

CALL THE HANDS

Issue No.34

September 2019

From the President

Welcome to this 34th edition of Call the Hands and Occasional Papers. Paper 62 which looks at the history of the Navy in South Australia and early efforts in the colonial period to protect the colony. Paper 63 describes war time service in HMAS Vendetta (I) and life in Malta between 1940 and 1942.

In recent weeks a series of interesting coincidences concerning East Timor and Australian Defence Force involvement in that country have emerged. These are worth sharing.

Firstly, the Society received a research request from a retired 2 Commando Company officer who served in East Timor in 1999. He was researching an East Timor Battlefield Guide which also included RAN involvement during WW II and more recent UN Operations. He hoped to contact any surviving crew members of HMAS Armidale (I). *Armidale* was lost to Japanese bombers in the Timor Sea on 1 December 1942. *Armidale* had been involved in the relief/reinforcement of the Australian 2/2nd Independent Company which was holding out in Japanese occupied Timor. Subsequent investigations revealed that Doctor Ray Leonard is the last living *Armidale* survivor.

The second coincidence was publication in the September 2019 edition of the Society's magazine of a well researched essay on the RAN's involvement in the support of Service Reconnaissance Department (SRD) operations in Timor between 1943 and 1945. The author Sub Lieutenant Nicholas Seton was recently awarded the Society's history essay prize for his work. His essay highlighted the risks faced by the crews of the Fairmile Motor Launches operating at the limit of their endurance and capabilities in support of SRD operatives in this compromised operation.

The third matter, also linked to our magazine, the Naval Historical Review, is a significant rescue story to be published in December 2019. This story concerns the largely unknown rescue of Australian military forces from Japanese occupied Dutch Timor in 1942. The rescued servicemen were a rear guard, left following the surrender of Allied forces to the numerically superior Japanese.

Finally, on 30 August 2019 East Timor celebrated the 20th anniversary of the referendum which secured its independence from Indonesia. Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975. The celebration was well justified given that for more than 400 years, apart from 9 days between 28 November and 7 December 1975, East Timorese had not experienced true independence from colonizers, occupiers and invaders. Even Australia invaded Portuguese Timor, a neutral country, when the 2nd/2nd Independent Company landed in Dili on 19 December 1941. These days we call it pre-emptive defence.

To receive the Naval Historical Review in either digital or printed format and read these stories first hand, simply visit the Society's website, <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/shop/membership/>.

Your feedback on Call the Hands or any other matter is always valued.

Yours aye,
David Michael



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Edward Albert Amphlett – Paymaster RN

Born: 1828 at Pirton, near Kempsey, Worcester, England.

Entered Royal Navy in 1842 and retired in 1888.

Died: 31 January 1896 at North Sydney, NSW, Australia.

THE ROYAL NAVY'S AUSTRALIA STATION was established in 1859, just three years after the Colony of New South Wales was granted Responsible Government. From this date until the final decision was made in 1889 to build a Naval Store on Garden Island, there had been 26 Administrations in office, with yet another change of Government before the Stores Building was completed in 1894. A duration of Government averaging 16 1/2 months.

In the same period there had been 13 Naval Officers Commanding the Australian Station, an average appointment of 27 months. Two Commodores Commanding the Station had died in the line of duty.

Considering the Command extended from the Antarctic to the islands north of Australia, and the demands made upon the services of the Navy during the Maori Wars during the earlier part of this period, it is not surprising that it took over 30 years for a Colonial Government and the Admiralty, represented by the Officer Commanding the station, to achieve agreement regarding the location and establishment of Naval Base in Sydney, and in particular a dedicated Naval Store Building. The latter became a pressing requirement after 1872, when the Imperial Officer in Charge of the Commissariat Stores at Circular Quay was recalled, the British Army having withdrawn two years previously. At this period the Navy relied upon the Commissariat Stores for supplies and storage space.

After the departure of the British Army, the Navy had to share the Store with the Colonial Government. This was the situation pertaining when Paymaster Amphlett was appointed to the Australian Station in 1872, vide HMS Clio, for service in charge of Naval, Victualling and Medical Stores at Sydney.

The Commissariat Stores were described at this time as being 'not only decayed and unsafe, but incommodious in view of the increasing needs of the Squadron.' It was therefore proposed to build a Naval Store, and negotiations were commenced for a site. Garden Island, Fort Macquarie and Dawes Point were suggested with two sites at Woolloomooloo Bay being considered later.

So began Amphlett's long quest for a Naval Store Building, concurrent with the Navy's desire for a base. It was not always envisaged that the two should share the same location but by 1894 Garden Island became the site of both. After a short home posting as District Paymaster and Transport Officer at Liverpool, England, from 1879 to 1882, Amphlett was re-appointed to Sydney early in 1882 as Storekeeper of the Naval Yard, a position he occupied until his retirement in 1888 at the age of 60 years.

His long association and knowledge of the Australia Station was unequalled and dated from its inception when he served in HMS Niger from 1859 to 1861, in New Zealand during the Maori Wars. He was serving in HMS Orpheus, the Flagship of the Station, when she was wrecked on Manukau Bar on 7 February 1863, an ordeal during which Amphlett acquitted himself with distinction.

After attending the Court Martial into the loss of Orpheus on board HMS Victory at Portsmouth, he was appointed to HMS Curacao 'additional for transport service' in November 1863, and returned to Auckland, New Zealand, as Transport Officer.

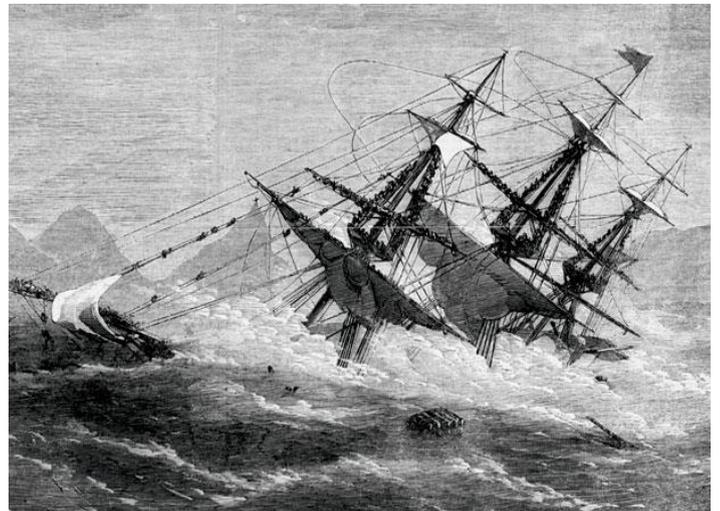
He was posted home to join HMS Nankin at Pembroke Dock in 1868 as Paymaster, but in 1872 was appointed to HMS Clio on the Australia Station for service in Sydney.

In retirement, Amphlett became Paymaster of Imperial Pensions for the Colony of NSW, and was consulted by the Rear Admiral Commanding the Station and the Admiralty regarding the requirements and capacity of the Naval Store to be built on Garden Island. As a result of Amphlett's recommendations the capacity of the proposed Store Building was vastly increased and materialised as Asset 89.

Paymaster Amphlett died at North Sydney on 31 January 1896, having lived to see the completion of the Garden Island Naval Establishment, including the Naval Store, but sadly not long enough to see the official handing over of the Establishment which took place on 2 September 1896.

(A photograph of Paymaster Amphlett and a summary of his achievements once adorned the foyer of the Old Naval Stores Building 89 in Garden Island's Office Square after it was refurbished for use as Dockyard offices in the 1980s, but was removed (lost) during a subsequent refurbishment as naval offices during the reorganisation of Maritime Headquarters and Naval Support Command Headquarters in about 1997.

As a fortunate survivor from the loss of HMS Orpheus in New Zealand, Paymaster Amphlett wrote an account of the tragedy for the London Illustrated News prior to the court-martial held in HMS Victory at Portsmouth in 1863, which inquired into the circumstances of the loss. However, his poor handwriting was misinterpreted to credit Marines instead of Maoris responsible for rescuing survivors. Characteristically, Amphlett went to considerable trouble to have his error redressed and credit given to these rightful people. In the fullness of time a more practical monetary award was given.)



Loss of HMS Orpheus

This story by Norman C Rivett was first published in the March 2003 edition of the Naval Historical Review and is available on the [Society website](#).



Naval Stores Building,
Garden Island Sydney.



Youtube Video – Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm display off Melbourne July 1947



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJVfQC10YAq>

There were several accidents during the display and further reading is available at Trove
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/35988545>

Support the Society

Although Call the Hands is a free service to the community, produced by volunteers there are costs. Our objective is simply to promote understanding of Australian naval history. Voluntary contributions are essential to deliver this service to readers. If you value our work **please consider a donation.** <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/donate/>

'The cruiser HMAS Shropshire today faces a breaker's yard

The warship Jap guns couldn't sink

Australia's "Old Ironsides" once went six hours at sea with an enemy mine clinging to her bows.

AT midnight on a dark October night in 1944, a haggard officer of the watch clambered up to the bridge of the Australian cruiser, HMAS Shropshire, as it steamed through the Pacific at full speed.

Below him, several petty officers and seamen anxiously looked over the starboard side of the cruiser's bows.

A drifting Japanese mine was caught in the ship's paravane. One big wave and the mine would hit the ship and blow up the bows.

The men grimly watching the mine bobbing up and down in the water, waited for the order from the bridge. If the cruiser changed course the mine would release itself. Then it could be blown up.

But dramatically, no order came. Australia's "Old Ironsides" might be blown to smithereens, but the mine would have to stay for the next few hours.

The Shropshire on this bleak yet historic night was steaming toward the island of Leyte in the Philippines.

She was escorting troopships — along with the American Fleet — carrying an invasion force to Leyte in the first move to drive the Japanese out of the Philippines.

General MacArthur's dramatic promise, "I will return," was about to be fulfilled, yet the whole operation depended on the element of surprise.

And if that mine blew up, the Japanese occupation forces would have their big guns trained out to sea before the landing craft had been lowered over the side.

So Old Ironsides forged ahead, the mine alternately drifting a few inches nearer the hull, then a few inches away again.

For six long and weary hours the lives of the 1100 sailors aboard were in dire peril. Yet the cruiser's luck held.

In the early light of dawn, the staccato crack of Japanese shore batteries opened up as American mar-

ines surged on to the beach.

The invasion had begun. The silence was broken.

The skipper of the Shropshire promptly gave the order to change course and the mine released itself. A gunner blew it up when it was a safe distance from the ship.

But the cruiser's job was unfinished. Despite the surprise attack, the Japanese quickly mobilised their defences.

US Marines were falling like flies under a hail of bullets from machine-gun posts spreadeagled just off the beach.

The Shropshire moved closer to shore and opened up a heavy bombardment on the shore batteries. In half an hour only a smouldering ruin remained of the Japanese fortifications.

American infantry in their thousands followed the Marines on to the beach. The battle for Leyte was all over bar the shouting.

Today, the Shropshire, a rusting, empty wreck of a once lusty sea warrior, lies in Athol Bight, a small Harbor inlet off Taronga Park Zoo.

Here, she has rotted, since November, 1949, her decks no longer spick and span, her guns useless, manned by a skeleton crew of one chief petty officer and six seamen.

The ship the enemy couldn't sink is a grimy hulk, yet some of the affection in which she was once held by her crew brought memories flooding back this month.

A big American shipbuilding firm announced that it wants to buy Old Ironsides for scrap following a statement by Australian Navy authorities that the 25-year-old cruiser will be dismantled and her hulk offered for sale.

They are ready to tow it to America, even though this would cost £50,000.

A Sydney shipbroker said he would tender for the Shropshire on behalf of the American firm.

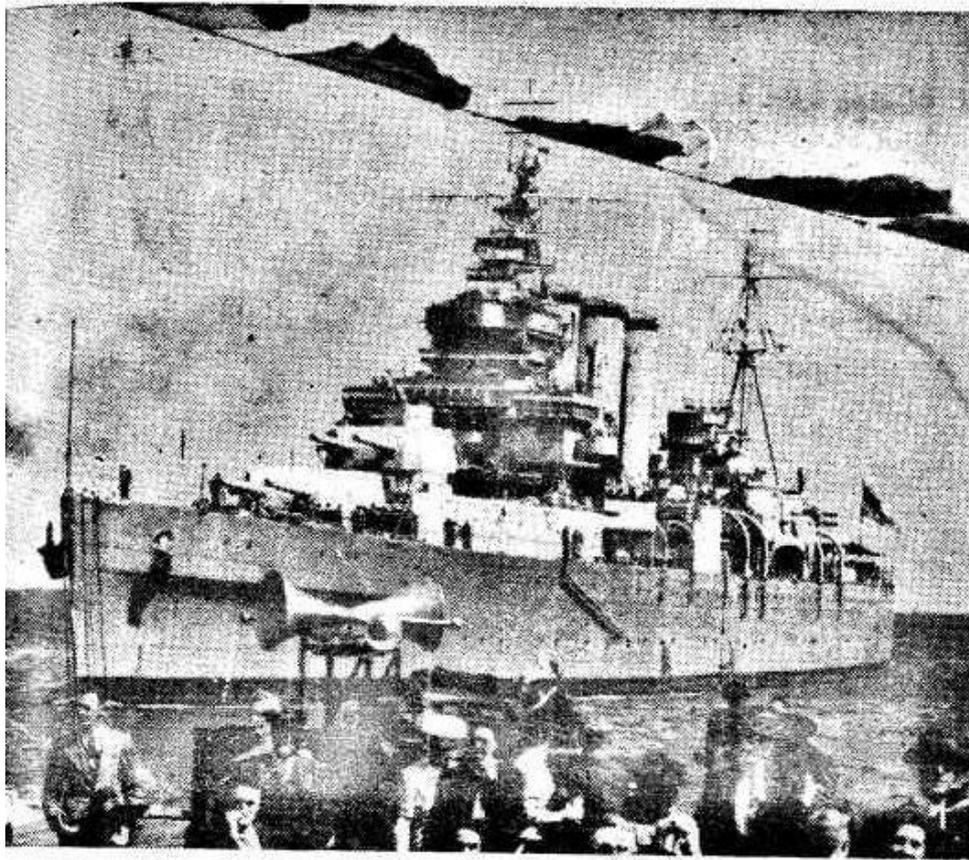
But ex-members of Old Ironsides' crew, men who survived the Leyte landing and other Pacific battles, are protesting that their old ship be given a decent burial off the Australian coast she once helped to defend.

The official Navy reply to their protests is that the Shropshire is obsolete and uneconomical to refit. So she must go to the breakers.

But one of her ex-crew said, "We took her over from the Royal Navy in 1943. She was really outdated then, except that she had the best radar in the Pacific.

"Maybe she never figured in any spectacular battles like the Sydney or the Australia, but she did a good job during the war.

"And we made her a happy ship. I don't think any man who served



Above is a picture of HMAS Shropshire in all her wartime glory. Today she is a rusting hulk in one of Sydney Harbor's inlets.

aboard her can bear to think of the old lady going to the scrapheap. She deserves something better."

More than 100 of the men who once manned Old Ironsides will meet this month for a reunion to toast the Shropshire's health.

They may even ask the Navy again to send her to the bottom off the Australian coast.

Some of the ex-crew members served aboard her not only at Leyte, but right from the time she became an Australian ship until the end of the war.

After the landing at Leyte, for example, Old Ironsides helped the Americans at Corregidor in Manila Bay, cover-firing the landing of US Marines.

A few days later she again ran

the gauntlet of enemy guns in pumping more than 100 tons of high explosives into Japanese ammunition dumps in another landing in the Pacific.

At Balikpapan, Borneo, in July, 1945, the Shropshire once again covered the landing of American assault troops. In this encounter, two Japanese kamikaze pilots tried to crash their planes on the cruiser's deck.

Finally, she was in Tokio Bay when Japan's leaders boarded the American ship Missouri to sign an unconditional surrender.

But her sailing days have long been over.

And it looks certain that the shell of Old Ironsides will end in a breaker's yard — despite the protests of the men who manned her.—J.M.●



USS Goldsborough: Decommissioning and Fate

Twenty five years ago in 1993, Australia acquired the former USS Goldsborough as a source of spares for the RAN's DDGs. It arrived in Sydney in Jan 1994 and was later sold to breakers in July 1994. *Goldsborough* was launched in December 1961 at Puget Sound and decommissioned on 29 April 1993.

The ship was sold to Australia on 17 September 1993 for US\$2,337,462.

The Royal Australian Navy intended to remove equipment from the ship to establish training facilities for maintenance personnel posted to RAN Charles F. Adams Class DDGs.

At the time, most training was conducted in the United States which was expensive. Technical sailors were continually flying between the United States and Australia. As the DDGs were soon to be retired from service with overseas training needs scaling back an alternative plan for *Goldsborough* was implemented. She would be used as a source of spares for the Perth class DDGs.

Goldsborough had been towed from Hawaii to Australia arriving in Sydney on 2 February 1994, and berthed at Fleet Base East. A four-man team set about removing equipment. While in Australian hands, the team painted the number 40 on the bow, filling a gap in the pennant number sequence of RAN destroyers. After all usable equipment had been stripped, *Goldsborough* was sold to an Indian company in August 1994, and towed away for breaking.



USS Goldsborough, USN Image

Royal Australian Navy Charles F Adams Class Destroyers

HMAS Perth (II),	Pennant 38,	Commissioned 17 Jul 1965,	Decommissioned 15 Oct 1999
HMAS Hobart (II),	Pennant 39,	Commissioned, 18 Dec 1965,	Decommissioned, 12 May 2000
HMAS Brisbane (II),	Pennant 41,	Commissioned, 16 Dec 1967,	Decommissioned, 19 Oct 2001

Photo of the Month:



Murrays Beach 23 January 1978
Photo by David Stratton

History of N7-212

- First Flight 18/01/63
- Ditched on 22/1/78 when with 817 Sqn for SAR duties was transiting from RANAS Nowra to HMAS Melbourne when it had a complete engine failure and ditched in Jervis Bay near Bowen Island. Leut(P) D.Anderson RAN LSA P Cummins and AB Wilkinson swam ashore.

The helo remained afloat and was towed to Murrays Beach from where it was underslung on an RAAF Chinook helicopter and flown to NAS Nowra.

Stored but never repaired and while after being on loan on static display in Melbourne City.

- Struck off charge on 12/04/89.
- Was located at Country Fire Authority Training ground at Fiskville, Vic as a fire training aid.
- 10/2012 moved to and on display at Richard Winterburn's aircraft museum at Heathcote, Vic.
- 2015 Sold to Badgery Creek, NSW Paint Ball Park

Source: <http://www.adf-serials.com.au/n7.htm>

News in Brief

HMAS Farncomb returned home after completing a deployment that saw her take part in several international maneuvers in the past five months.

Farncomb returned to Fleet Base West at Rockingham, Western Australia in late August after participating in exercises Bersama Shield, Pacific Vanguard and Talisman Sabre. During the deployment Farncomb also visited a number of foreign ports, including Guam and Noumea. Out of Guam, Farncomb participated in the US-led exercise Pacific Vanguard together with the navies of Japan and South Korea, and worked through a range of complex maritime task group scenarios with those navies.

Farncomb's visit to Noumea represented a milestone first visit for a Collins-class submarine as well as the first time in 30 years that an Australian submarine has visited the French territory. Before returning home, Farncomb spent some time on the east coast of Australia to conduct valuable familiarisation experiences for potential future submariners.



Future HMAS Stalwart (III) Launched

The Navy's future AOR capability achieved another milestone on 30 August with the launch of NUSHIP Stalwart at Navantia's Ferrol shipyard in Spain. Her sister ship HMAS Supply II is due to enter service in 2020 after being launched in 2018.



More details of the class is available on the [RAN website](#)

This Month in History

September 1820	HMCS SPITFIRE, transported the expedition of LEUT J. W. Smith, RN, and G. E. Dalrymple, to explore northern Queensland. Spitfire Rock was named to honour the schooner
September 1862	HMS BEATRICE, (99 ton topsail schooner), was commissioned. The vessel was jointly owned by the Admiralty and the South Australian Government, and was that State's first man-o-war.
September 1905	VADM Sir Wilmot H. Fawkes, KCB, KCVO, was appointed Flag Officer Commanding the Australia Station. His flagship was HMS POWERFUL
September 1914	The cruiser HMS PSYCHE, (later HMAS PSYCHE), and survey ship HMS FANTOME, (later HMAS FANTOME), joined the contraband patrol in the Bay of Bengal.
September 1916	SBLT S. J. Goble, an Australian serving in the RNAS, shot down a German LVG bomber near Ghistelles. Goble was flying a Sopwith Ship's Pup
September 1926	LCDR F. C. Darley, RN, was killed while leading a boarding party to recapture a British river steamer, seized by Chinese pirates at Wanh sien. Darley distinguished himself in HMAS AUSTRALIA, (cruiser), in May 1917, when he rendered safe a damaged 30 cm shell, jammed in an hydraulic hoist. He cleared the hoist of personnel and removed the fuse of the shell with a crowbar and a spanner. On the night before his death Lcdr Darley wrote in a letter to his mother:- 'I pray to God that I shall do nothing that may bring discredit on the White Ensign'.
September 1929	HMAS CANBERRA, (cruiser), ran aground at Broome, WA . Damage was minor, and the cruiser re-floated herself.
September 1935	The first Seagull MK V amphibian was embarked in HMAS AUSTRALIA, (cruiser). HMAS SYDNEY, (cruiser), also carried a Seagull A2-2.
September 1940	The auxiliary minesweeper HMAS SAMUEL BENBOW, was commissioned. SAMUEL BENBOW was laid down in the UK in 1918. She was requisitioned for the RAN, from her owners, Cam ; Sons Pty Ltd, Sydney, on 4 August 1940
September 1943	HMAS SHEPPARTON and ML 817, were straddled in a heavy attack by Japanese bombers at Morobe, New Guinea. Neither ship suffered casualties, but 50 holes were counted above the waterline on the port side of ML 817.
September 1946	Three seamen from HMAS QUIBERON, (destroyer), were washed overboard during exercise off Port Phillip, VIC. Despite immediate action to recover the sailors, two, Ordinary Seamen, D.R. Egglestone and C. E. Revitt, were lost.
September 1954	HMAS TIDE AUSTRAL, later renamed SUPPLY, was launched at Belfast, Northern Ireland.
September 1962	First Wessex helicopter delivered to the RAN FAA
September 1968	851 Squadron recommissioned at NAS Nowra as a training and transport squadron flying Grumman Trackers and Dakotas
September 1974	HMAS BOMBARD, (LEUT R. Cook, RAN), completed the first circumnavigation of Australia by a patrol boat.
September 1981	CAPT Morton Moyes, OBE, RAN, the last survivor of Mawson's Antarctic Expedition of 1911-1914, died in Sydney. Moyes was the first Instructor Officer to be promoted to Captain in the RAN.
September 1985	The first official rum issue made in a ship of the RAN in 30 years, was made to the crew of HMAS HOBART, (guided missile destroyer), at Victoria, British Columbia. HOBART was representing Australia at the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy
September 1989	VADM Sir John Collins, KBE, CB, RAN, (Retired), died in Sydney. His naval career stretched from 1913 to 1955, and he was the first RANC graduate to reach the position of Chief of Navy. He also served as the Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand, from 1956 to 1963. In 1988 he had been named in the Bicentennial List of 200 Great Australians.
September 1994	HMAS ANZAC was launched by Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Staham, (nee Bullwinkle), one of the survivors of a group of Australian nurses seized by the Japanese in 1942. The ship was launched at Transfield Shipbuilding Yard in Port Phillip, VIC
September 2002	HMAS ADELAIDE, (frigate), arrives in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, for a good will visit.
September 2005	HMAS Whyalla II decommissioned
September 2017	HMAS Hobart III, lead ship of the Hobart Class Airwarfare Destroyers, commissioned

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/>

Readers Forum

Visit to Shanghai by HMAS Swan - 3 September 1981

Thanks to Max Sulman for reminding us of this memorable visit.

When perusing the latest Call the Hands and reading through the monthly events of naval importance it occurred to me that SWAN's visit in 1981 may be worth an entry.

After the revolution in 1949 warship visits to Chinese ports by other than like-minded Communist countries ceased. It was not until the late 1970s that visits were made to China by the British, Italians and French. All went to Shanghai. In 1980 there was an expectation that *Swan* would visit that year but it did not eventuate.



HMAS Swan berthing in Shanghai, 3 September 1981
Image by Naval Liaison Officer

I was her CO when we deployed for a seven month deployment from May to September of 1981 that included 24 scheduled port visits to 17 different countries.

There was a chance that a visit to China may eventuate also but nothing was decided and we were not advised that it was on until August, with visit dates of 1 to 5 September, in Shanghai.

Unfortunately, in late August Typhoon Agnes roared across the Pacific and, having mauled the Philippines, set sail for Shanghai with an ETA of 2 September. SWAN was enroute from Japan and we eventually achieved morse contact with the Chinese navy who advised that we should attempt to beat the typhoon and arrive the day before. This was achieved but, because of the weather, *Swan* spent an exciting three days in a typhoon anchorage about 80 miles upriver with a large number of other vessels. It was exciting because a merchantman wound up my port cable on his screw and getting extricated was a challenge. Anyway, *Swan* eventually berthed alongside in Shanghai at Garden Bend at 1100 on 3 September 1981. The first RAN ship to visit China in 32 years.

There have been several RAN ship visits since then, but I'll warrant none so memorable.

Max

Collins of the Sydney

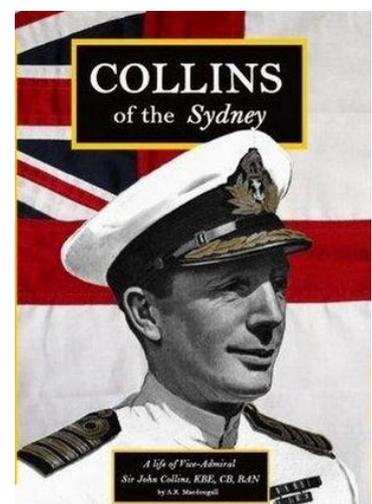
A Life of Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins

By A.K Macdougall

Recently acquired for the Society's library, this book provides significant insight not just into the remarkable life of Vice Admiral Sir John Collins but the history of the Royal Australian Navy for more than half its existence.

Recommended reading.

It is available on line through [Booktopia](#).



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Occasional Papers in this edition

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

- Occasional Paper 62 - The Navy in South Australia
- Occasional Paper 63 - HMAS Vendetta in Malta during WWII

Society Matters

Volunteering with the Society

In March we sought the assistance of a volunteer with an interest in converting books published by the Society to e-Book format. We are delighted with the response with two more Victorian based volunteers joining the Project Team. If you have an interest please contact us. We soon hope to have a range of books available in the online shop.

Marketing Opportunity

For the financial health of the Society the conduct of guided tours and sale of Society products is fundamental. Marketing is a key part of this. If you are available to assist either from home or by attending at the Boatshed in Sydney a few hours a week promoting the Society will make a great contribution. If you can assist please contact us.

Society Events

Visitors are welcome. Details are provided on [the website](#) or contact Chapter points of contact.

Naval Historical Review

Become a member to receive quarterly copies of the Naval Historical Review the Society's flagship magazine. <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/membership/>.

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