

PASSING OF "JOHN" PIDGEON

WHEN British submarine P38 went down some time after April of this year, it took with it Stephen Arthur Pidgeon, who for most of his 30 years had lived in the tradition of his childhood's heroes. Drake, Frobisher and Hawkins.

BORN at South Yarra in 1912, and educated at Melbourne Grammar School, he was admitted at 13 to the Royal Australian Naval College at Jervis Bay. Scullin Government's retrenchments put him on the beach again two years later. His parents sent him to Geelong College. He got back to the sea in yachts, and interested himself in aviation and photography.

But yachting was no substitute for the sea. When he was 16, the four-masted barque "Viking" arrived in port, and when she sailed for Callao, Peru, Stephen Arthur Pidgeon, better known to his friends as "John," was one of the crew.

"Viking" ran into a revolution at Callao, and young Pidgeon had his first dash of swash-buckling. He spent some time in South America, and the Peruvian caballeros taught him Spanish.

Back in Australia, he joined the Mawson expedition to the Antarctic as an ordinary seaman, and was still young enough when he came back from the expedition to become an apprentice on the Australind Line.

"John" Pidgeon went through all the grades, and in 1937, he got his First Officer's ticket, at the age of 25.

Three years before, he had been given a commission in the Royal Naval Reserve, and had

served a period of training on HMS "Nelson." But he had not found life on the big ships sufficiently adventurous, and had transferred to the submarine service—

ently adventurous, and had transferred to the submarine service—"the Trade." He did a submarine course from August, 1937 to June, 1938, passed first in his class, and was made a lieutenant with an added six months' seniority.

At that time, business was not brisk in "the Trade," so he returned to the Merchant Service as first officer in a boat running the blockade between England and Spain, his second taste of revolutionary war, in which he shared the joys of the "Potato Joneses" and other hardy blockade-runners.

When Britain declared war on Germany, the submarine service called him up and made him navigating officer in the "Sunfish." In May, 1940, he was mentioned in dispatches, the first Australian in the RNR so to be honored.

Then he was posted to submarine P38. Early this year, he was presented to the King. Soon afterwards, he went to sea again in P38.

In March, P38 stopped reporting, and "presumed sunk" notices have since been confirmed. Last week "John" Pidgeon's family in Geelong had news of his death.

He was married 18 months ago, and leaves a wife and son.

