sup>

In 1937, Wilson took up a position with the British General Electric Company in Tasmania, living in Launceston however in March 1939 his father died, and he returned to Sydney. Shortly thereafter, Wilson joined the Citizen's Military Forces (CMF), serving in an artillery unit based at the nearby suburb of Willoughby. Despite his prior CMF service, Wilson later applied for naval service and on 27 May 1940, he was appointed as a Sub Lieutenant RANVR (On Probation) with seniority to date 20 May 1940.<sup>8</sup> and was posted to HMAS *Penguin II* (27 May to 31 July 1940), followed by HMAS *Rushcutter* (01 August 1940 to 01 September 1940), in order to undertake his anti-submarine warfare (ASW) training. On 08 June 1940, after a brief, whirlwind courtship, Wilson married Phyllis Gertrude Westbrook at North Sydney.<sup>9</sup> They later had one son together (now also deceased), who produced one grandson.

On 28 September 1940, Wilson completed his Anti-Submarine (A/S) training, in course 'N', having served briefly at sea in HMAS *Moresby*<sup>10</sup> and HMAS *Kybra*<sup>11</sup> during his ASW training. He was posted to HMAS *Cerberus* (02 September to 13 October 1940) and again to HMAS *Rushcutter* (14 October to 12 November 1940). On 13 November 1940, in company with four other freshly qualified RANVR A/S officers, including his lifelong friend Bedford Osborne<sup>12</sup> he took passage to the U.K. in the Shaw, Savill & Albion liner SS *Thermistocles*, along with four others from his ASDIC class. They travelled via South Africa and stopped at Freetown for some time, whilst waiting for a convoy to leave for England.<sup>13</sup> Once Wilson left for naval service the UK, he did not see his wife again for five and a half years.<sup>14</sup>

On arrival at Liverpool, they were sent to Dunoon in Scotland, but no-one knew anything about them there, so they returned to Edinburgh, where they were told to catch the train to London and presented themselves at Australia House, on the Strand in central London. Whilst at Australia House, they were presented to the Australian High Commissioner, Lord Bruce. Thereafter Wilson remained at the RAN London Depot until 09 February 1941, when he was posted to HMS *Badger* at Harwich. This was a shore support base for a number of naval formations, including destroyers, submarines, minesweepers, motor torpedo boats and other convoy escort craft.<sup>15</sup>

Wilson was posted to HMT *Agate*, a trawler which had been taken up from trade by the RN and converted to ASW and convoy escort work. Unfortunately, *Agate* ran aground in foul weather during an east coast convoy escort run on 05 August 1942 and Wilson was one of the lucky survivors from the crew.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, Wilson was sent to HMT *Turquoise*, another converted ASW trawler.<sup>17</sup> Wilson was awarded a full watchkeeping certificate "by Lieut in

Command", but no date or certifying officer was entered on his service record. Presumably this occurred in *Turquoise*.<sup>18</sup> Whilst in the UK, Wilson met the relatives of his friend Bedford Osborne, who hosted him on his wartime leave periods.<sup>19</sup> Whilst serving in HMS *Turquoise*, Wilson was in command, as a Sub-Lieutenant, for about three months before he went to submarines.<sup>20</sup>

Having seen the submarines operating from Blythe, Wilson volunteered for submarine service and undertook his submarine officer training course at HMS *Elfin*<sup>21</sup> from 05 January to 09 March 1942. As he came second overall in his submarine course, he was offered the second choice as to where he wished to be posted. He chose the Tenth Submarine Flotilla (nick-named the Fighting 10<sup>th</sup>), based out of HMS *Talbot*, located at the Lazaretto on Manoel Island, in the middle of Marsamxett Harbour, Malta.<sup>22</sup>

Before he could take up this appointment however, Wilson was given another task. The Vickers-Armstrong Shipyard at Barrow-in Furness had just finished building an S-class submarine for the Turkish Navy, named *Murat Reis* (*Murat Reic*).



**Turkish Submarine Murat Reis, 1942. Location unknown**

The submarine was then completing its sea trials and work up on the Clyde and Wilson was to join the delivery crew (under the command of Lieutenant A.J.W. Pitt RN).<sup>23</sup> They proceeded via Gibraltar, to Malta, then Alexandria and finally delivered the boat to the Turks at Iskenderun, Turkey.<sup>24</sup> Along the way, Wilson was dropped off in Malta to join the Tenth Submarine Flotilla there.<sup>25</sup> The trip from Gibraltar to Malta in *Murat Reis* was conducted as a war patrol, however it was uneventful. When Wilson left the *Murat Reis* in Malta, he became a spare crew submarine officer at HMS *Talbot*.

Shortly thereafter, it was decided that he would proceed by air to Alexandria to join a boat undertaking dockyard repair there. That evening, he took off in a Royal Canadian Air Force

Catalina sea plane, where he was appointed as the starboard blister machine-gunner. An elderly RN Captain, who was going out to join a ship protecting the entrance of the Red Sea, was appointed as the port blister machine-gunner and off they went. About 11 o'clock that night, they passed Malta, where an air battle was raging, which they could clearly hear over their radio. The tactic used by the Catalinas to avoid the enemy night fighters, was to get right down to sea level, where the enemy fighters could not operate.

The aircraft navigator was having difficulty with his fixes and at about 0530 hours, he pronounced them to be off Alexandria and recommended a right turn to run in to the coast. It seemed that their navigation was out by about fifty miles, as they came in over the coast just off Mersah Matruh, which was the furthest west that Rommel's Afrika Korps made it during their last big offensive. As they looked down at the airport they were approaching, they realised that it was in German hands and there were many Messerschmidt's parked there, so they stood their aircraft on its wingtip and headed back out to sea, at about twenty-five to thirty feet above the waves. They then flew along the coast until they reached their correct landing place on Aboukir Bay, where they landed without further incident. <sup>26</sup>

Wilson joined the U-class submarine HMS/M *P31* (later re-named HMS *Uproar*) at Port Said, Egypt, on 23 May 1942 <sup>27</sup>, serving under the command of Lieutenant J.B. de B. Kershaw RN, initially as the 4<sup>th</sup> hand and navigator and later as the First Lieutenant. <sup>28</sup>



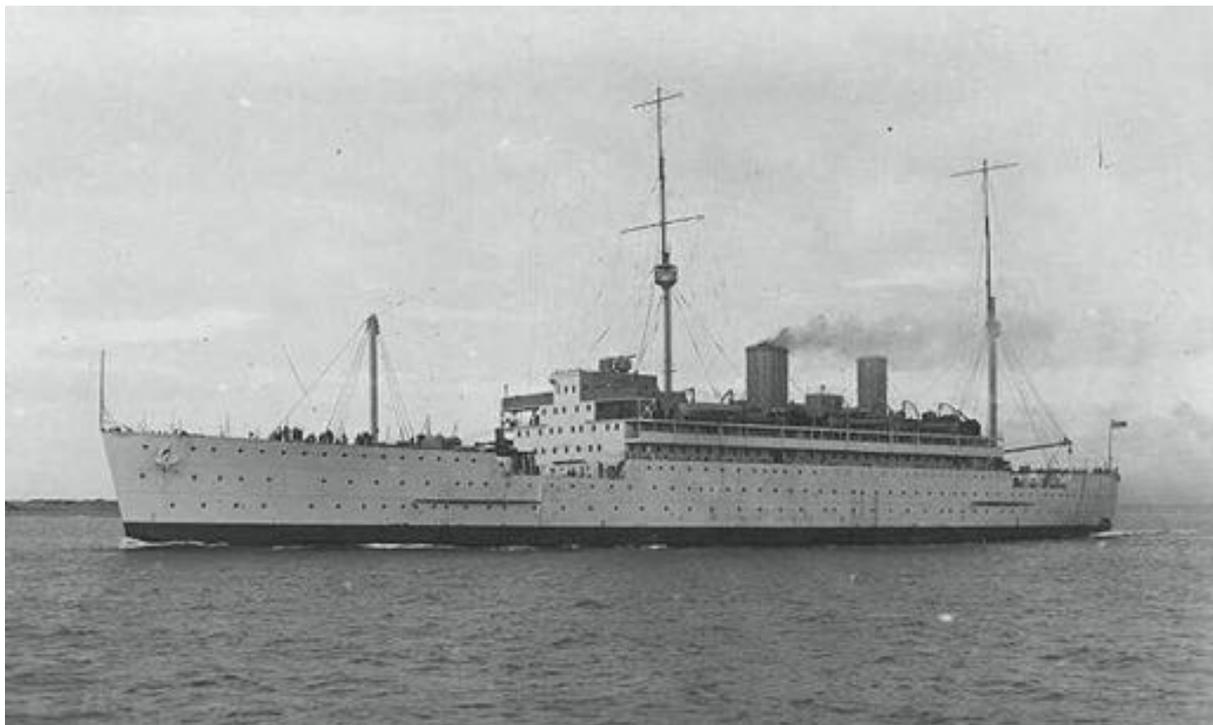
**HMS Uproar P31**

*Imperial War Museum photograph FL 20470*

On 09 June 1942, Wilson was promoted to Lieutenant RANVR, with seniority to that date and went on to serve in *P-31* for a number of war patrols. *P-31* had a 34-man crew, officers and men. <sup>29</sup> On her 11<sup>th</sup> war patrol (06 to 28 June 1942), *P-31* departed from and returned to Alexandria, having been sent to patrol in the Ionian Sea, whilst providing cover during 'Operation Vigorous'. <sup>30</sup> Whilst on this patrol, *P-31* observed an Allied air attack on two battleships and three cruisers of the Regia Marine (R.M. - Italian Navy), but unfortunately the air force dropped their bombs just as the Italian fleet was approaching the British submarine

patrol line. The Italians turned away with the bombing attack and *P-31* was too far off their track to engage them herself and no attack was made by her. The R.M. cruiser *Trento*, as it turned away, came within range of HMS/M *P-35* (later re-named HMS *Umbra*, commanded then by Lieutenant – later Lieutenant Commander - S.L.C. Maydon DSO DSC RN <sup>31</sup>), who fired four torpedoes at her, which resulted in her sinking. <sup>32</sup>

At this stage of the war, Rommel's Afrika Korps was close to breaking through the Allied lines in their quest to take Cairo and the Suez Canal, and naval assets were being moved out of harm's way. Thus, on 29 June 1942, *P-31* was ordered to depart Alexandria for Haifa, Palestine, arriving there on 03 July 1942. *P-31* was greeted on arrival by Captain George 'Shrimp' Simpson RN, <sup>33</sup> the (then) Commanding Officer of the 10<sup>th</sup> Submarine Flotilla, with the sad news that the submarine depot ship HMS *Medway* had been sunk by *U-372* in deep water just off Port Said, as she had sailed for Haifa. Thirty men were lost out of the 1,135 men onboard, plus a huge amount of submarine spares and stores, in addition to around 100 torpedoes. Some of the torpedoes subsequently floated to the surface and were recovered, but all of the submariners' personal gear was lost, as it was routinely stored in the depot ship whilst the submarines were at sea on patrol. <sup>34</sup> Wilson felt most keenly the loss of his gramophone and records, which had been gift from his mother before leaving Australia.



HMS Medway At Sea

On 17 July 1942, *P-31* left Haifa for her 12<sup>th</sup> war patrol, conducting a short, uneventful patrol off Crete before going on to Malta, arriving there on 01 August 1942. During this patrol, *P-31* carried about five tons of cargo and 11 passengers, which would have been a large impost in such a small submarine. <sup>35</sup> On 11 August 1942, *P-31* departed Malta for Gibraltar on her 13<sup>th</sup> war patrol, whilst en-route to the UK for a refit. Along the way she took part in the covering force for another Malta relief convoy, 'Operation Pedestal' <sup>36</sup> and arrived at Gibraltar on 29 August 1942.

Departing Gibraltar for Portsmouth on 24 August, *P-31* was re-routed to the west of Cape Finisterre, to seek and destroy a German blockade runner which was known to be heading for

France, making this passage her 14<sup>th</sup> war patrol but in the event, nothing was sighted. *P-31* made her landfall off Devonport and as she proceeded around the coast to HMS *Dolphin*, Wilson had the bridge watch at night, when he saw a floating mine directly ahead. He made a very urgent alteration of course and the bow wave pushed the mine away from them.<sup>37</sup> Without further incident, *P-31* arrived at Portsmouth on 10 September 1942. The First Lieutenant left the boat at HMS *Dolphin* and Wilson was made up to First Lieutenant. Three days later, she shifted around to Sheerness and on 15 September 1942, *P-31* was taken in hand for refit at Chatham Dockyard. Wilson remained in *P-31* throughout the refit, but on the passage back around from Chatham to HMS *Dolphin*, he developed pneumonia and was sent ashore to recover at Haslar Naval Hospital (adjacent to HMS *Dolphin*, at Gosport, Portsmouth).<sup>38</sup>

On 18 February 1943, Wilson re-joined HMS *Dolphin* and was appointed First Lieutenant of the small U-class submarine HMS/M *Untiring*<sup>39</sup> (commanded by Lieutenant R. Boyd DSC RN) which was then under construction at the Vickers-Armstrong Shipyard, at High Walker, on the River Tyne.<sup>40</sup> The U's were a successful class of small submarines built during the war, which excelled in the close waters of the Mediterranean. Their limited range meant that they were much less suitable for the long distances to be found in the Pacific submarine war and those which were sent to the Pacific later on (as the German war wound down at sea and became primarily a land war), were used as ASW training submarines. *Untiring* had a crew of 39 officers and men<sup>41</sup>, she was 195 feet long, with a displacement of 735 tons dived, a maximum diving depth of 200 feet, she mounted four 21-inch torpedo tubes forward (none aft) and carried eight torpedoes. She also had a three-inch deck gun mounted forward of the conning tower and three .303 machine guns for anti-aircraft defence.<sup>42</sup>



**HMS Untiring – Imperial War Museum (collection no. 8308-29)**

The crew usually operated in a three-watch system, being on duty for two hours and then off for four hours. The enlisted men slept in hammocks and the officers had bunks. There were very few frills on board these submarines and a good cook could and did make a huge contribution to the crew's morale. They were each given one Mars Bar a week, donated by the Mars Confectionary Company. Porpoises often followed and played around the submarines

and looking through the periscope, in the clear blue waters of the Mediterranean, prisms of light followed their tracks, which would mix like long trails of colourful ribbons. However, their playing disturbed the water, and made the boat a possible target, especially from Axis aircraft. <sup>43</sup>

HMS *Untiring* came out of the building yard on 30 May 1943 and conducted trials and exercises in Home waters until 20 August 1943, when she sailed for Lerwick, in the Shetland Islands. *Untiring* was also used as a 'model boat' during the salvage of her sister submarine, HMS *Untamed*, which sank in the Firth of Clyde on 30 May 1943. <sup>44</sup> Being the model boat entailed *Untiring* being available close to the wreck site, for the divers and salvage masters to pour over her physical constructions, as they worked out how to salvage the sunken submarine. The dive team was led by the very famous Australian diver, Johnno Johnson, the man who led the first recovery of the gold bullion from the SS *Niagara* <sup>45</sup>, after she was sunk in 400 feet of water off New Zealand by a mine from a German raider. Wilson adjudged Johnson to be a 'delightful chap'. <sup>46</sup> He was much less impressed when *Untiring*'s crew were directed to remove the bodies from the hull of *Untamed*, after she was recovered to the surface. This had a disastrous effect on many of the crew members, particularly the younger men. <sup>47</sup>

On 23 August 1943, *Untiring* departed Lerwick for her first war patrol, an anti U-boat patrol in the Norwegian Sea. On 27 August 1943, she sank a Norwegian fishing vessel by gunfire, which was suspected of being a weather and shipping reporting vessel for the Germans. The crew of six (seven?) Norwegians were taken prisoner and put ashore in the Shetlands when *Untiring* returned there from her war patrol, on 05 September 1943. <sup>48</sup> They went up to the North Cape on this patrol, to cover a Russian convoy to Murmansk, in absolutely freezing weather and in huge seas. <sup>49</sup> On one occasion, Wilson was officer of the watch on the bridge, along with Able Seaman Oldham, a torpedoman. Both were securely roped onto the bridge structure. As they were pummed by the huge seas, Oldham's job was to jump on the upper conning tower lid and shut it temporarily, so that water did not cascade uncontrollably into the control room, flooding the submarine. When the wave passed, he had to quickly open the hatch again, as the diesel engines were still running and would quickly draw a large vacuum inside the submarine. If the vacuum reached too high a level in the submarine (i.e., the air pressure became too low), the diesels could stall, and the crew could also be rendered unconscious. <sup>50</sup> On one occasion, a huge wave came over, which the control room depth gauge showed as being 28 feet. This meant that Wilson and Oldham were submerged under about 14 feet of freezing cold seawater, as the wave passed over them. <sup>51</sup>

On 18 September 1943, *Untiring* sailed from Holy Loch for her second war patrol (also an anti U-boat patrol) in the Bay of Biscay. This patrol was uneventful and on 03 October 1943, *Untiring* arrived at Gibraltar. On 10 October 1943, she departed Gibraltar for her third war patrol off southern France, and to proceed to Algiers on completion. On 16 October 1943, *Untiring* sighted a U-boat (*U-616*, commanded by Kapitanleutnant Siegfried Koitschka <sup>52</sup>) off Toulon and fired four torpedoes at her. The U-boat heard the approaching torpedoes on her sonar and turned sharply away <sup>53</sup> to 'comb their tracks', thus surviving the attack unscathed. After a period of 'cat and mouse' stalking between the two submarines, the U-boat safely entered the harbour at Toulon. <sup>54</sup> On 19 October and 21 October *Untiring* made torpedo attacks on two German barges and an enemy merchant vessel respectively, but no hits were obtained and on 24 October 1943, she arrived at Algiers. Her fourth war patrol, from 04 to 23 November 1943, off southern France and the Italian Riviera, was uneventful. *Untiring* arrived at Bizerta, Tunisia, on 21 November, then taking passage to Malta where she finished her patrol on 23 November 1943.

On 07 December 1943, *Untiring* departed Malta for her fifth war patrol, again off southern France. On 14 December 1943, *Untiring* sighted a ship off Monaco and followed it close inshore, hoping to be able to fire her torpedoes at it, into the harbour if necessary. At 1556 hours, with the ship now lying alongside the International Geographical Society building inside Monaco harbour, *Untiring* fired two torpedoes from a range of about 550 yards. One torpedo struck the side of the entrance, but the other was right on target and blew the bow off the ship, sinking her (the German net layer *Netztender 44 / Prudente* of 396 GRT). The ship was loading mines at the time and the combined explosion blew out nearly every window in Monaco. Thereafter, Wilson used to joke that they were ‘the men who broke the bank at Monte Carlo’.<sup>55</sup> It is not recorded however, what the Monegasque thought of their endeavours. Despite being attacked by an enemy destroyer with a torpedo and two UJ craft with depth charges (U-boat Jaegers – submarine hunters) on 17 December, *Untiring* escaped unscathed and on 19 December 1943, she arrived at the new forward operating base at La Maddalena (on an island at the northern end of Sardinia).<sup>56</sup>

From 31 December 1943 to 12 January 1944, *Untiring* made her sixth war patrol in the Gulf of Genoa, during which she torpedoed and sank the German barge *F 296*, which had been in convoy with two similar barges. From 23 January to 01 February 1944, *Untiring* made her seventh war patrol off southern France and the Italian Riviera. An unsuccessful attack was made on a small escorted convoy on 30 January, after which *Untiring* was heavily and accurately depth charged, suffering some damage. On 31 January, she sank two German barges, which were escorted by four auxiliary minesweepers.<sup>57</sup> The following day, *Untiring* arrived back at La Maddalena. From 14 to 26 February 1944, *Untiring* made her eighth war patrol from La Maddalena, but it was uneventful. On 01 March 1944, *Untiring* made passage to Malta in company with her sister submarine HMS *Ultor* (Lt. G.E. Hunt, DSC and Bar, RN) and an escort ship, where she was docked for six days. It was found that the depth charging during her 7<sup>th</sup> war patrol had taken a chunk out of her port propeller, probably as the result of being struck by a part of the steel casing of a depth charge.<sup>58</sup> *Untiring* then underwent sea trials, workups and exercises, before arriving back at La Maddalena on 30 March 1944.

From 04 to 13 April 1944, *Untiring* conducted her ninth war patrol off southern France. On 11 April 1944, she sank the German auxiliary minesweeper *M 6022* (formerly the French *Enseigne*) and on 12 April 1944, she sank the German merchant *Diana* (1454 GRT, built 1903, former Greek *Mairi Deftereou*), before returning to La Maddalena on 13 April 1944. From 25 April to 03 May 1944, *Untiring* conducted her tenth war patrol, once again off southern France. On 27 April 1944, in a classic case of the hunted becoming the hunter, *Untiring* sank the German auxiliary submarine chaser *UJ 6075* (formerly the French *Clairvoyant*), as it and another vessel, *UJ 6078*, returned to Toulon harbour from an anti-submarine patrol.

The Allies had received information that the Axis merchant ship *Astree* (formerly the French *Siena*, of 2147 GRT<sup>59</sup>) had taken on board a heavy explosive cargo somewhere on the west coast of Africa, below Sierra Leone. It was surmised at the time that this cargo might be related to atomic bomb warfare. *Astree* was tracked as travelling northwards only by night and she also went through the Straits of Gibraltar at night. The next morning, she was observed to put her nose onto the beach in Spanish waters where she could not be attacked. Updated intelligence indicated that she might be making for the nearest French harbour at Port Vendres.<sup>60</sup> *Untiring* was covering the harbor approaches when, at about midnight, *Astree* was sighted and the hunt began. At 0444 hours, in a position five cables off Cape Bear, *Untiring* fired four

torpedoes from 800 yards, of which one hit the target amidships. By 0525 hours, *Astree* had sunk right across the harbour entrance.<sup>61</sup> On 03 May 1944, *Untiring* returned to La Maddalena.

*Untiring*'s 11<sup>th</sup> war patrol (14 to 28 May 1944, off the south of France) was uneventful. Her 12<sup>th</sup> war patrol departed La Maddalena on 05 June 1944 and on 09 June, she sank the German auxiliary submarine chaser *UJ 6073* (previously the Egyptian yacht *Nimeth Allah*) off Toulon. On 10 June 1944, *Untiring* sank the German auxiliary submarine chaser *UJ 6078* (formerly the French *La Havraise*, of 398 GRT), before returning to La Maddalena on 12 June 1944. From 15 to 29 June, *Untiring* made a passage to Algiers and back, for which no explanation was given in the war history.<sup>62</sup> From 01 to 14 July 1944, *Untiring* undertook her 13<sup>th</sup> war patrol off southern France, with just one (unsuccessful) torpedo attack made on a German patrol vessel.

On 11 July 1944, Wilson was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for outstanding courage, skill and devotion to duty in successful patrols in HM Submarine.<sup>63</sup> This was presented to him by King George VI on 13 February 1945 at Buckingham Palace.

From 28 July to 01 August 1944, *Untiring* conducted her 14<sup>th</sup> war patrol, performing a special operation on the Hyeres Islands, off southern France. They took onboard a mixed party of two members of the First Special Service Force (FSSF – an American/Canadian commando unit) and two members of the British Combined Operations Pilotage Party No.5 (COPP 5). Their mission was to conduct a beach reconnaissance of the landing areas, just prior to the amphibious invasion of these islands by the First Special Service Force, on 14 August 1944.<sup>64</sup>

On 05 September, *Untiring* departed La Maddalena for Malta, where she was docked for five days. From 29 September to 17 October 1944, she conducted her 15<sup>th</sup> war patrol, in the northern Aegean Sea. On 04 October, a torpedo attack on a German torpedo boat missed and on the following day, *Untiring* surfaced, gunned and sank an 80-ton caique. Later that same day, she made a torpedo attack on a suspected merchantman, which turned out to be a German auxiliary submarine chaser *UJ 2102*, that was on an anti-submarine sweep together with *UJ 2144*. The submarine hunters gave *Untiring* a depth charging, but she was not damaged.

On 06 October, *Untiring* arrived at Chios, Greece, where she took on four replacement torpedoes and departed the same day to continue her patrol. On 07 October, she attacked the German landing barge *M.N.L. 23* with one torpedo but missed. Whilst near Santorini on this patrol, *Untiring* inadvertently entered a German minefield and had a lucky escape when a mooring wire from a mine passed down their side.<sup>65</sup> On 17 October 1944, *Untiring* arrived back at Malta, having completed her last war patrol. She subsequently returned to the UK for refit and was thereafter assigned to ASW training roles.

Wilson was flown back to the UK, and on 27 December 1944 was appointed to HMS *Dolphin* to undertake his "Perisher" - the Submarine Commanding Officer's Qualifying Course (COQC). The course began in earnest in January 1945 at Port Bannatyne, on the Isle of Bute where their chief instructor (or "Teacher" as he was then and still is known) was Commander Edward "Teddy" Woodward DSO\*\* RN.<sup>66</sup> During the sea phase of his Perisher, 'the Perisher boat' was conducting a practice attack on a fleet unit which included the battleship HMS *Nelson*. A Canadian destroyer, which was unaware of the exercise, sighted the submarine's periscope and charged in to try and save the flagship. She approached at full speed to ram and then attacked with depth charges. Luckily, no damage was done and when the Perisher boat finally broke surface, a large Union Jack was raised from the conning tower.<sup>67</sup> Wilson

successfully completed his *Perisher* in March 1945 and in May 1945, he was appointed in command of HMS *Voracious* <sup>68</sup>.

By that time, *Voracious* had conducted a number of war patrols off Norway and in the Mediterranean, before being sent out to join the British Pacific Fleet at Trincomalee, Ceylon. Wilson travelled out to Ceylon in the troopship *Aorangi*, departing from the Clyde for the Far East on 31 March 1945, with convoy KMF.42, bound for Trincomalee via Bombay and carrying 433 service passengers. <sup>69</sup> At that time, reorganisations were underway in the British submarine flotillas in the Far East <sup>70</sup> and on 15 January 1945, *Voracious* had departed Colombo for Sydney. <sup>71</sup> After her arrival at Sydney, *Voracious* conducted ASW training exercises off Sydney with various ships and aircraft. In the meantime, Wilson, upon his arrival at Trincomalee, took passage to Australia in one of a group of three RN submarines, which sailed along the Indian Ocean coast of Sumatra, past the Sunda Strait and thence down to Fremantle. From there, he made his way to Sydney. <sup>72</sup>

On 23 May 1945, Wilson took command of HMS *Voracious* at Sydney and after a four-day docking (28 May to 02 June), *Voracious* departed Sydney for Brisbane, arriving there on 15 June 1945. Around this time, that he was promoted to the rank of Temporary/Local Acting Lieutenant Commander, due to his command position in *Voracious*. <sup>73</sup> Thereafter *Voracious* conducted ASW training exercises off Brisbane, before returning to Sydney on 29 June 1945. <sup>74</sup> Shortly afterwards, *Voracious* departed Sydney for Manus Island, on her way to Leyte Gulf, in the Philippines. She was on her way to Manus when the war ended, and she thereafter returned to Sydney. Wilson then took *Voracious* to Melbourne (for the Melbourne Cup) and later to Hobart, for port visits, before returning to Sydney.



**HMS *Voracious* in Melbourne, 02 February 1946 - State Library of Victoria**

Wilson relinquished command of HMS *Voracious* at Sydney and was transferred back to the RAN on station. On 22 October 1945, he was at HMS *Golden Hind* (RN base, Sydney) and on 07 February 1946, Wilson was demobilised at HMAS *Rushcutter*. <sup>75</sup> His appointment in the RANVR was terminated on 28 March 1946 and he was re-appointed to the RANVR on 29

March 1946, in the rank of Lieutenant, with seniority to date 09 June 1942. On 30 June 1950, he was promoted Lieutenant Commander RANVR.<sup>76</sup>

By October of 1946, Don and Phyllis Wilson had bought a 180-acre property called 'Kerry Farm', at Wildes Meadow in the picturesque Southern Highlands of NSW, where they grew cabbages and potatoes, as well as keeping a flock of sheep, to gain experience with sheep and fat lambs. It was during this period that their only child, a son, was born. Both being keen sailors from a young age, Don and his friend Bedford Osborne tried to enter a sixteen foot clinker built yacht named "Old Fashioned Sue", in the first Sydney Hobart Yacht Race (started on Boxing Day 1945), but she was not accepted as an entrant by the organising committee<sup>77</sup>, as 'Sue' was deemed to be too small. Don and Bedford sailed the course anyway, taking about three weeks to complete it and return to Sydney.<sup>78</sup>

Wilson was later allocated a Soldier Settlers Block, 'Bairnsdale', which had been a part of a much larger grazing property called 'Bowlie' near Gundaroo (outside Canberra). 'Bowlie' belonged to the family of his great friend Bedford Osborne. When the government resumed part of their property after the war, to create soldier-settler blocks, Osborne put Don's name forward for one of the blocks. The 1,200 acres of land was completely cleared when they took it up, there were not even any fences, however they developed the land. During this period, he had record prices for his wool and fat lambs, and the property prospered under his hand. Wilson planted many trees, building fences on both sides of the trees, to protect them from the cattle. The trees still stand tall, in long lines marking the "Bairnsdale" fields. Don later won an award for Best Soldier Settler in southern NSW, running sheep, fat lambs and cattle there.<sup>79</sup>

In October 1965, seeking new horizons, the Wilson's sold 'Bairnsdale' and he took up employment with Burns Philp, to work as a plantation manager in Papua New Guinea. An uncle of Wilson's had been a director of Burns Philp and he knew other people who lived and worked up there as well.<sup>80</sup> On his arrival in Rabaul, he worked on the staff of a Mr Garret and he was then posted to the plantation 'Kulon', to gain experience. On 01 January 1966, he was posted to 'Raulawat' plantation and on 04 February 1966, he became Mr Garret's assistant. In September 1966, Wilson was transferred to New Ireland, relieving a Mr Dyer and by 04 September 1967, Wilson finished his contract with Burns Philp.<sup>81</sup>

In 1970 they purchased the balance of a 99-year Crown lease (issued in 1909) over the small, two square mile, island of Muwo in the Trobriand Group, where they lived and grew copra. Don also ran a store and looked after the medical needs of the island people. Owing to the remoteness of this location, they later bought an apartment at Mosman where Phyllis could spend time as well as visiting the island. In later years, Don told many stories of his adventures in paradise, of the marvellous fishing, the crayfish, the crocodiles and even some black pearls from the reefs around the island; but he also told tales of much laughter and music from his local friends and workers on the island. Don recorded much of the native music and donated part of this collection, including many artefact's, to the Australian Museum.

Soon after Papua New Guinea's Independence (16 September 1975), a group of Melanesian nationalists from New Britain wanted to take over the Trobriand Island Group as an independent country, similar to Bougainville. The Trobriand island of Muwo, with its copra production, was the most viable island in the group, and hence was considered by them to be vital to their plans. In such times, there were quite real dangers when living in remote areas of New Guinea and Don's life was threatened after the District Commissioner in Rabaul was killed. For a while he was given a small police force to protect him and he set up his old Jaguar

car headlights to floodlight the island's beach each night. His own local native people kept lookouts and remained very loyal and supportive. The situation became so serious that, as a protection at night, the wire doormats at the entrances to his home were connected to the 240-volt generator. Don of course warned his own people not to come near.

The changes in the political dynamics of PNG after Independence eventually took their toll, with the stress proving so great that Don was medically evacuated from the island, never to return. He had developed a severe stomach ulcer, and was carried semi-conscious on a stretcher, by the Muwo islanders, across the island, then paddled in a canoe across to the larger Kiriwina Island, from where he was flown to Port Moresby. Joan Wilson still has copies of abject letters from his Muwo islanders, asking him to return, but it was not to be. In the late 1990's the remainder of the island lease was eventually sold to a local family.<sup>82</sup>

In 1980, the Wilsons were living at "Cumbijowa", a lucerne property on Wandary Lane, outside of Forbes, NSW, but they soon sold it and set up home at Cremorne Point, Sydney, taking occasional trips overseas. Phyllis became very ill and was devotedly nursed by Don, but on 17 February 1994, Phyllis Wilson of Cremorne Point, Sydney, passed away after a long illness and was privately cremated. During these years Don was also a volunteer with 2NBS Radio Station, recording many classical and jazz concerts, often outdoors, working late in the night with the heavy equipment of the period and at one time he even had his own radio programme.

After his first wife's passing, Don was talking one day with a new neighbour, Joan, when he discovered that she was the daughter of Major WA (Bill) Tebbutt, who had been a friend of his own father and whom Don had known since childhood and had always greatly admired.<sup>83</sup> Joan travelled often to India, with her Distant Pavilions Tour Groups, and on each trip, they visited the Tibetan refugees, taking gifts for the children. Joan's work inspired Don, and he promptly went out and bought her one thousand balloons as gifts for the children.

On 24 March 1995, Don Wilson married Joan Mary Tebbutt-Scharkie and they enjoyed nearly fifteen wonderful years together. When he was well past 90, Don and Joan were still sailing together in Fiji. They both had a great love for travel, taking many overseas trips, including to the UK, where they had an emotional meeting with some of the surviving crewmembers of HMS *Untiring*, many of whom travelled across England to see Don. They also stayed with Major General Robert and Airlie Staveley, the relatives of Bedford Osborne, renewing Don's friendship with the Maxwell / Lambert family who had hosted him on his wartime leaves.

Don and Joan then moved to Tasmania, where they lived for six months just south of Swansea, in a little house right on the beach. No one seemed to use the long golden beach except them; they had no TV or phone and a huge open fire with plenty of wood for warmth, one of the most peaceful periods of his life. The house looked across Great Oyster Bay to the Freycinet Peninsula, and in the sunset those cliffs turned incredible vibrant colours. At night there were no lights to be seen, unless there was a car on the road, and they would open their dozen or so of local oysters, go down on the beach in their tracksuits and scarves, taking several old champagne bottles with candles in them, a pot plant and of course champagne, enjoy the oysters and watch the stars, which were coloured pink and green in the clear air. It was perhaps the most peaceful and beautiful time of their lives. They would sit at each end of the big table, with their own computers. Don copied the logbook of Bill Nance from his epic voyage in 'Cardinal Virtue' - the first Australian ever to sail around the world single handed, before Chichester. It

is one of Don's regrets that he was not able to get Bill's wonderful feat more widely acknowledged. <sup>84</sup>

Don and Joan then returned to live in Mosman but continued travelling and met His Holiness the Dalai Lama several times, through Joan's work with the Tibetan Friendship Group Australia (Inc.), for the Tibetans fleeing into India. <sup>85</sup> Back in Australia, Don wanted to have the earth under his feet again, so they moved to Clareville, on the Pittwater side of the northern beaches of Sydney, with beautiful views out over Pittwater and to the ocean. Don's favourite birds, the Lorikeets, would alight on his shoulders and head as he walked down to the big rock to feed them each morning. This helped make Clareville a special home for Don and Joan.

In May 2002 Don and Joan travelled to Passau in Germany, for the International Meeting of Submariners. The meetings had begun in 1962, when the French Association invited submariners from Italy, USA, and Germany, offering the hand of reconciliation to the enemies of two world wars. In front of the vast Passau Cathedral, each representative of the fourteen nations attending, accompanied by a standard bearer with their national flag, in turn made a prayer for those submariners from their own country which had lost their lives in service. The following prayer given by Lieutenant Commander Don Wilson DSC RANVR Rtd. on behalf of Australian submariners.

*Let us pray for the souls of those Australian Submariners, who lost their lives in service.*

*At this time let us also give thanks for the manly virtues of bravery, loyalty, steadfastness, comradeship and self-discipline, which we found in our shipmates, in the time of our youth.*

*Let us pray that these qualities are not lost from the world, by the young people of today.*

*Let us ask also, that these qualities may still be found amongst us, for the battles we are personally fighting, against the frailties of approaching old age. Amen*

In 2003 Don was selected as part of the delegation for the Commemorative Mission for the Dedication of the Australian War Memorial, London, by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth. He felt his inclusion was a great honour, to be amongst so many distinguished heroes. <sup>86</sup>

The next few years passed with more travel. One trip to Europe included a visit to Malta, to see the old 10<sup>th</sup> Flotilla submarine base at the Lazaretto on Manoel Island. They subsequently had further contact with a school in Malta and arranged for them the signatures of Naval men, who served in Malta in WW2, on a painting of Malta. Don's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration included a cake shaped like a yellow submarine. Then, in January 2008, when Don was 90 years, he and Joan went off to India again! The highlight of this trip was when Don rode elephants in the jungle looking for a tiger. They also celebrated New Year's Eve in the palace on the lake at Udaipur and later with dancing at the historic Grand Hotel in Kolkata.

Don and Joan had travelled to India several times, visiting the Tibetan refugee settlements and were honoured by audiences with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, with whom they became friends. On the Dalai Lama's visit to Sydney in 2008, as he arrived, he saw Don, and the two friends affectionately greeted each other. There are Tibetans among the staff of Mona Vale House Nursing Home, and the photo of Don with His Holiness, immediately made Don a celebrity there.



**His Holiness, the Dalai Lama meets with Don Wilson, 2008**

Don Wilson passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009, aged 92 years. His remains were cremated at Northern Suburbs Crematorium, Sydney. Some of his ashes were scattered on his first wife's memorial rose bush there, and the remainder were placed with the Tebbutt family remains, with a plaque. He was survived by his son (now also deceased) and his grandson from his first marriage and, through his second wife Joan, with twelve grandchildren and three great grandchildren. His was indeed a life well lived.

<sup>1</sup> Information in this biography was drawn partially from Wilson's service record (see National Archives of Australia (NAA) Series A6769, Control Symbol WILSON DR, Barcode 5331615). Further information has been supplied by Mrs. Joan Mary Wilson OAM, the surviving second wife of D.R. Wilson. Reference was also made to previous biographies of D.R. Wilson, compiled by Mr Peter Smith (Historian, Submarine Association Australia – see [https://www.submarinesaustralia.com/upperiscope2/people\\_obituaries.htm](https://www.submarinesaustralia.com/upperiscope2/people_obituaries.htm) ) and by Mr. Walter Burroughs of the Naval History Association of Australia (NHSA), as published in the June 2018 edition of the Naval Historical Review (see <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/they-also-served-lcdr-donald-r-wilson-dsc-ranvr/>). Other sources are as indicated hereunder.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from <https://www.navy.gov.au/brief-history-royal-australian-naval-reserve>

<sup>3</sup> See Wilson family lineage at <http://rmbt.id.au/families/wilson.html>

<sup>4</sup> From an oral history of Donald Wilson's life, recorded by Captain Barry Nobes RAN Rtd, on 24 July 1997 at Sydney. The tapes were transcribed by Peter Smith and Murray Davidson in January 2017. See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mowbray\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mowbray_House)

<sup>5</sup> Document entitled "2020 Naval Report" provided to the author by Mrs Joan Mary Wilson OAM.

<sup>6</sup> Mrs Wilson document, see also <https://gordonrugby.com.au/our-story/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>

<sup>8</sup> See National Archives of Australia (NAA) Series A6769, Control Symbol WILSON DR, Barcode 5331615, for Wilson's service record.

<sup>9</sup> Ancestry.com. *Australia, Marriage Index, 1788-1950* [database on-line].

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-moresby-i>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kybra>

<sup>12</sup> Lt. Cdr. James Bedford Jeffries Osborne RANVR, see service record at NAA Item 5423406. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Themistocles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Themistocles) . As with many RANVR personnel, Wilson's service thereafter was almost entirely with the Royal Navy and he knew very few people in the RAN.

<sup>12</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson> , oral history recording in the 'Australians At War Film Archive, UNSW Canberra.

<sup>14</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Barry Nobes RAN Rtd.

<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Badger\\_\(shore\\_establishment\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Badger_(shore_establishment))

<sup>16</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT\\_Agate\\_\(1933\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT_Agate_(1933)) , although quite obviously, not all of the officers were lost. See also <http://www.harwichanddovercourt.co.uk/warships/tractors/> for images and details of both *Agate* and *Turquoise*.

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- <sup>17</sup> See <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/6490.html>
- <sup>18</sup> Service Record.
- <sup>19</sup> The Maxwell/ Lambert/ Staveley families, with whom Mrs Joan Wilson has maintained a friendship, even after her husband's passing.
- <sup>20</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Nobes RAN Rtd.
- <sup>21</sup> By then, HMS *Elfin* was a shore base for submarine training at Blythe, Northumberland, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Elfin\\_\(1933\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Elfin_(1933))
- <sup>22</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manoel\\_Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manoel_Island)
- <sup>23</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Barry Nobes RAN Rtd.
- <sup>24</sup> From the June 2018 edition of the Naval Historical Review, Naval History Society of Australia. The article was written by Mr Walter Burroughs, with the assistance of Mr Joan Wilson OAM. See also <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/they-also-served-lcdr-donald-r-wilson-dsc-ranvr/>. This posting was not recorded in Wilson's service record. See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oru%C3%A7\\_Reis-class\\_submarine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oru%C3%A7_Reis-class_submarine).
- <sup>25</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Nobes RAN Rtd.
- <sup>26</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>27</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_U-class\\_submarine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_U-class_submarine), see also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Uproar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Uproar).
- <sup>28</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Uproar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Uproar). See also <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3541.html> for war history of this submarine.
- <sup>29</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>30</sup> Op. Vigorous was a British RN and RAF operation to escort a supply convoy (MW11) from the eastern Mediterranean to Malta, it took place from 11–16 June 1942. Op. Vigorous was a part of Op. Julius, which saw another supply convoy simultaneously depart from Gibraltar, also bound for Malta. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Vigorous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Vigorous).
- <sup>31</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynch\\_Maydon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynch_Maydon)
- <sup>32</sup> R.M. *Trento* had already been damaged by a torpedo strike from a Bristol Beaufort aircraft, when attacked by P-35, see <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3545.html>
- <sup>33</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Simpson\\_\(Royal\\_Navy\\_officer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Simpson_(Royal_Navy_officer))
- <sup>34</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Medway\\_\(1928\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Medway_(1928)), see also <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>35</sup> <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3541.html> for the operational history of HMS *Untiring*. It became common practice for submarines to carry stores and personnel in and out of Malta, in the face of the ferocity and success of the Axis air attacks thereon.
- <sup>36</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Pedestal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Pedestal).
- <sup>37</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Barry Nobes RAN Rtd.
- <sup>38</sup> From Wilson's oral history.
- <sup>39</sup> See <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3564.html>
- <sup>40</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers\\_Shipbuilding\\_and\\_Engineering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Shipbuilding_and_Engineering)
- <sup>41</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>42</sup> <http://rnsbs.co.uk/boats/subs/u-class/untiring.html>. *Untiring* survived the war and in July 1945 was loaned to the Greek Navy. Returned to the Royal Navy in 1952, she was sunk as an ASDIC target in July 1957.
- <sup>43</sup> From Mrs Joan Wilson's 2020 biography of her husband's life.
- <sup>44</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Untamed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Untamed)
- <sup>45</sup> <https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/gold-sunken/page-2>
- <sup>46</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Nobes RAN Rtd.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> The NHS article states there were six Norwegians captured, whilst the uboat.net website states there were seven men recovered.
- <sup>49</sup> Wilson was awarded the Arctic Star for this war patrol.
- <sup>50</sup> Just such a fatal incident occurred to a Chinese Ming class submarine in 2003, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_submarine\\_361](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_submarine_361).
- <sup>51</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>52</sup> <https://uboat.net/men/koitschka.htm>. Koitschka was awarded the Knight Cross of the Iron Cross during the war. See also [http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/Siegfried\\_Koitschka](http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/Siegfried_Koitschka). Some 30 years after the war, Koitschka went to the RNSM at Gosport and made enquiries of Mr Gus Britton, as to the fate of the submarine that had fired on him, and whether any of the crew were still alive. Britton was able to advise Koitschka that Wilson was at that time in London and had in fact been at the museum the previous day. They got in communication and stayed that way. Through this connection, Koitschka also got in touch with Robert Boyd, the former C.O. of *Untiring*, who had by then retired to the Algarve (Portugal). Koitschka went down there and met with Boyd, and apparently it was a happy meeting. Many years later, when Wilson went to attend the International Submariners Meeting in

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Passau, Germany in 2002, he too was able to meet with Koitschka, with all enmity between former foes quite forgotten. Sadly, Koitschka died that very same night.

<sup>53</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>

<sup>54</sup> Some twelve years later, during a visit to the RN Submarine Museum in Portsmouth, Wilson was told by the curator that the captain of the German submarine (U-616), had visited the museum previous day, enquiring about the engagement, whether the submarine involved had survived the war and requesting details of its whereabouts. Don later wrote to Siegfried Koitscha, the former commanding officer of the German submarine, and kept up a correspondence with him. Finally, in May 2002 there was an extraordinary meeting in Frankfurt, when Koitscha met his 'neighbour in the deep'. It was also the actual anniversary of the day Siegfried's own submarine was sunk by the British, but all the crew was saved. He said: *I was not proud of everything in the war, but proud of the fact that I saved all my crew.* That evening proved to be Koitscha's last, as after returning home he passed away. (From Mrs Joan Wilson's 2020 biography of her husband's life)

<sup>55</sup> The war history at <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3564.html>, based on the Admiralty files for the war patrol reports and the ships log, states only one torpedo was fired. Wilson's own account, per Mrs Joan Wilson, states that two torpedoes were fired, with one striking the entrance wall and the other, the ship.

<sup>56</sup> Due to the Allied advances into southern France and Italy, the Malta based submarines now used La Maddalena as a forward operating base.

<sup>57</sup> The German barges were *FP 352* (formerly the French *Jean Suzon*) and *FP 358* (formerly the French *St. Antoine*). The barges were in convoy together and were escorted by the German auxiliary minesweepers *M 6041*, *M 6046*, *M 7001*, *M 7010*.

<sup>58</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Nobes RAN Rtd.

<sup>59</sup> See also <https://wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?95220>

<sup>60</sup> Port Vendres is a beautiful town and a small commercial port, in the very south west of Mediterranean France, near the Spanish border.

<sup>61</sup> See <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3564.html> and NHA article. These two sources vary on the number of torpedoes used in this attack.

<sup>62</sup> <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3564.html> Per <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>, according to Wilson, they were invited down to Algiers by a Free French Admiral, to attend a dinner!

<sup>63</sup> Commonwealth of Australia Gazette 149/44, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 1944: "The Governor General has received advice that His Majesty the King has approved of the following awards – 11<sup>th</sup> July 1944: - Royal Australian Navy For outstanding courage, skill and devotion to duty in a successful patrol in one of His Majesty's submarines: Distinguished Service Cross Lieutenant Donald Rupert Wilson R.A.N.V.R.

<sup>64</sup> From the oral history of Donald Wilson's life, recorded by Captain Barry Nobes RAN Rtd. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Special\\_Service\\_Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Special_Service_Force), see also Burhans, Robert D. (1947). "The First Special Service Force: A Canadian/American Wartime Alliance: The Devil's Brigade". Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press Inc. In his book (pages 253-255) Burhans describes the mission and states that the four-man group consisted of himself, Sgt. Jim Kurtzal (3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, FSSF), Lt Fryson RN and a British Commando Sgt. whom he does not identify, both from the British Combined Operations Pilotage Party (COPP) No.5. He states that only periscope and after dark surface reconnaissance was performed, and sketches were made and that this was sufficient, thus no actual landing was made. See also Trenowden, "Stealthily By Night" 1995, page 97, who identifies the British pair as Lt. Richard Fyson RN and Lt. Mike Dawson RNVR from COPP2. See also <https://www.coppsurvey.uk/july-1944>, which states that only periscope and after dark surface reconnaissance was undertaken during the mission as, during canoe launching practice, it became obvious that the American officer was not proficient in canoe work, thus no actual beach landing was carried out.

<sup>65</sup> ANHS article.

<sup>66</sup> See [https://www.unithistories.com/officers/RN\\_officersW5.html](https://www.unithistories.com/officers/RN_officersW5.html). Woodward was a legendary British submariner who spoke his mind, perhaps too freely, as he retired from the service in 1946 and migrated to Adelaide with his Australian born wife. The Wilson's remained in contact with them and went to Adelaide to attend Woodward's funeral.

<sup>67</sup> From Wilson's oral history, recorded by Captain Nobes RAN Rtd.

<sup>68</sup> See <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3597.html>.

<sup>69</sup> Not to be confused with the ship of the same name that had accompanied the Australian expeditionary forces to Rabaul, New Britain, in 1914. See <http://www.royalnavyresearcharchive.org.uk/BPF-EIF/Ships/AORANGI.htm#.YBtcq2MRWik>. See also <http://ssmaritime.com/Aorangi-II-WW2.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> See <http://www.royalnavyresearcharchive.org.uk/BPF-EIF/Ships/AORANGI.htm#.YBtcq2MRWik>.

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- <sup>71</sup> *Voracious* took fuel at the ‘Pot Shot’ submarine refuelling facility near (Exmouth W.A.), before arriving at Fremantle on 05 February 1945, where she was dry docked on Fremantle Slipway. She departed Fremantle on 14 February, was in Melbourne from 23-27 February, before arriving at Sydney on 02 March 1945.
- <sup>72</sup> It is not known in which submarine Wilson travelled to Fremantle. Nor is it known how he got from Fremantle to Sydney. He may have flown, or he may have continued his passage in the submarine.
- <sup>73</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>74</sup> <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3597.html>
- <sup>75</sup> Service record and email to the author on 20 April 2020 from Mr David R. Parry of Fareham, England, a PHD candidate who was writing his dissertation on the Perisher course.
- <sup>76</sup> Service Record.
- <sup>77</sup> <https://cyca.com.au/cyca-history/>
- <sup>78</sup> From Mrs Joan Wilson’s 2020 biography of her husband’s life.
- <sup>79</sup> Document entitled “2020 Naval Report” provided to the author by Mrs Joan Mary Wilson OAM. See also <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>80</sup> <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>81</sup> See Wilson’s employment and salary card from his Burns Philp service, at NAA N145\_262\_0058\_Wilson, Donald Rupert.
- <sup>82</sup> From Mrs Joan Wilson’s 2020 biography of her husband’s life, also from <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/121-donald-wilson>
- <sup>83</sup> William Alston Tebbutt had served in both World Wars and was on Gallipoli that very first morning at 0500 hours, see <https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=296840> . He became a lawyer after WW1, and then in WW2 he served in Malaya, where he was an intelligence officer with the 8<sup>th</sup> Division. At the Fall of Singapore he was the senior Australian officer onboard the SS Vyner Brooke and after her sinking, he was made a POW of the Japanese on Bangka Island, later at Palembang (Sumatra) and finally at Changi Prison in Singapore, in horrific circumstances, before finally making it home after the war’s end. See also <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/17953434> and <https://www.facebook.com/983774011682886/posts/my-father-was-a-genuine-and-caring-real-australian-hero-and-i-know-i-have-been-p/2160823120644630/> .
- <sup>84</sup> From Mrs Joan Wilson’s 2020 biography of her husband’s life.
- <sup>85</sup> In 2013, Mrs Joan Mary Wilson was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for her services to the Tibetan community.
- <sup>86</sup> <https://anzacday.org.au/australian-war-memorial-london>