



FOUND: *M24* Japanese Midget Submarine has been photographed on the ocean bed. It's propeller remains mostly intact (Left) while sea life has made itself home in the conning tower (Right).

Photos courtesy Heritage Branch, NSW Govt.

Sub survey begins

By Michael Brooke

THE 'Bubbies' of RAN AUSCDT ONE recently surveyed the Japanese midget submarine *M24*, in order to help unlock the mystery surrounding its fate in WWII.

The divers joined the Heritage Branch, NSW Department of Planning, in surveying the wreck of the *M24*.

The team undertook a detailed inspection of the hull, surrounding debris field and the fishing nets still trapped at the bow, using a remote operated vehicle (ROV) supplied by Seabotix Inc.

Thanks to ideal sea conditions, clear water visibility and minimal current, the resulting imagery has provided the most useful evidence yet of the condition of *M24* as well as the state of the midget submarine's unexploded demolition charges.

For the members of AUSCDT ONE, the survey provided an opportunity to incorporate the *M24* project into their own deep dive training regime which will enhance their capabilities.

The survey also provided the chance to complete one of the most challenging

diving operations conducted in Australian waters some 67 years ago, when Navy divers surveyed the wrecks of the *M21* and *M22*, which were still armed with torpedoes.

M24 project manager and the Deputy Director of the heritage branch, Tim Smith, said the ROV imagery and other data from the latest survey would be incorporated into a new Heritage online exhibition featuring the *M24* with stories from the night of the attack on Sydney Harbour.

Due to go 'live' before the end of June 2009, the site will be linked to the heritage branch website www.heritage.nsw.gov.au

Mr Smith said since the discovery, Commonwealth and State agencies had been working together to understand how the *M24* met its fate and to develop a comprehensive management plan.

The survey, in May, comes almost two years to the day since AUSCDT ONE first dived on the *M24* wreck, when divers collected sand as a memorial for the relatives of the deceased Japanese submariners.