

HMAS SYDNEY Virtual Memorial

**Laurence Thomas WOOLMORE,
Ordnance Artificer Cl. 2
Lost in action, HMAS Sydney II
on 19 November 1941**

Laurence Thomas (Laurie) Woolmore was born in Essex, England on 1 August 1910. His father, Battery Sergeant Major (Warrant Officer) William Woolmore, Royal Field Artillery, was mortally wounded in action at the first battle of Ypres in 1914, leaving Laurie's mother, Margaret Woolmore, with seven children to care for. When the war ended she migrated to Australia with her young family, arriving on the liner '*CERAMIC*' in 1919.



The family settled in Brighton, Victoria, and Margaret was remarried to a Royal Australian Navy Engine Room Artificer, Arthur Kenrick Johnson (AKA Raphael G. Hargraves) who had been an early under age enlistment in



Laurie Woolmore

the Navy (hence the name change) and had served on *HMAS SYDNEY I* during the First World War. He was aboard during the action with the German cruiser, *SMS EMDEN*, which was destroyed by '*SYDNEY*' on Keeling Island, north west of Australia on 9 November 1914.

Arthur Johnson (Hargraves) started a naval tradition in the family. First, Laurence Woolmore's eldest brother, Cyril James, entered the RAN in June 1921, aged 17½ and qualified as an Electrical Artificer, reaching Class 2 rank. He was followed on 30 October 1929 by Laurie who was then 19 years of age and started as an Ordnance Artificer Cl. 5

Laurence Thomas Woolmore qualified as an Ordnance Artificer at the Gunnery School, Flinders Naval Depot and his first seagoing service was aboard the heavy cruiser *HMAS CANBERRA* (sunk by Japanese at Guadalcanal on 9 August 1942) which he joined on 31 October 1931. With the exception of a brief spell back at Flinders he continued serving on the *CANBERRA* until 25 February 1935 when he was stationed at Jervis Bay in NSW for 2 months before returning to Flinders Naval Depot. He then sailed to England on the P&O liner S.S. Maloja to join the commissioning crew for the new 6" gunned cruiser, *HMAS SYDNEY II* and his record shows him at London Depot from 7 May 1935 to 16 June 1935, *HMS VICTORY II* from 17 June 1935 to 23 September 1935 when he officially joined the *HMAS SYDNEY*.



Taken on the
Bridge of
HMAS Sydney
Alexandria
Egypt.
To My Darling
Mother
With Lots of Love
Laurie
XXXXXX



Don & Laurie Woolmore

The ship left Portsmouth for Australia on 29 October 1935 but, due to the Abyssinian crisis, she was ordered to join the 2nd Cruiser Squadron at Gibraltar and later the 1st Cruiser Squadron at Alexandria from where Laurie sent home the above photo. They finally sailed through Suez for Australia on 14 July 1936 in company with *HMAS AUSTRALIA*. Laurie continued to serve on the 'SYDNEY' until 13 April 1937 when he was transferred to Flinders Naval Depot. He returned to the *HMAS SYDNEY* on 4 November 1937. This period of almost seven months in Victoria enabled Laurie Woolmore to spend time with his family, especially his two children, Laurie (later known as Graham) and

Lorraine. At this time the family occupied the 'Manor House' in Manor Street, Brighton Beach.

Laurie continued to serve as Ordnance Artificer Grade II on the *SYDNEY* right through to and including her distinguished war service in the Mediterranean in 1940 and 1941. Captain John A. Collins took over command of the ship shortly after the start of WW2. When *HMAS SYDNEY* arrived back in Australia on 11 August 1941 about a third of the ships company, including Captain Collins, was replaced but Laurie Woolmore remained with the ship which had been his home from the time it was commissioned.

He was aboard Sydney during the fateful action with the German raider *HSK KORMORAN* off the coast of Western Australia on 19 November 1941 which resulted in the sinking of both ships. Laurie Woolmore was tragically lost at sea along with the rest of the ships company. He had shortly before written home to say that he had on board with him the 21st birthday present for his youngest sister, Audrey. Laurie's son, Graham, later followed his father into the RAN and served on the *HMAS AUSTRALIA II* and the *HMAS TOBRUK*.



*Adding poppies to the wall. Geraldton Memorial Service for HMAS SYDNEY II
19 November 2008*







1950

Taken on the
Bridge of
WILLIAM Sydney
Alexandria
Egypt.

To My Darling
Mother
With Lots of Love
Laurie

X X X X X



Handshake
1952