

EDUCATION RESOURCE

H.M.A.S. FALIE

THE WAR YEARS



USING THIS RESOURCE



This education resource was created for educators and students, to learn and share stories about one of South Australia's most beloved and historically important vessels.

The information and activities in this booklet aligns with the following Australian Curriculum links:

- Year 10 History: the Modern World and Australia. World War II Depth Study.
- Year 9 History: the Making of the Modern World.
- Year 4 HASS: How people, places and environments interact, past and present
- Year 3 HASS: Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make

ABOUT THE FALIE

***Falie* is a 46-metre (151 ft) ketch that traded for many years in Australian waters. She is on the Australian Register of Historic Vessels. After her retirement in 1982, she was then the last working ship representing the South Australian ketch fleet, and along with the *Nelcebee*, one of the last two working sail powered cargo vessels in South Australia.**

Falie was originally built in Maassluis, Netherlands by W Richter in 1919 as a gaff rigged motor schooner collier Holland True. She was built as a speculation by the builder in the hope of selling her to a prospective buyer and sat idle after her launch in 1919 until purchased by the Spencer's Gulf Transport Company in 1922. She was renamed and used for coastal trading in South Australia.

The vessel was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as *HMAS Falie* during World War II, serving first as an inspection vessel primarily patrolling the Port of Sydney, Australia, then as a stores ship.

Returned to her owners in 1946, *Falie* was used to transport explosives around Australia before resuming the South Australian coastal trade to Kangaroo Island and on occasion carrying bulk gypsum from Stenhouse Bay from 1968. She was retired in 1982, then purchased by the South Australian government for preservation as a community and educational resource. The ship was restored for the state's sesquicentenary celebrations in 1986, with re-masting, new sails, and the fitting of accommodation and a galley. With this arrangement, she could carry up to 70 passengers on day trips, or 20 passengers plus nine crew overnight.

THE FALIE NOW

***Falie* is currently owned by the SA Department of Infrastructure and Transport, and looked after by a dedicated band of volunteers who aim to restore and keep her in Port Adelaide inner Harbour for future generations to enjoy, and seek to spread awareness of the historic ketches and their importance to South Australia's maritime history.**



THE H.M.A.S. FALIE

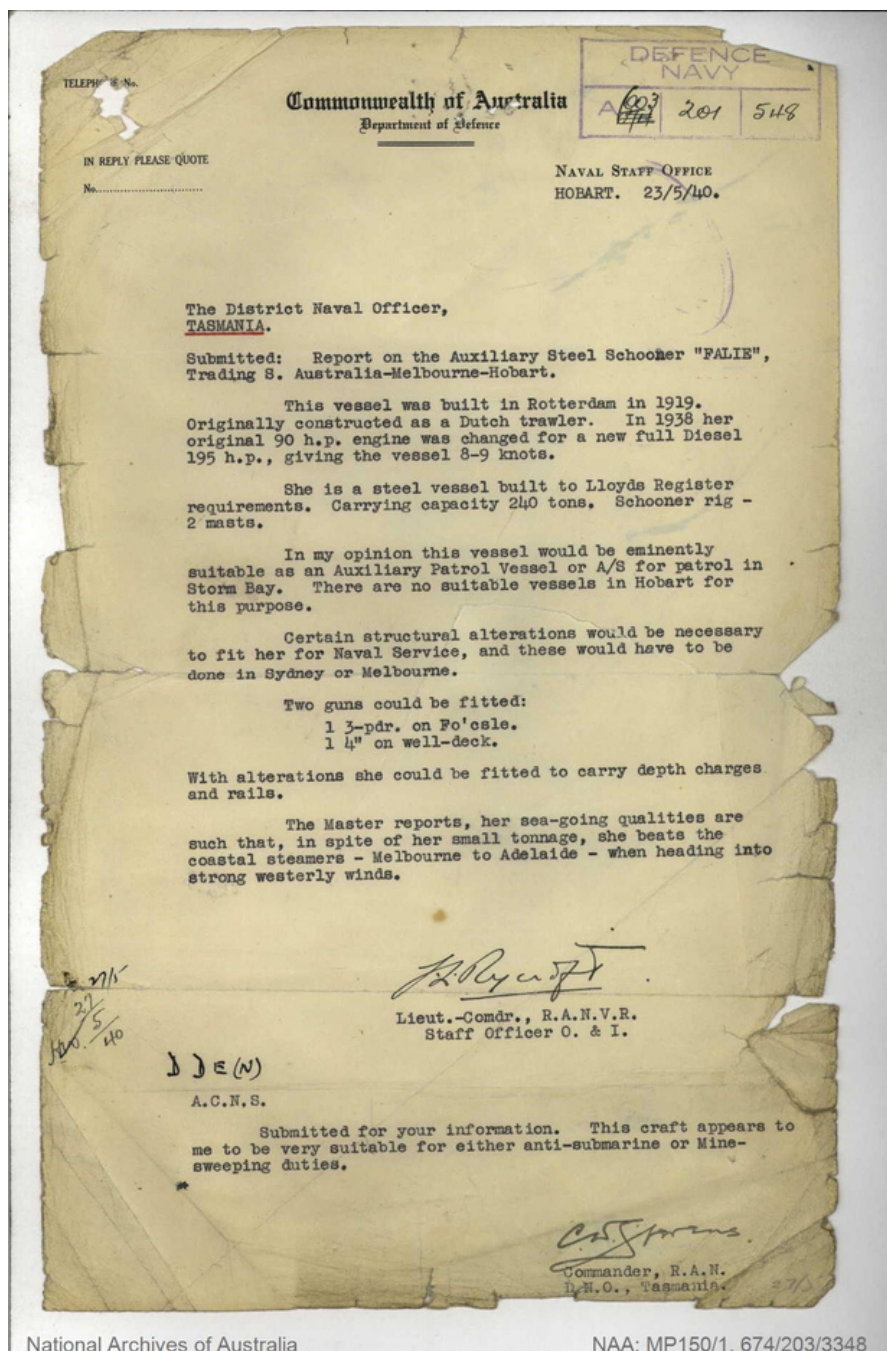
In July 1940 the Falie was requisitioned by the Navy Department, for use during the war.

At the beginning of World War II, Falie and her crew were still continuing their regular work of delivering goods between Launceston and Port Lincoln, amongst other ports.

Ten months into the war, the Navy notified the owners of the Falie by mail that she was to be delivered to Garden Island, Sydney, for use in the war effort. The owners were compensated for the Falie's requisition, but we can only wonder how they must have felt; perhaps concern for their vessel, or pride in their support for the war effort.

Known throughout the war at the H.M.A.S Falie, her first duty was as Examination Ship in Sydney Harbour. Positioned outside the boom gate and anti-submarine netting that stretched across the entrance to the Harbour, The crew on board the Falie would check identification on any approaching vessels before they would be granted access.

While in this role as Examination ship, the Falie and her crew had a near miss in 1942.



ATTACK ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

While stationed at the Harbour entrance at 11pm on 31 May, 1942, *Falie's* crew reported 'feeling three distinct bumps on the starboard side'. Soon after, a fleet of three Japanese 'midget' submarines were spotted attempting to attack ships in the Harbour.

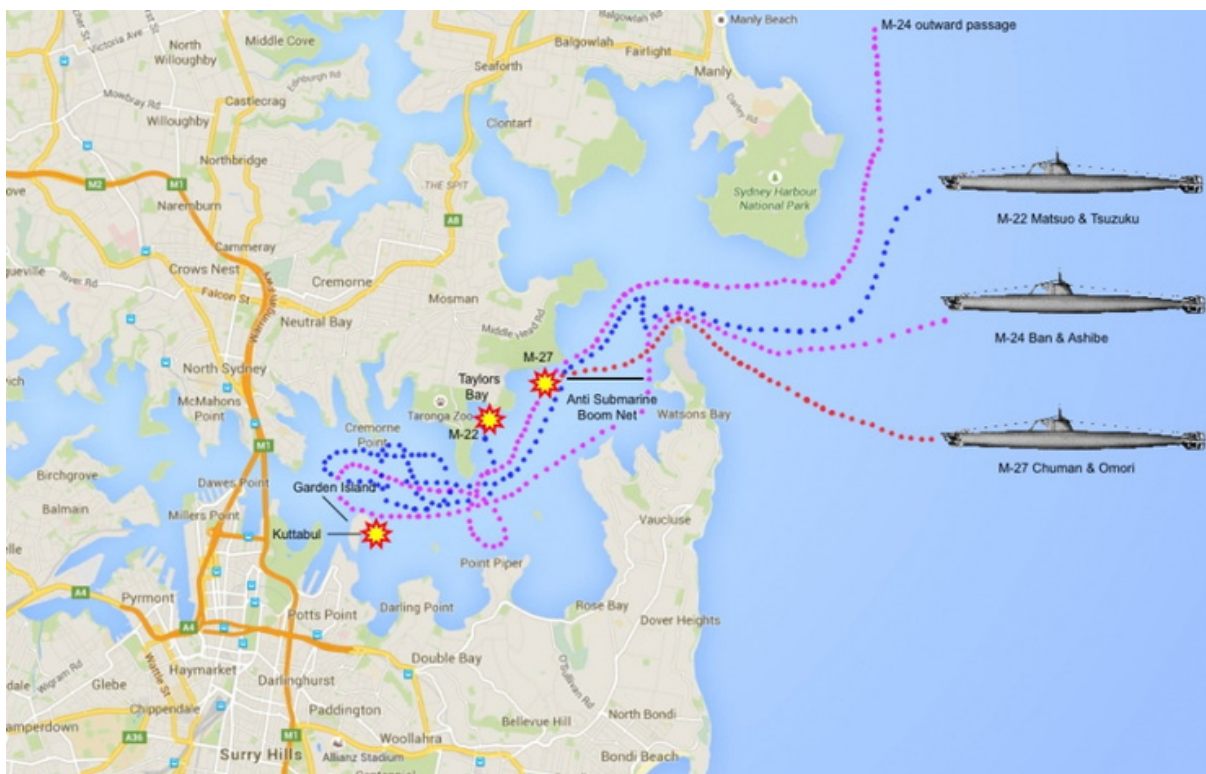
These small two-man submarines were armed with torpedoes, and fitted with a system of cable and saw-toothed cutters to dispel the anti-submarine netting.

Despite this attachment, one of the subs became entangled in the net, and was spotted thrashing back and forth by a Maritime Services Board watchman.

The watchman and a patrol boat inspected cautiously, unsure whether the object was a mine or submarine. Soon after their realisation of the significance of this vessel, the Japanese officers deployed a charge to self-destruct.

It would have been clear they had been spotted and perhaps hoped some enemy vessel may be close enough to share their fate.

The explosion from the self-destroyed sub was seen as an orange-coloured flash, a roar, and a spurt of water forty-feet high. It shook nearby suburbs, and finally convinced the authorities there was substance to the reports of strange happenings in the harbour.



ATTACK ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

Eight short minutes later, the *Lauriana*, another patrol vessel spotted the conning tower of a second 'midget' submarine in the inner North Head of the harbour. The anti-submarine vessel on duty was called over, which was the H.M.A.S. *Yandra*, a South Australian steamship that had also been requisitioned for the war. The *Yandra* attempted to ram the sub and then dropped depth charges that lifted the 60-ton *Lauriana* right out of the water. The 'midget' sub disappeared.

Meanwhile, the third Japanese 'midget' sub had been spotted near Garden Island and fired on by the *Chicago*.

Almost two hours later the submarine fired two torpedoes at the *Chicago*. Aim was poor due to the wind and lack of light making it look like the vessel was moving forward. One torpedo glanced off the ship without exploding.

The other narrowly missed the cruiser, passed beneath a nearby Dutch submarine, and exploded against a harbour wall, below the naval depot ship the H.M.A.S. *Kuttabul*, sinking her and killing nineteen seafarers on board.

The sub was spotted once more during the night but disappeared forever.

It took several days to recover and account for the 21 people that were killed while aboard the *Kuttabul*. Later, on 3 June 1942 Rear Admiral GC Muirhead-Gould, DSC, Flag Officer-in-Charge Sydney, and over 200 Navy personnel attended a burial service conducted with naval honours for those killed in the attack.

On 1 January 1943, the naval depot at Garden Island was commissioned as HMAS *Kuttabul* to further perpetuate the memory of the 21 men killed during the attack.



ATTACK ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

The second 'midget' sub had not in fact been destroyed by the *Yandra's* charge, and had moved into the harbour.

While in place, the Japanese officer discovered that his torpedoes would not fire due to the depth-charge damage. Now with no defences, he tried to escape, but was sighted and attacked in Taylor's Bay by the channel patrol boat. When the craft was recovered, it was found the crew had taken their own lives.

Later, the Royal Australian Navy also recognised the bravery of the four Japanese submariners recovered from the two submarines destroyed in the harbour.

They too were accorded a funeral with naval honours at Rookwood Cemetery, a gesture much appreciated in later years by the Japanese. The cremated remains of the submariners were returned to Japan two months later as part of an arranged diplomatic exchange.

The attack on Australia's largest port was a significant event during the war, and not the last.

It was a sharp wake-up call for many Australians for whom the war seemed distant.

Early on this fateful evening *Falie* and her crew had felt three bumps and signalled the incident. It is suspected the bumps were caused by the second sub passing under her hull, which was sighted two minutes afterward.



THE H.M.A.S. FALIE

Following this period as examination ship in Sydney harbour, in 1943 the H.M.A.S. *Falie* became a stores ship to support the war in the New Guinea and Pacific region. She would be responsible for more tasks, journeys and repairs, and manoeuvring troops in darkness behind enemy lines. She had significant capacity to store supplies, provisions sufficient for ninety days, and was now fitted with a small number

of anti-aircraft and machine guns. The vessel was modified with gun mountings, and the temporary removal of her mainmast. Over the following six months the *Falie* would average a trip a month, bringing supplies to Port Moresby and other ports around Papua New Guinea, followed by more tasks, journeys and repairs.

The war ended in September 1945, and after some final repairs and refitting, the *Falie* was returned to her home in South Australia two months later. She was greeted on arrival by a group of onlookers, one of whom was the *Falie's* agent Mr Fricker, emotionally welcoming her home.



After reading about the *Falie's* adventures during WWII, discuss and respond to the questions below.

1. When did WWII begin and end? When was the *Falie* requisitioned for duty?
2. What does the acronym H.M.A.S. stand for?
3. Define a meaning for the word 'requisitioned'. How is it similar or different to 'conscription'?
4. What do you think some of the impacts of the *Falie* being requisitioned would have been? (Hint: think about what the *Falie* was used for before the war)
5. What adaptations were made to the *Falie*, for use during the war? What other additions or adaptations do you think the vessel would have needed during this time?
6. Why was *Falie* sent to New Guinea? What were Australians doing there during wartime?

DEPTH STUDY

YEAR 10 HISTORY: THE MODERN WORLD AND AUSTRALIA



World War II (1939-45)

Students investigate wartime experiences through a study of World War II in depth. This includes a study of the causes, events, outcome and broader impact of the conflict as an episode in world history, and the nature of Australia's involvement.

Part of this study includes a focus on the impact of World War II, with a particular emphasis on the Australian home front, including the changing roles of women and use of wartime government controls (conscription, manpower controls, rationing and censorship) (ACDSEH109)

Working in small groups, students should use the story of the requisitioned H.M.A.S. *Falie* as inspiration to explore the impact of WWII on South Australians.

Students should choose a specific region of South Australia as a focus for this task (e.g. Kangaroo Island, Eyre Peninsula, Flinders Ranges and the Outback, Barossa Valley, Adelaide city). They are encouraged to find primary sources to support research for this report, and may like to interview community members or connect with local history groups.

Students may use the following questions to guide their research:

- The requisition of vessels such as the *Falie* meant transportation of goods between various cities, towns and islands would have become more difficult. What kind of goods were in short supply? Which regions struggled, or thrived, with this change in the supply chain?
- Who and what could be subject to conscription or requisition by the Australian government? Could it be avoided? What was the public attitude toward conscription of men to join the war in this time?
- Did the South Australian community take any defensive measures to protect itself during wartime? For example, installing air raid sirens or performing drills?

ACTIVITY: DIARY ENTRY OR LETTER



Your task is to write a diary entry or letter from the perspective of someone that witnessed the attempted attack on ships in Sydney harbour in May 1942.

Imagine you are a crew member on board the H.M.A.S. *Falie* while in her position as examination ship in Sydney Harbour.

- What did you see, feel and hear that night?
- How did other people around you react?
- How are you feeling afterwards?
- Has this incident made you think about Australia's role in the war differently?

THE CREW

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE FOR THE FALIE'S CREW DURING WWII?

PEOPLE

As noted by Alastair Templeton in his Wartime Recollections, 'informality was the keynote in *Falie*. Everyone on board worked well and did so because of some kind of 'family' pride. Moreover, it was always possible to get a good laugh out of people and situations.'

CLOTHING

The *Falie* and her crew didn't often wear uniform, as they were disguised as a fishing boat, so as not to draw suspicion from potential enemy vessels. The air of informality also meant the crew dressed comfortably for the tropical climate. Alastair Templeton described how the usual dress for the crew and Captain Charley Wood alike, was U.S. Army underpants.

RECREATION

When not at sea, the favourite recreation was swimming. One of the crew had been a surf lifesaver and made a point of improving everyone's swimming skills. The crew would go for long leisurely swims, or play water polo with goals rigged alongside the ship. If they had spare time, the crew would occasionally stop at an uninhabited island and explore the jungle, collecting coconuts. They would even go 'fishing' with the aid of a hand grenade and collect the fish for supper!

FOOD

Alastair Templeton shared how the *Falie* crew got some treats when ferrying a group of U.S. Navy men: American ice cream mix. Alastair said 'the U.S. sailors did not move without their ice cream.' This kind of luxury was certainly not standard on the Australian vessel. There was only an old domestic fridge on board, so fresh meat or food could not be stored for much more than 48 hours. The crew would often eat tinned meat and vegetable stew, when not able to access fresh supplies. Alastair noted *Falie*'s cook, Elliot, 'was one of those excellent people who was positively unhappy if he was not creating good meals for everybody. The things he did with our rations were superb and he rejoiced in the nickname of 'The Opener'.'



Front. A/B. 'DINGA' Jones
Sitting A/B. Mick Joyce, Cook Jim Elliot, Behind Cook
A/B. Pat Blake, Lt. L. Just, A/B. Blackwood.
Standing L to R. Stoker (not known) A/B. (N.K.)
A/B. (N.K.) A/B. Ted Neal, A/B. (N.K.) A/B. (N.K.)
E. R. A. L. Summers, Lt. Col. C. Wood, 1st Lt. (N.K.)
Rear. A/B. E. Middle, Sig. L. Marshall.

ACTIVITY: OBJECT-BASED SOURCE ANALYSIS

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM HISTORICAL OBJECTS?



Gilt and enamel Merchant Navy tie pin

This tie pin was worn by Australian merchant seaman Valwyn Gordon Fletcher, who sailed on British, Norwegian, Swedish, Belgian, Panamanian and Danish vessels during the Second World War. Mr Fletcher's ships included the *Lidvard* and the *Kookaburra*, but he was primarily associated with the 7000 ton Norwegian steamer *Tai Yang*. His father George Fletcher served in the Australian Army during both the First and Second World Wars.



Merchant Navy pennant

Associated with Able Seaman Alan Wickow, Merchant Navy.

DELVE DEEPER

1. The objects above are classified as *heraldry* in the Australian War Memorial collection. What does heraldry mean, in relation to the military? Try to find a definition. What other objects may be considered heraldry?
2. Look at the Merchant Navy crest. What do the crown and loop of rope symbolise? What colours are featured, and what do they represent?
3. How is Merchant Navy different from Defence Navy? What are the responsibilities of each navy? Where do you think the H.M.A.S. *Falke* fit in?
4. What do you think is the purpose of these objects?
5. Why might a museum collect such objects?
6. Why do you think there is more information available for the tie pin, than the pennant?

REFERENCES

Information and images have been gathered from the sources below, and from the Falie group's own collection.

FALIE: Portrait of a Coastal Trader. Published by Falie Project Limited, 1985. Text by Robert Thomas Sexton and Gordon Samuel Pickhaver. (Includes Alastair Templeton's Wartime Recollections)

South Australian History Network: Historic Ketch Falie.
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Japanese Midget Submarine Attack on Sydney Harbour.
Article by John Perryman.
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Australian War Memorial
awm.gov.au

