

Obituary

Commander Mark Hudson, RAN (ret'd) 1955 – 2003

On 31 January 2003 Commander Mark Hudson was killed tragically in a railway accident on his way to work at the Australian Hydrographic Office. He leaves a wife and two teenage daughters.



Mark Hudson

Mark Hudson grew up in Adelaide, one of two brothers. In 1970, at the age of 15, Mark left his family for a life of adventure in the Royal Australian Navy. So began a love affair with the Navy that would provide a career in uniform spanning 31 years. It began at the Royal Australian Naval College where Mark thrived undergoing academic studies and military training – so much so that he was awarded the prestigious Queen's Medal upon his graduation.

As a junior officer he travelled the world in a variety of ships, all the while honing his skills and demonstrating his passion for his naval career. He was introduced to hydrographic surveying during service as a lieutenant in HMAS Flinders and soon realised that he had found his niche in a specialism that might not be as glamorous as other elements of the Navy, yet offered its own rich rewards. He was attracted to a profession that calls for navigation skills, a meticulous attitude, and a focus on quality. It also offered an element of excitement, due to the remote and poorly charted waters in which Australian hydrographic ships operate.

Mark applied himself to his challenging

new duties with zeal and commitment. Serving in HMAS *Moresby* and HMAS *Cook*, he built a reputation as a skilful surveyor and seaman. During this period, which encompassed the late 1970's and early 1980's, many believed that Mark was actually married to the Navy, such was his

devotion to his duties. But this outlook was at least partially modified in 1982, when he was appointed in command of the Fijian surveying ship, HMFS *Ruve*. It was in Suva where Mark met his wife, Mere, and found a new love; one that would displace the Navy as his number one priority.

After his marriage, Mark and Mere adopted the nomadic lifestyle that is typical of Navy families – it included stints in the UK, Cairns, Perth, Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide. Career highlights for Mark during this period were command of two more survey ships, HMAS *Betano* and HMAS *Moresby*, and his important role in the project team that developed the world-renowned Laser Airborne Depth Sounder (LADS). Other profound personal highlights were the births of his two daughters. This was followed by key senior appointments in the Australian Hydrographic Office, especially as the Director of Hydrographic Operations, where he was responsible for the chart production output of the Hydrographic Service as well as administering the survey efforts of the Navy's surveying

ships and units. In this role he was a staunch advocate for naval hydrography, and a compassionate leader of his civilian and military staff. He also served two terms (1998-2001) on the Australian Hydrographic Surveyors Accreditation Panel.

In early 2001, after three decades in uniform, Mark retired from the Navy – having epitomised the hydrographer's motto: 'No day too long, no task too arduous'. But he was reluctant to leave the Navy family altogether. So, his new workplace was literally only five metres from his old office. He rejoined the Hydrographic Service the next day as a public servant, once again in a demanding role in which he excelled. Mark swapped his uniform and cap for a business suit, and continued to be involved in every aspect of hydrographic service activities. His extensive knowledge, proactive attitude and unwavering loyalty providing yet more valuable service as the newly created Hydrographic

Service Business Manager – responsible for establishing the organisation and reporting structures required to support the Force Element Group arrangements under which the Hydrographic Service now operates. It was on his way to another day as Business Manager that tragedy struck.

Mark will be remembered as an unpretentious, yet determined and self confident person, a quiet achiever, and a man who earned the unstinting respect of his colleagues, both in the Royal Australian Navy and the international community. In Mark's case the term 'officer and gentlemen' is truly apt – he was a consummate naval officer, a stalwart of the Australian Hydrographic Service and a true gentleman in every sense.

Vale, Mark Hudson.

BJK