

Obituary

Lieutenant Commander C B Dillon VRD LLB RANR (Rtd)

Abridged version of a eulogy delivered by Captain L M Hinchliffe DSC RAN (Rtd) at HMAS Watson in the Chapel of St George the Martyr on Tuesday 28 July 1992.

Clive Barker Dillon, better known to all and sundry as "Dickie" Dillon, was born on 24 February 1913. He was the eldest of three children and was educated at North Sydney High School, Sydney Grammar School and the University of Sydney where he read law, graduating in 1935, and being admitted to the Bar in May 1937.

Between graduation and admission he was articled to Faithfull, Murdoch and Baldock and was associate to both Mr Justice Owen and Mr Justice Miller Stephen, both of the Supreme Court of NSW, and then commenced practice on his own. His legal career continued after WWII, when being a Naval Reserve Officer he had the inevitable break, until his death last week. He was in fact the senior junior barrister (ie, one who had not taken silk), and indeed was the longest serving of all members practising at the Bar.

His advocacy suffered from a lack of aggression, and this was no doubt due to his gentle manner of dealing with all people - a manner which was not always appropriate when dealing with some of them.

I have never heard anyone denigrate Dick in the fifty years plus that I knew him and I have only one memory of him loathing any one person. I'm perhaps the only one who knew of this because he seldom mentioned it even to me. All the other parties are deceased. "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," as Bacon wrote.

I had only one occasion to use him as a lawyer and that was during his training period in the ship in which I was serving. This was to advise on a court martial. The miscreant pleaded guilty and so the case fizzled in so far as legal argument was concerned and Dick had no opportunity to shine.

Dick played rugby and boxed from time to time, but his real love was sailing, starting off in 16 footers. He became a very experienced round-the-buoys and ocean-racing sailor and a very competent helmsman. He took part in Montague Island races and other well-known ocean races and some six Hobart races. He joined the RAN Sailing Association, becoming a life member.

He also joined the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, but resigned in 1969 when that club vacated its city rooms for its new Clubhouse on Pittwater.

His love of the sea moved him to join the Naval Reserve but he could only do so as a Paymaster. So he became a Paymaster Sub Lieutenant (on probation) with seniority 1 October 1936 and commissioned on that date. He didn't really like this branch and when the Anti-Submarine branch advertised for officers in 1938 he requested to change, was accepted and became a seaman officer as he originally wanted to be.

He qualified as a trained a/s officer just before the war and at the outbreak of WWII was expecting to be called up. Of

course, it was not possible to mobilise all Reserve officers at once and he was not called up until October. He then found that if he wished he could proceed to the UK, as the Admiralty was short of trained a/s officers of the type turned out by the Australian A/S School.

On his return to Sydney after active service in the Norway campaign, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, the Pacific War was being wound up and he was reverted to RAN service and demobbed finally in February 1946. The Reserves were reformed for peacetime and he was reinstated. By this time he was a Lieutenant Commander proper. He continued doing reserve service as required until retired at age 60.

He had had a very long service, seeing more active service - seagoing - than most, and had been awarded a MID, the Volunteer Reserve Decoration with two bars. He was one of the very few Australians awarded virtually every theatre medal possible, both British and Australian.

In addition, he was presented with the Greek Crete Medal (he enjoyed! being kissed by the Greek general) and with the Murmansk Convoy Medal by the Russians.

Since retirement from the Reserve, Dick maintained contact by being a member of the RUSI, RANSA, KUTTABUL Wardroom and the League of Ancient Mariners of NSW.

His legal practice after the war embraced divorce, family law, common Law, a period with the Employers Industrial Group, and local courts towards the end of his long career. His last brief was in June in Wollongong.

He helped many naval people in one or more of the above jurisdictions. He also had the privilege of moving the admission of his nephew Ian Sanderson to the Bar of NSW, and also of Commodore Brian Cleary, much appreciated by both these gentlemen.

As I said earlier, I never heard him denigrated. Why he did not marry was, as he put it: "*Because I set a standard, which has not been reached. I wanted to marry a nymphomaniac whose father owned a brewery.*" And, of course, it never was reached.

He must have set a record as a cruise-ship "traveller" if that is the word. At a rough guess, he must have taken at least ten cruises out of Sydney in the past years - I lost count. The Russians acknowledged his patronage quite recently. So if you did not get an answer to a phone call, you knew he was AOC - absent on a cruise.

I for one shall miss him, with his finger brushed hair, that distinctive mannerism, more of a sweeping shrug than a wave, when for reasons I could never fathom, he constantly hoisted his coat back onto his shoulder, always with a glass in hand, and of course his dry sense of humour. □