

= Teddy Sheean =

Edward " Teddy " Sheean (28 December 1923 ? 1 December 1942) was a sailor in the Royal Australian Navy during the Second World War . Born in Tasmania , Sheean was employed as a farm labourer when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve in April 1941 . Following training at HMAS Derwent and the Flinders Naval Depot , he was posted to Sydney , where he joined the newly commissioned corvette HMAS Armidale in June 1942 . Sheean served aboard Armidale as she initially took part in escort duties along the eastern Australian coast and in New Guinea waters , before he transferred with the ship to Darwin in October , where Armidale was tasked with assisting Australian operations in Timor .

On 29 November 1942 , Armidale set out for an operation to Betano , Timor , along with HMAS Castlemaine . The two ships were attacked by Japanese aircraft along the way , and were subsequently late in arriving at their destination , missing a planned rendezvous with HMAS Kuru . While returning to Darwin , the pair encountered Kuru south of Betano and it was decided by Castlemaine 's commanding officer ? as the senior officer ? that Armidale and Kuru should voyage to Betano . The two ships undertook different routes to Betano , during which both vessels came under aerial assault .

During a subsequent confrontation with thirteen Japanese aircraft on 1 December , Armidale was struck by two torpedoes and a bomb , and began to sink ; the order to abandon ship was given . After helping to free a life @-@ raft , Sheean was wounded by two bullets . He made his way to the aft Oerlikon 20 mm cannon and began to fire on the Japanese aircraft to protect those in the water . Sheean managed to shoot down one of the Japanese bombers , but was killed when Armidale sank . Many of the survivors credited their lives to Sheean and he was posthumously mentioned in despatches . In 1999 , the submarine HMAS Sheean was named in his honour , and efforts have been made to have Sheean belatedly awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia .

= = Early life = =

Sheean was born in Lower Barrington , Tasmania , on 28 December 1923 , the youngest of fourteen children to James Sheean , a labourer , and his wife Mary Jane (née Broomhall) . Soon after Edward 's birth , the Sheean family moved to Latrobe , where he was educated at the local Catholic school . Following the completion of his schooling , Sheean gained casual employment working on several farms in the vicinity of Latrobe and Merseylea .

= = Second World War = =

On 21 April 1941 , Sheean enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve . He had followed in the steps of five of his brothers who had already joined the armed forces ? four in the Australian Army and one in the Royal Australian Navy ? for service in the Second World War . Sheean was initially posted to the Hobart naval base HMAS Derwent for training , where he gained a period of seafaring experience aboard HMAS Coombar , an auxiliary minesweeper , from 17 ? 31 December . On finishing his initial training course , Sheean was attached to the Flinders Naval Depot in Western Port , Victoria , for further instruction from 11 February 1942 .

Completing his course at the Flinders Naval Depot , Sheean was posted to the Garden Island naval base HMAS Penguin in Sydney Harbour on 11 May . During his time with Penguin , he was billeted on the requisitioned ferry HMAS Kuttabul . Granted a period of leave later that month , he returned home to Tasmania . While he was on leave , Japanese midget submarines attacked Sydney Harbour and sank Kuttabul on 31 May . Returning to Sydney eleven days after the raid , Sheean joined the newly commissioned Bathurst @-@ class corvette HMAS Armidale as an Oerlikon anti @-@ aircraft gun loader .

Leaving Sydney Harbour in late August 1942 , Sheean served aboard Armidale as she carried out " relatively uneventful " escort duties along the North Queensland , Port Moresby and Milne Bay coasts over the subsequent two months . During October , Armidale was ordered to Darwin . Setting

sail , she arrived on 7 November and was detailed to assist in the Australian operations in Timor .

= = = Sinking of Armidale = = =

On 24 November 1942 , the evacuation of the 2 / 2nd Australian Independent Company from Timor along with 150 Portuguese people was approved by the Allied Land Forces Headquarters . In response to this , Commodore Cuthbert Pope , the Naval Officer @-@ in @-@ Charge Darwin , organised an operation utilizing HMA Ships Kuru , Castlemaine and Armidale . The operation was to involve the three ships undertaking two voyages each , the first to take place on the night of 30 November / 1 December and involve a trip to Betano , Timor , in which the ships were to land 50 fresh Dutch guerrillas in the area along with supplies , and simultaneously withdraw 190 Dutch soldiers as well as the 150 Portuguese refugees . The second excursion was to be carried out on the night of 4 / 5 December , and entail the extraction of the 2 / 2nd Independent Company .

At 22 : 30 on 28 November 1942 , Kuru set sail for Betano . Kuru was scheduled to arrive at approximately 20 : 30 on 30 November , where she was to unload the supplies on board and embark the Portuguese refugees , which were to transfer to Castlemaine once she arrived along with Armidale two hours later . However , Kuru hit bad weather during her voyage and arrived at Betano three hours late . Armidale ? with two Dutch Army officers , 61 Netherlands East Indies troops and three Australian Army soldiers aboard ? and Castlemaine set sail from Darwin at 01 : 42 on 29 November . At approximately 09 : 15 on 30 November , while 190 kilometres (100 nmi) from their destination , the two ships were attacked by a single Japanese aircraft . Having missed with several bombs , the aircraft flew off in the direction of Timor an hour later . Fearing that their discovery by this aircraft would jeopardise the mission , Castlemaine 's Commanding Officer , Lieutenant Commander Philip Sullivan , ordered evasive action and signalled Darwin for further orders . A signal returned decreeing that the operation must proceed and a party of fighter aircraft were to be dispatched as protective cover .

Continuing in their voyage , Armidale and Castlemaine were attacked twice more by air , each time by a formation of bombers that bombed and machine @-@ gunned the ships . Despite this , neither ship suffered damage or casualties and both arrived at Betano at 03 : 30 on 1 December , however there was no sign of Kuru . Having made sure that Kuru was not in the bay , the two corvettes decided to abandon the mission and sailed south in order to return to Darwin . Kuru 's commanding officer , Lieutenant John Grant , had loaded 77 of the Portuguese refugees as well as one critically injured Australian soldier on board the ship and set sail at around 02 : 00 on 1 December from Betano , fearing he had missed the rendezvous with the other two ships . While approximately 110 kilometres (59 nmi) south of Betano , Armidale and Castlemaine sighted Kuru , and the three ships closed by dawn .

Following the transfer of passengers from Kuru to Castlemaine , the former received orders that she was to return to Betano that evening " and do the job tonight " . At this time , a formation of Japanese aircraft was spotted and Kuru sailed for cover . Assessing the situation , Sullivan ? as senior officer ? decided that Armidale would accompany Kuru in order to unload the former 's passengers at Betano while Castlemaine returned to Darwin . Armidale and Kuru assumed separate routes to Betano , and at approximately 13 : 00 Armidale was attacked by a party of five Japanese bombers ; the explosives , however , fell wide of their target . At 13 : 58 , Armidale reported that she was under attack from " nine bombers , four fighters " over the Arafura Sea .

Armidale undertook evasive action , manoeuvring frantically to avoid the aerial attack . However , at 15 : 15 , the vessel was struck by two air @-@ launched torpedoes , one hitting her port side and the other colliding with the engineering spaces , before a bomb exploded aft . Armidale listed sharply to port at this stage , and the order was given to abandon ship . As the crew leapt into the sea , they were strafed by the attacking aircraft . Sheean ? after assisting to free a life @-@ raft ? was hit by two bullets from one of the aircraft , wounding him in the chest and back . Scrambling across the deck , he strapped himself into the aft Oerlikon 20 mm cannon and began shooting at the fighters in an effort to protect some of the sailors already in the sea . Subject to the fire from Sheean 's Oerlikon , the Japanese aircraft were kept at bay and were unable to effectively strafe those in the

water .

With Armidale rapidly sinking , Sheean continued to fire and managed to shoot down one of the Japanese bombers . He damaged a further two aircraft before Armidale 's stern was engulfed by the sea . Despite this , Sheean maintained his fire as the water rose above his feet , and remained firing as he " disappeared beneath the waves " . Sheean 's crewmates later testified to witnessing tracers rising from beneath the water 's surface as Sheean was dragged under .

= = Legacy = =

Sheean was among 100 of the original 149 people on board HMAS Armidale at the time of the attack who were killed during the ship 's sinking and its aftermath . Many of the survivors attributed their lives to Sheean . For his " bravery and devotion when HMAS Armidale was lost " , Sheean 's actions were recognised with a posthumous Mention in Despatches , awarded on the recommendation of Armidale 's commanding officer , Lieutenant Commander David Richards , and announced in a supplement to The London Gazette on 29 June 1943 . However , many hold the opinion that Sheean 's gallantry , devotion to duty and self @-@ sacrifice were worthy of the Victoria Cross , with author Robert Macklin stating his " actions were in the highest tradition of the Australian military " and comparing them with those of Vietnam War Victoria Cross recipient Kevin Wheatley .

On 1 May 1999 , the submarine HMAS Sheean was launched by Ivy Hayes ? sister of Teddy Sheean ? named in the ordinary seaman 's honour . Sheean was subsequently commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy on 23 February 2001 , and was the first Royal Australian Navy vessel to be named in honour of a naval rating . Carrying the motto " Fight On " , the vessel was one of six Collins @-@ class submarines entered into service . Later that year , a Bill was introduced into the Australian Senate to have three awards of the Victoria Cross for Australia made , one being to Sheean . The Bill came as part of a campaign by the then @-@ leader of the Australian Labor Party and Federal Opposition , Kim Beazley , to secure more rights for war veterans . However , it was subsequently rejected by the Liberal Government . A painting depicting Sheean 's final moments is held by the Australian War Memorial . His home town of Latrobe commemorates his life via the Sheean Walk and Teddy Sheean Memorial , opened in 1992 . In 2003 , the Australian Navy Cadets established a training ship at Tewantin , Queensland , called NTS Sheean in his honour .

= = = Valour Inquiry = = =

In 2011 , at the direction of the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence , Senator David Feeney , the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal opened an inquiry into thirteen cases of unresolved recognition for past acts of gallantry . Among the group were eleven naval personnel , including Sheean . Known as the ' Valour Inquiry ' , the Tribunal was directed to determine if the individuals were unduly overlooked for recognition at the time of their actions and , if so , whether retrospective awards were appropriate . The inquiry lasted two years and witnessed 166 written submissions from the public , before the Tribunal reported its findings in January 2013 . In the case of Sheean , the Tribunal found that there was no manifest injustice with the award of the Mention in Despatches , and that there was no new evidence to support the reconsideration of Sheean for a Victoria Cross for Australia . If Sheean had lived , they reported , he might have been recommended for either the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal or the Distinguished Service Medal instead , but neither medal could be awarded posthumously in 1942 . The Tribunal did recommend that the RAN perpetuate the use of Sheean as the name of a major combatant vessel .