



# CALL THE HANDS

Issue No. 51 April 2021



## From the President

Welcome to the Society's 51<sup>st</sup> edition of Call the Hands and accompanying occasional papers. The occasional papers are available to members through the members website page. The papers are then made available to the community after twelve months. This policy is consistent with articles published in the quarterly magazine, the Naval Historical Review.

It is a great pleasure to welcome our many new members who joined in recent weeks. Welcome aboard. It is most encouraging for the Committee and regular volunteers to know that the many services the Society provides are valued. We do look forward to providing you with new products and services in the coming months. An example is the new documentaries on Spectacle Island and the Naval Heritage Collection launched in March. Read about them on page 13 and get your copy through the [website shop](#). We also expect to publish a book on the history of the Ikara anti-submarine missile in a few months. This will be the first detailed account of this iconic Australian weapon system.

Although the Society is an 'all volunteer' 'not for profit' organization, it must generate revenue to cover regular overheads. In addition to developing new products for sale through the website shop, new tours are being developed for community groups and individuals. These tours build on the success of Sub Base Platypus tours conducted earlier in 2021. New tours are now planned for Bradley's Head and the Waverton Coal Loader, both in Sydney. The flyer accompanying this edition provides details of the initial '[Coal to Oil](#)' presentation and tour at Waverton scheduled for 3 May. Details of Bradley's Head events will be advised in due course.

Importantly, while most members will be aware of the Japanese midget submarine attack in Sydney Harbour in 1942 there is now a great opportunity to learn much more about this watershed event. During an anniversary Sydney Harbour cruise, scheduled for 31 May you will hear a detailed commentary about the attack and personalities involved and visit the key locations where events occurred. Links to [Eventbrite](#) where tickets can be purchased are provided on page 8. We do hope you can join us and support the Society.

As always, the Society welcomes new volunteers. At present we are seeking people to join us in the Boatshed, Sydney to assist with a range of administrative and other interesting tasks as well as tour leaders. Training and support is provided. Please get in touch if you can assist.

Kind regards,

David Michael



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of Australia**

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## In this Edition

Page	
1	From the President
2	Sea trip on HMAS Bataan March 1946 – 75 years ago
4	Garden Island Rangefinding
5	The Society: Part of the Navy Community in Victoria
6	A Short History of HMAS Albatross
7	Veterans Stories
8	Video of the Month
8	Coming Events
9	Photo of the Month
10	News in Brief
11	This Month in History
13	Occasional papers
13	Society Matters

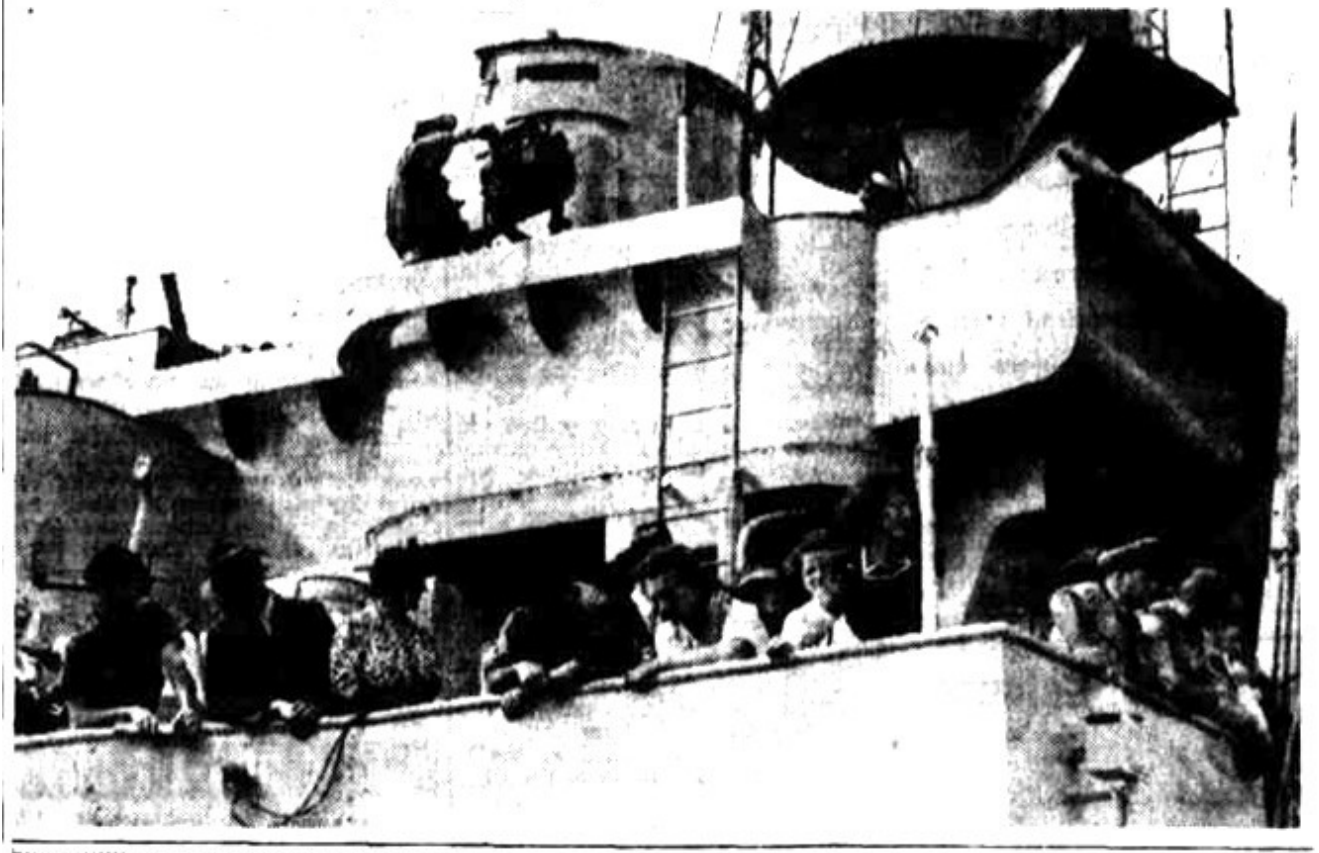
## Sea trip on HMAS *Bataan* March 1946 – 75 years ago

### ★ Trip on HMAS Bataan! ★

Civilians went to sea today for the first time on an Australian warship, HMAS Bataan, the newest Australian-made Tribal class destroyer. They earned the right by virtue of a £50 subscription or more (two passengers subscribed £500) to the Security Loan.

Captain H. Burrell was on the bridge. Next highest lookout was the signal deck, and as many non-naval people as it could hold were there (as the photograph shows) when the last signals were flashed to the flagship HMAS Shropshire.

Apart from those who earned the right to the trip because of a loan subscription, there were three hospital parties aboard—one of 30 from the 2 AWH and two of disabled soldiers from the Holland Park and Greenslopes military hospitals.



Story from The Telegraph, Brisbane, Qld Thu 21 Mar 1946



10. Subsequently Security Loan Cruises were carried out in accordance with Navy Office Letter 552/202/8 undated, with the exception of a.m. Friday 22nd March, when ship remained alongside for an inspection by your Squadron Engineer Officer.

11. £50 had been prescribed as the minimum bond to qualify for a passage. Full numbers were not obtained for the week day excursions which permitted free passage to be given to parties of disabled soldiers, Army Women's Services and W.R.A.N.S. who seemed to appreciate a "Breath of Fresh Air". Further, owing to the inclement weather, all qualified subscribers did not embark.

12. The Deputy Loan Director made available the following figures (copy of his letter dated 25th March attached):-

Thursday 21 March	A.M.	92	passengers representing	£10,120
-do-	P.M.	118	" "	12,390
Friday 22 March	P.M.	102	" "	9,180
Saturday 23 March	A.M.	170	" "	12,750
-do-	P.M.	248	" "	16,120
Sunday 24 March	A.M.	192	" "	14,400
-do-	P.M.	219	" "	19,710.
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TOTAL		<u>1141</u>		<u>£94,670.</u>

13. Each excursion was of three hour duration. Ship proceeded to the Pile Light and after five minutes at 19 knots, speed was reduced and the return passage made.

14. The attached souvenir programme was on sale, the proceeds to be devoted to the Fund to construct Protestant and R.C. Chapels at Flinders Naval Depot.

15. All the demonstrations were well attended.

16. Owing to the long time civilians were embarked, tea and biscuits were made available at a nominal charge. Noticeable were the enthusiastic fathers and young sons who revelled in this unexpected chance to satisfy their frustrated yearning. On the other hand, mothers enjoyed knitting in different surroundings quite oblivious of the passing scene. There was the usual young male who had invested £100 to impress the girl of his choice, regardless of rain and spray.

#### HMAS Bataan Record of Proceedings for March 1946

HMAS *Bataan* conducted sea trips from Brisbane, Newcastle and Sydney in the period 21<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1946. HMAS *Warramunga* conducted sea trips from Melbourne in November 1946

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According to the website below £50 in 1946 is worth approximately \$2400.00AUD today  
[https://www.measuringworth.com/.../result\\_exchange.php](https://www.measuringworth.com/.../result_exchange.php)

## Garden Island Rangefinding

Before the days of radar an array of optical rangefinders was an important feature of nearly all warships. In Royal Naval vessels, including those of the Dominions, these were mostly made by the Glasgow firm of Barr & Stroud and rangefinders fitted in RAN ships were returned to the makers for repairs and calibration. As this was time consuming and expensive a decision was made in the early 1920s to conduct future rangefinder maintenance and repairs locally at Garden Island Dockyard.

It was not until 1925 that a site for a repair shop was selected and built on the northern hill alongside the signal station with access by Hill Road past the dockyard residences. This site presented long and uninterrupted views down harbour.

Tradesmen, including a foreman with required expertise, were recruited in the United Kingdom, most likely poached from Barr & Stroud. As optical work had previously been conducted by the Dockyard on submarine periscopes there was some level of local experience already available. This existing work had been carried out in the electrical workshop near the dominant shear-leg crane.

The largest rangefinder then fitted to capital ships such as the battle-cruiser HMAS *Australia* was the FX3 which measured 22 feet (6.7 m) in length. To enable these large instruments to be repaired and calibrated a special jig was sent out by Bar & Stroud and fitted along the eastern side of the new hillside repair shop. This enabled the water tower on Dover Heights and other similar landmarks to be used for calibration, with Clark and Shark islands used for closer ranges. In 1930 a two storey addition to the original building was completed, enabling all optical and mechanical instruments in the RAN inventory to be repaired locally.



Rangefinder taken from WWI battleship HMS *Revenge*

With the WWII development of radar, optical range-finding became obsolete. The last RAN ships capable of being fitted with rangefinders within their direction systems were the DDGs, HMA Ships *Brisbane*, *Hobart* and *Perth*. However, as weight restrictions to these particular ships were imposed by the incorporation of the Ikara ASW missile system, their rangefinders were not installed. Photographs of the DDGs show that the directors have blanking discs where the rangefinders should have protruded.

This just left the smaller one metre base rangefinders used by ships for navigational purposes. These smaller instruments required much closer targets for calibration which included the top of the staircase on the western side of the Dockyard Chapel and the northern end of the Finger Wharf at Woolloomooloo Bay. For longer ranges the closest of the twin flagstaffs on top of the Harbour Bridge was used.

With the construction of a new Weapons Building (No 79) in 1969 the optical workshop was sited on the top level of this building with a new periscope workshop on the level below. This did not last long: with the further construction of a new Integrated Weapons Workshop along the western side of the Captain Cook Dock in 1987. Limited work on rangefinders continued here until the closure of the Optical and Periscope workshop in 2010. So ended 85 years of local technical support by Garden Island Dockyard for the maintenance of optical instruments.

By Fred Haynes, first published in the September 2018 edition of Naval Historical Review



## The Society: Part of the Navy Community in Victoria

NHSA Victorian Chapter President Andrew Mackinnon wrote in his March newsletter, *Flag Kilo* to Chapter members about a number of issues which have broad appeal for all Society members and subscribers. Several issues in which the Chapter will engage in the future are described below.

### Navy Victoria Network

He highlighted the wider role the Society plays in the Victorian Navy community. He also noted that many members of the NHSA in Victoria are also affiliated with other ex-Navy associations and like-minded Navy community organisations and suggested that the Navy Victoria Network (NVN) is an excellent means by which members can keep abreast of “commemorative, representational and recreational events held in Victoria and stay informed about the RAN’s activities and other newsworthy ‘nautical’ matters”. The NVN is free and provides an excellent service with current Victorian news on a broad range of naval matters. Visit the [NVN website](#) at to learn more.

### Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network

Andrew also reported a growing level of interest in maritime history in Melbourne, reflected in the creation of the Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network (MMHN). The MMHN is advocating for a Melbourne Maritime Heritage Precinct. This is logical, noting that Melbourne is Australia’s largest port. It should have its own Maritime Museum with appropriate naval representation as do other capital cities in Australia and overseas. A key MMHN objective is to improve public understanding that Melbourne’s cultural and economic strength is due largely to its rich maritime heritage. Melbourne was and is still, a great port city. The Victorian Chapter will examine how it can do more than just offer support to this concept. Further information is available on the [MMHN website](#).



Railway Pier, Port Melbourne circa 1870.  
Image: Charles Nettleton, State Library of Victoria

### Osborne House

A recent visit to Osborne House at Geelong with Corio Council representatives was undertaken to understand the present condition of this wonderful old building, plus the maritime museum collection in the adjoining stables. In 1913 Osborne House became the location for the initial RAN College, which remained there until transferring to Jervis Bay in 1915. During the First World War, it became a Naval Convalescent Hospital and between 1919 and 1924 was used as the RAN Submarine Service base, operating the J-class submarines. While presently in a sad state and closed for some years, some restoration has begun and expressions of interest are now being sought to identify future uses for the buildings and how they might be restored to their former grandeur. While not funded to support this, Navy has an interest in its outcome and potentially its heritage collection.



### Recognition for Laurie Pegler

The quiet, high achieving Victorian volunteer, Laurie Pegler was recognised by the Society on 22 March 2021. For more than ten years Laurie has supported the Society and managed the Navy Victoria Network website and assisted in numerous other ways. Bravo Zulu Laurie.

Andrew Mackinnon recognising 10 years of service by Laurie Pegler.



## A Short History of HMAS *Albatross*

Reprinted from a Welcome Aboard pamphlet (date unknown)

The decision to build an airfield on the land now occupied by the Naval Air Station was taken soon after WWII was declared in 1939. The RAAF occupied the new base on 7 May 1942 and were soon followed by the US Army Air Corps and the Royal Netherlands East Indies Air Force. In 1944 the Admiralty directed forces to the SW Pacific area, necessitating the provision of RN naval air bases in Australia. RAAF Base Nowra was considered the ideal choice because of its proximity to Jervis Bay, which was large enough to accommodate the entire British Pacific Fleet. The Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm began operations at Nowra in late October 1944, and the base was renamed HMAS *Nabbington*. In March 1946, the base reverted to RAAF control 'to be retained but not maintained'.

On 3 July 1947 the Commonwealth Defence Council approved the formation of a Fleet Air Arm which would be controlled and operated by the RAN. The initial planning provided for the purchase of two aircraft carriers, necessary aircraft and the establishment of shore facilities. The carriers were later named HMAS *Sydney* and HMAS *Melbourne* and the shore facilities were at Nowra.



HMAS *Albatross* was commissioned on 31 August 1948 and the 20th Carrier Air Group, comprising Sea Fury and Firefly aircraft, were brought from England to Australia by HMAS *Sydney*. These aircraft, operated by 805 and 816 Squadrons, disembarked to Nowra in May 1949. In November 1950 they were joined by the 21st Carrier Air Group of 808 and 817 Squadrons, also flying Sea Furies and Fireflies.

HMAS *Albatross* has been expanding ever since. As more capable aircraft have been acquired, so ground support facilities have had to be built to service the more sophisticated equipment. In April 1955, Sea Venoms and Gannets arrived and so radar workshops and test facilities were required. More aircraft in the skies necessitated stricter standards of air traffic control and a new control tower was built in 1958. Wessex helicopters with a dunking sonar capability required a further expansion in servicing techniques and skills in 1962.

In 1965 it was decided to buy American aircraft to replace the ageing British Gannets and Sea Venoms. Douglas Skyhawks and Grumman Trackers were the choice and additional avionics facilities were built to service the complex equipment these aircraft carried.

Albatross took delivery of the Seahawk helicopter in 1988, which restored to the RAN much of the capability lost when the Grumman Tracker squadrons were disbanded in 1983. Meanwhile, the modernisation processes continued. The wartime living accommodation was replaced with modern brick buildings.

## Veterans Stories

Douglas Gilling - Royal Australian Navy  
Department of Veterans Affairs Video

At the outbreak of World War II the Admiralty accepted the Australian Naval Board's offer to provide personnel to serve with the Royal Navy. Douglas Gilling was one who signed on under what was known as the Yachtsman's Scheme, essentially the 'loan' of 500 Australian reservists to the Royal Navy.

Enlisting in Sydney on 23 June 1941, he was soon in England where he was trained at RN Barracks, Portsmouth. His first posting was to HMS *Berkeley*, a Hunt class destroyer. Passing the sailor he was replacing, on the gangplank, Douglas was surprised to see it was an old school mate from Sydney. He said it took months to be accepted on board *Berkeley* as the only Australian, but a fonder memory of life in the Royal Navy was the daily rum issue.

On his 21st birthday, Douglas was given an additional ration and passed out, to be stowed by his mates in a deck locker, out of sight of his superiors. *Berkeley* was sunk during an air attack on 19 August 1942, while supporting the Dieppe landing. At the time, Douglas was an ammunition loader on a 4-inch gun. A bomb went off on the deck and Douglas was blown into the scuppers, still with a four-inch shell in his hands.

Later in the war, Douglas served in motor launches and was discharged on 4 March 1946. After the war he became an architect and was later a Life Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.



[Veterans' stories - Doug Gilling - YouTube](#)



## Video of the month

### [Sea Eagles - YouTube](#)

This scripted Fleet Air Arm recruiting video produced in 1980 shows a variety of sailors, officers and aircraft in action aboard the aircraft carrier and flagship at that time, HMAS Melbourne. Included in the video is Melbourne's then commanding officer, Commodore (later Rear Admiral Sir) David Martin who later became Governor of New South Wales.



## Coming Events

Members and subscribers have a smorgasbord of events conducted by the NHSA or associated organisations to choose from in coming weeks. Full details will be provided as they come to hand.

**14th April** – Webinar – Australian Garden History Society – “The gardens of Garden Island”. Details available on [AGHS website](#).

**19th April** – Webinar – Engineers Australia, Heritage – “The Captain Cook Graving Dock”. Details TBA on Engineers Australia website.

**16 April** - NHSA Zoom Meeting – “The Teddy Sheean Story”, presented by Noel Phelan, Details and link will be e-mailed to members one week ahead of the event.

**24th April** – Harbour Cruise - 1942 Submarine Attack, Sydney Heritage Fleet – James Craig. Bookings via the [SHF website](#).

**3rd May** – NHSA Presentation on “The Royal Australian Navy – From Coal to Oil” and tour of the Coal Loader, Waverton. Bookings via [Eventbrite](#).

**31st May** – NHSA cruise of Sydney Harbour - Sydney Under Attack – The Japanese submarine attack on Sydney – 79th Anniversary of the attack – visiting each of the major locations. Bookings via [Eventbrite](#)



## Photo of the Month



In 1953 the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS *Unicorn* was returning from the Korean War via the Suez Canal. It was at the head of a North bound convoy as was usual practice in the post war years.

At the time *Unicorn* had few knots of north going current behind her. This is explained by the fact that in winter the currents in the Canal are diurnal, moving with the tides. However, during summer the rate of evaporation in the Mediterranean is greater than the flows into the sea via the Strait of Gibraltar and many rivers causing the northerly flow through the canal.

Shortly after entering the canal *Unicorn's* bow touched the eastern side. The stern swung on to the western bank thereby blocking the canal and halting the convoy. As the Suez tug was under repair and unavailable, the Port Said tug took some time to arrive. In addition to tug assistance there were bollards on the canal bank which were used in conjunction with the ships capstans and ropes to pull the stern clear. It is understood that *Unicorn* was aground for less than eight hours.

The cause of the grounding, as with that of the *Ever Given* was cross wind. *Unicorn*, with two hangars had quite a high freeboard, much higher than the WW2 Fleet carriers. However, there vast difference between the two incidents is size; *Unicorn's* 14,500 tons versus *Ever Given's* 200,000 tons.

Similarly, *Unicorn's* sharp cruiser bow would have been much easier to pull clear of the bank than a deeply embedded bulbous bow.

## News in Brief

### Launch of the Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessel Enterprise

Australia Secretary of Defence Mr. Greg Moriarty launched the Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) Enterprise on 9 March 2021.

Head Maritime Systems, Rear Admiral Wendy Malcolm said the OPV Enterprise establishment represented a significant milestone under the Continuous Shipbuilding Plan.



“The launch marks a critical step towards the implementation of Plan Galileo, an ambitious Future Maritime Sustainment Model which ensures our sustainment organization engages with acquisition teams early in the build process,” Rear Admiral Malcolm said.

The Arafura Class OPVs, which replace the Armidale and Cape Class patrol boats, will be the Australian Defence Force’s primary asset for maritime patrol and response duties and will primarily undertake constabulary missions.

### Submarine spotting skills put to the test

Guided missile destroyer HMAS *Hobart* and submarine HMAS *Sheean* recently combined off the coast of South Australia so Hobart’s crew could practise its submarine detection and tracking skills.

Hobart’s crew attempted to visually identify Sheean while she was at periscope depth, a task which proved much more difficult than anticipated.



Able Seaman Boatswain’s Mate Ricki-Leigh Viney was the first person to spot the Collins-class submarine from the bridge wing.

“The upper decks were full with people using binoculars,” Able Seaman Viney said. “No one thought it would be that hard to spot the periscope, but it was really difficult.”

Following the submarine exercise, *Hobart*’s crew then conducted tests and trials of the ship’s integrated sonar system, and the ship patrolled the gas and oil platforms in the Bass Strait in support of the Australian Government’s commitment to maintaining a military presence in the region.

## This Month in History

April 1860	HMVS VICTORIA (Sloop) sailed from Melbourne for service in the Maori War, in New Zealand. This was Australia's first commitment of forces overseas.
April 1871	HMVS CERBERUS, (armoured-turret ship), launched in England in December 1868, arrived in Port Phillip, VIC, on her maiden voyage. At that time CERBERUS was the most powerful ship in the southern hemisphere.
April 1900	CAPT Hector McDonald Laws Waller, DSO and Bar, RAN, one of Australia's greatest naval commanders, was born at Benalla, VIC.
April 1911	HMAS WARREGO's re-launching ceremony was conducted by Mrs. G. F. Pearce, wife of the Minister for Defence at Cockatoo Island. The ship built at Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering, Govan, Scotland had been broken down into it's individual parts and shipped to Australia for re-assembly at Cockatoo Island. It was the first destroyer 'built' in Australia and launched at Cockatoo Island, Sydney. This provided Australian dockyard workers with ship construction experience for they were to build three more River class destroyers, HMAS SWAN, HMAS TORRENS, and HMAS HUON.
April 1914	LEUT A. M. Longmore, an Australian serving with the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps, flew the First Sea Lord, Winston Churchill, on his first flight in a Maurice Farman seaplane.
April 1918	CMDR W. H. F. Warren, RAN, commander of the Australian Torpedo Boat Destroyer Flotilla, accidentally drowned at Brindisi, Italy, the day before his DSO award was received at the Flotilla base. CMDR A. G. H. Bond, RAN, assumed command of the Australian Torpedo Boat Flotilla at Brindisi, Italy.
April 1924	HMAS Adelaide (I) joined the flag of Vice Admiral Commanding Special Service Squadron Royal Navy on 18 April 1924 and left Sydney for Wellington on 20 April. She accompanied the battle cruisers throughout the remainder of their worldwide cruise and reached Portsmouth on 28 September 1924, having called at, Wellington, Napier, Auckland, Suva, Honolulu, Victoria (BC), Vancouver, San Francisco, Panama, Colon, Jamaica, Halifax, Quebec, Topsail Bay and Conception Bay en route. Adelaide (I) was the first RAN ship to pass through the Panama Canal.
April 1929	HMAS ALBATROSS, (seaplane carrier), was dispatched from Sydney to search for Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's aircraft, the Southern Cross, in the vicinity of Wyndham WA. The Southern Cross had been forced down onto a mud flat in Northern Australia, and the subsequent search became known as the 'Coffee Royal Affair', as some claimed that Kingsford Smith orchestrated the whole event as a publicity stunt. One of the many civilian aircraft searching for Kingsford Smith and his crew crashed landed in the northern Australia, and her crew perished. The Southern Cross was located before ALBATROSS reached the search area.
April 1931	HMA Submarines OXLEY and OTWAY decommissioned at Sydney and were re-commissioned next day as RN ships.
April 1940	AB A. Kennedy, RAN, survived the sinking of the destroyer HMS GHURKA by dive bombers off Norway. Kennedy was the only Australian in the crew.
April 1941	Twelve telegraphists, and two stewards of the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps, (WESC), commenced duty at the Harman W/T Station in Canberra. The WESC was the forerunner of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, (WRANS), which was formed the following year.
April 1943	HMA Ships KAPUNDA, WAGGA, and WHYALLA, (minesweepers), fought off repeated attacks by 100 Japanese aircraft at Milne Bay, New Guinea.
April 1949	HMAS SHOALHAVEN was brought to one hours notice for sea following the receipt of a signal from HMS AMETHYST, reporting she had been fired on by Communist shore batteries, and was damaged, suffered heavy casualties, and ran aground in the Yangtse River. Surgeon LEUT N. S. Chalk, RANR, was transferred to HMS BLACK SWAN, which, in company with the cruiser HMS LONDON, were dispatched to assist AMETHYST. HMS CONSORT also sailed from Nanking to assist. SHOALHAVEN was ordered to remain at Shanghai to act as the wireless telegraphy guard ship for the Senior British Naval Officer, (Shanghai). The attempt by CONSORT, BLACK SWAN and LONDON to reach AMETHYST failed, and all ships suffered damage and loss of life before returning to Shanghai. AMETHYST was later re-floated by her crew, and escaped to Shanghai.
April 1955	The Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, announced the decision to commit Australian forces to the Far East Strategic Reserve, (FESR), in Malaya. The Navy's contribution was to include two frigates or destroyers and an annual visit by HMAS MELBOURNE, (aircraft carrier). The first two RAN warships sent to South East Asia as part of the FESR were the destroyers HMAS ARUNTA and HMAS WARRAMUNGA. The FESR duties for the RAN continued until 1971.



April 1958	The Indonesian Navy ship HANG TUAH, (ex HMNS MOROTAI, ex HMAS IPSWICH), was sunk in a bombing attack off North Borneo. The WWII Mitchell bomber was piloted by an American mercenary pilot who received \$US5000 for the operation.
April 1964	The former Z Special Force vessel HMAS KRAIT, arrived in Sydney. She had been sold after the war, and was later found in Borneo employed as a timber carrying vessel. A campaign was started to bring her back to Australia, and she was subsequently bought by public subscription. She was operated by the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, (NSW Section), for many years but eventually found a home at the Australian National Maritime Museum in the late 1990's.
April 1968	The Oberon class submarine HMAS OTWAY, (LCDR G. R. Dalrymple, RAN), was commissioned. OTWAY was laid down at Scott's Yard, Greenock, Scotland, on 29 June 1965, and launched on 29 November 1966. Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, performed the launching ceremony.
April 1972	HMAS Queenborough paid off having steamed some 443,236 miles in the RAN. On 8 April 1975 the ship was sold to Willtopp (Asia) Ltd through the firm's Agents, Banks Bros and Streets, of Sydney. On 2 May 1975 she was towed from Bradleys Head in Sydney Harbour to Jubilee Engineering Works, Balmain, to be prepared for towing to Hong Kong.
April 1978	CDRE Sir James Ramsay, became the first officer of the RAN to be knighted twice. CDRE Ramsay, a Knight Bachelor and Governor of WA, was created a KCMG.
April 1982	RAN personnel joined the Multi-National Force and Observers, (MFO), operating on the Sinai Peninsula, to enforce the separation of Egyptian and Israeli forces. The RAN provided Iroquois helicopters, (which had been transported to the Middle East by HMAS TOBRUK), to patrol the peninsula. The RAN presence ceased in 1986, but a small Army detachment remained.
April 1986	The helicopter from HMAS Moresby II while approaching the ship after assisting with the calibration of hydrographic equipment at Gibson Point in the Admiralty Gulf, Western Australia lost power at a height of some 30 metres and crashed into the sea. The three-person crew escaped uninjured, and the aircraft was recovered, with the exception of its rotor and transmission, by Moresby's SMBs and crane. A replacement aircraft was embarked the following month
April 1990	HMAS CURLEW, the last of the RAN's Ton class minesweepers, was decommissioned at HMAS WATERHEN, Sydney after 28 years of service and 38 years to the day after her keel had been laid. She had steamed more than 400,000 nautical miles in 40,000 hours underway. Curlew remained in the Reserve Fleet until she was sold on 17 June 1991
April 1999	HMAS PERTH, (destroyer), and HMAS ARUNTA, (frigate), arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, (Saigon), Vietnam, for a four day port visit. This was the first visit to Vietnam for Australian ships since the end of the Vietnam War. The following day an ANZAC Day dawn service was held onboard PERTH, which had seen action during the Vietnam War.
April 2005	HMAS TOBRUK, (CMDR N. Bramwell, RAN), departed Sydney en-route to the Persian Gulf. The ship's task was to transport equipment and personnel from the Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment to Iraq, where they would be deployed to the Al Muthanna Task Group in Southern Iraq.
April 2020	Australia officially transferred ex HMA ships Melbourne and Newcastle to the Chilean Navy during a commissioning ceremony at HMAS Watson Naval Base in Sydney. The two frigates were retired from service by the Royal Australian Navy in 2019, and bought second hand by the Armada de Chile, which has renamed them Almirante Latorre (ex HMAS Melbourne) and Capitan Pratt (ex HMAS Newcastle) for Chilean Navy service

The entries selected for publication this month are randomly generated from an extensive database of historic naval events. The absence of a significant event is in no way intended to cause offence. The objective is to provide a cross section of events across time. The Society's website enables you to look up any event in RAN history. Searches can be made by era, date look up or today. The latter appears on the home page. The others are accessed via the Research page. <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/research/on-this-day/>

## Occasional Papers

Included with this edition of Call the Hands are the following occasional papers: -

- Occasional Paper 106 - RAN Divers 1961 Lake Eucumbene
- Occasional Paper 107 - Dutch Submarine K IX
- Occasional Paper 108 - Royal Navy Brig HMS Sappho

## Society Matters

### Honouring Norman Rivett

It is with great sadness that Society members learnt of the passing of Society founding member and active volunteer for almost 50 years, Norman 'Norm' Cecil Rivett on Monday 8 March 2021.

Norm spent a total of 64 years in the Garden Island Dockyard as an employee and volunteer until his retirement in June 2018. As a Committee member at various times and active volunteer, Norm contributed enormously to the Society and researched and wrote extensively about Garden Island and numerous other subjects. His seminal book was *From Church to Chapel: a History of the Naval Chapel Garden Island (2010)*. His last initiative was to propose the Society adopt a motto, which we did during our 50th year, 'Honouring History'.

Norm's written works (always submitted in precise copperplate script) included numerous articles for the Society's quarterly magazine, occasional papers and two other books; *The Naval Steam Reciprocating Engine (1989)* and *Some aspects of RMS Titanic (1912) and her sister ships (1993)*.

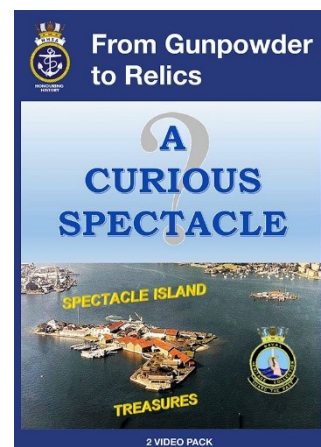
It was an honour and privilege to know and work with Norm. The Society will ensure that his contribution is not forgotten.



### Spectacle Island Video Launched

Spectacle Island was once a powder-keg in the heart of Sydney Harbour. Now it is a treasure-trove of the Royal Australian Navy's heritage. On Thursday 11 March, Captain Tony Raeside of Fleet Headquarters officiated at the launch of two new documentaries produced by Society. These documentaries aim to lift the veil of mystery and tell the Island's rich and colourful history. They are now available on the [Society's website](#).

Spectacle Island, located west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in Port Jackson is the little-known jewel in the Royal Australian Navy's crown which few serving personnel and civilians get to visit. These documentaries are your opportunity to learn more and assist your Society.



**Video One** describes changes forced upon the NSW Colonial government driven by gold rushes, construction of the earliest unique buildings from 1865.

It describes life on the Island in the late 19th century as innovative changes were made by Superintendent Clapper to better serve ships of the Royal Navy's Australia Station and the short service of James Gorman, VC who was officer in charge in the 1880s.

**Video Two** describes in detail just what makes up the Naval Heritage Collection much of which is exhibited in the RAN's four museums. However, many unique treasures remain in splendid isolation and security on Spectacle Island.

### Ian Phillips, Documentary Producer

The production of a documentary is no easy task but Ian Phillips, Committee member and regular volunteer, has now produced four excellent productions. Although he has been assisted by other volunteers with research, sourcing images and script writing he is the driving force behind these videos. Such videos assist greatly in telling the story of important aspects of the RAN's long and proud history. For his efforts as a volunteer over more than fifteen years Ian was presented with Honorary life membership during the video launch event.



### Volunteering in the Society is not for Wimps!

By Ian Phillips

Explaining what is required of a volunteer in the Society is no easy task, as variety is the name of the game. One plans the day only to find that there even more to be done and in areas not previously considered.

Sure, there are some tasks that require specific background knowledge, but it is amazing the number of our volunteers that are doing things never previously considered. Variety is one of the main attractions in working with our office. Prior skills and knowledge quickly find their niche, and new concepts and procedures fast become commonplace. People like myself now produce videos without any prior experience, others are turning earlier publications into eBooks.

Researching answers to information requests is constant task, as is the managing of our archives. The one guarantee is that boredom does not exist in the Society's office!

The Society also caters for those seeking to assist from home. There are a number of tasks that can be covered off-premises, providing there is access to a computer and if possible, a scanner. Any specific interests or knowledge can be put to good use – we are a very diverse entity, with volunteers assisting with proof-reading, story development, brochure design and many other items.

It has been said that Society volunteers do not have time for dementia – they are too busy! Join the fun – contact us now!

### New Ships Plans Available

A progressive task aimed at assisting model makers and others researching ships of the Royal Australian Navy, is the addition of new plans to the Society [website shop](#). They are very reasonably priced and popular. Recent additions have included the Adelaide Class FFG, general arrangements of HMAS *Success* and the Island Class 14ft sailing dinghy once embarked in RAN ships and used for sail training.

