

**THROWAWAY NAVIES: NAVAL TRANSITION, ABANDONMENT
PROCESSES, AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AUSTRALASIA'S TORPEDO
BOAT DEFENCES, 1884-1924**



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DECLARATION OF CANDIDATE

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed,

James W. Hunter, III

08/11/2012

DECLARATION OF SUPERVISOR

I believe that this thesis is properly presented, conforms to the specifications of thesis presentation at Flinders University and is *prima facie* worthy of examination.

Signed,

Dr. Jennifer McKinnon

08/11/2012

DEDICATION

This thesis is respectfully dedicated to the victims of the earthquakes that struck the Canterbury region of New Zealand on 4 September 2010 and 22 February 2011, as well as those killed or otherwise affected by the flooding in Queensland, Australia in December 2010 and January 2011.

ABSTRACT

Between 1884 and 1924, a total of fourteen torpedo boats served in the naval defence of Australia and New Zealand. Australasia's colonial governments purchased these vessels as a consequence of fears of seaborne invasion by Imperial Russia and other foreign powers. Although New Zealand's torpedo boats were decommissioned by 1900, the Australian examples remained in active service up to and beyond consolidation of the colonial naval forces into a national navy in 1911. All were eventually put up for sale, but most failed to find buyers, were ultimately stripped and abandoned, and not reused in either a military or non-military capacity.

Each torpedo vessel was assigned to a facility that served as its base of operations. In many cases, the infrastructure necessary to house, equip, arm, and maintain these boats was simply integrated within preexisting defensive installations known as submarine mining stations; however, some torpedo boats were provided with their own purpose-built facilities, while others were assigned no form of support infrastructure at all. Like the vessels they once supported, the vast majority of torpedo boat stations were decommissioned after the turn-of-the-century, salvaged of their reusable components, and the sites upon which they were located abandoned and never again used for military purposes.

Utilising archaeological and archival data derived from eight Australasian torpedo boat defensive sites, this thesis identifies disposal and abandonment patterns that characterise the system in its entirety, and illuminates historical and cultural factors that influenced these trends. It integrates and applies two scholarly frameworks—the 'archaeology of the event' and culturally influenced signatures of archaeological site formation—as a means to identify, analyse, and interpret the materiality of discard and

abandonment of these sites across a range of temporal and social scales. These range from centuries long, pan-geographic historical processes to isolated events resulting from individual human actions.

Through its interpretation of material culture associated with these early torpedo boat defences, this study seeks to identify signatures and patterns specific to disposal and abandonment of military matériel. It simultaneously creates a mechanism by which larger historical processes and themes of cultural continuity and change relevant to the military past of Australia and New Zealand may be explored. The research contained herein also reveals evidence of human behaviour and decision-making in these discard and abandonment practices, thereby contributing to an overall understanding of the role and significance of individual agency in the history and cultural practices of Australasia's military past.

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documentary sources that I utilised were consulted at his suggestion. Ross graciously invited me to co-author an article about *Mosquito* that was recently published in *Australian Warship* magazine, and continues to encourage me to submit material to various peer-reviewed historical journals and periodicals associated with the Royal Australian Navy.

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