

**Honour Denied**  
**Teddy Sheean A Tasmanian Hero**  
**And other brave warriors of the Royal Australian Navy**

Review by John Baxter, via Melbourne bookstore Hylands

It's quite probable that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of feats of heroism and gallantry during action in wartime that go unobserved, unreported or fail to reach the top of the chain where final acceptance and appropriate 'rewards' are promulgated and awarded. The basis of this book by Dr Tom Lewis OAM concerns just such actions.

It covers three such exploits. The first is that of Ordinary Seaman Ted Sheean, who died at his post, a 20 mm Oerlikon, defending his ship and shipmates in December 1942. The fact that this and other Royal Australian Navy actions seem to have been 'overlooked' to some extent and the actual procedure for the award system applicable to the RAN during World War Two adds more grist to the mill.

Without giving the game away, I found it an entertaining and informative read. Its revelations and indeed questions make for a very interesting debate. But to give you some information, this publication basically covers the service life of Teddy Sheean, his entry into the RAN, early training, posting and service in northern waters on board the Bathurst class corvette HMAS *Armidale*.

Much earlier, in March 1942, another RAN action took place in waters north of Darwin involving the sloop HMAS *Yarra* commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Robert Rankin. The action and result is recounted within this book and despite very heroic action, certainly when compared to a similar and earlier Royal Navy action, the resulting awards are remarkably different! Then there's the other remarkable story about Captain Hec Waller and the light cruiser HMAS *Perth* in the Battle of the Java Sea.

Dr Lewis' book of 317 pages, tells us that no Victoria Cross has ever been awarded to a member of the Royal Australian Navy, despite more than one heroic example being remarkably similar to that of the Royal Navy where a VC was awarded and the US Navy where a Medal of Honor was awarded. It's well illustrated with colour and black and white photos, colour illustrations and maps and profiles by Peter Ingman, it's an intriguing approach to a topical question which has both its supporters and non-supporters – I won't actually say detractors. It's really left to the reader to determine which side of the question you favour.

This is a great book for any Australian military enthusiast at a very competitive price. It is available from Hyland's Bookshop in Melbourne [hylandsbookshop@gmail.com](mailto:hylandsbookshop@gmail.com) (03 9654 7448) or Avonmore Books, Kent Town, South Australia [shop@avonmorebooks.com.au](mailto:shop@avonmorebooks.com.au) for about \$35. I believe it to be excellent value.

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