

CALL THE HANDS

Issue No. 37

December 2019

From the President

Welcome to this edition of *Call the Hands* and two accompanying occasional papers. I trust you find them of interest. This edition is our last for 2019. We look forward to bringing you the next in February 2020.

Occasional Paper 68 on the service history of Bristol Sycamore HR50/51 helicopter is a Sea Power Centre - Australia paper. It provides insight into this first-generation maritime helicopter operated by the RAN in a rescue and training role.

Occasional Paper 69 describes the origins, evolution and significance of the historic naval garden on the north end of Garden Island, Sydney. This area was first visited by First Fleet sailors in 1788.

Subsequently, the area has developed as a garden and been used for defences, communications and recreation. It is also home to some unique heritage items and provides outstanding harbour panoramas. For this reason, the Society now conducts monthly guided tours of the garden. [Bookings](#) can be made online.

Our November occasional paper 67 on the naval presence in Tasmania from colonial days to the present drew considerable reader feedback for which we are grateful. That feedback is detailed in this edition.

The Society's well attended 49th annual general meeting was conducted on 21 November at the City of Sydney RSL Club. The agenda featured the usual statutory agenda items including the election of office bearers and committee members. In the absence of other candidates, the Committee was unanimously re-elected. Whilst this situation is not uncommon in the modern age, an important point is that the Society is very well served by its dedicated Committee. Many are also regular volunteers, turning their hand to general Society business as well as their normal duties. For this I am most grateful. Committee members names are listed in the 'Society Matters' section of this newsletter.

Key items in the annual report tabled at the AGM included; a successful 2018-19, ongoing financial health of the Society, projects activity and planning for two significant anniversaries in 2020. Read about the projects and planned anniversaries in 'Society Matters'.

A part of the post AGM social program was a naval history quiz conducted by the Society's Research Officer, John Smith. As it was greatly enjoyed by members present despite the not so easy questions, it is attached for your festive season enjoyment. We will provide the answers in February.

Best wishes for a happy and safe festive season,

David Michael

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/>



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Those they left behind - RAN Memorials in the Lyness Naval Cemetery in Orkney

By Commander David Hobbs, MBE, RN (Rtd)

The atmosphere was always one of monotony and frustration at not being involved in the exciting things that were happening in other spheres of the war...We did spend a fair amount of time at sea, usually on a sweep as far as the Norwegian coast, but after four or five days we returned to Scapa, or to Rosyth (which we much preferred).

Andrew C Barrie

Dec 27th 1916. At anchor. I may say here also that one of our two chief stokers died in hospital on the 22nd, and we buried a stoker at the naval cemetery at Kirkwall [sic]. He took bad suddenly on Christmas Eve, and died on Christmas Day. Both chief stoker and stoker were fine fellows and well-liked by all. Stoker Peter Nelson Faust, HMAS Australia.

Scapa Flow is a large, natural harbour protected on all sides by the landmasses of the Orkney Islands. It has been used as a base by the Royal Navy since the eighteenth century and during the First World War it was the principal base of the Grand Fleet, the largest and most powerful fleet in the world at the time. It included three of His Majesty's Australian ships; the battle cruiser *Australia* which served for much of the war as flagship of the Second Battle-Cruiser Squadron and the cruisers *Sydney* and *Melbourne* which formed part of the Second Light Cruiser Squadron between 1916 and 1919.



The Grand Fleet was served by a large shore depot at Lyness on the Island of Hoy, the land-mass on the

western side of Scapa Flow (Hoy is the Norse, or Viking, word for 'high' and accurately describes this hilly island. The nearby island of Flotta, which means 'flat', is also accurately described). The base was built up after 1914 to provide fuel, stores and administrative support for the fleet and to act as a base for the boom defence organisation and the large number of drifters that supported the warships when they were in harbour. It continued in use until after the Second World War but was reduced to 'Care and Maintenance' status in July 1946. Most of the accommodation buildings were dismantled in 1957 and, subsequently, eleven of the twelve big oil storage tanks have been emptied and dismantled. The last one has been retained and restored to house large exhibits which, together with the pumping station and its preserved machinery, forms part of a museum which tells the story of the naval presence in Orkney. The base waterfront is still quite recognisable and continues in use for ferries and oil rig support vessels. The boom defence and stores buildings have been refurbished for industrial use.

The Royal Naval Cemetery is situated a few hundred yards to the west of the depot, on a gently sloping hillside that is strikingly silent except for the calls of sea birds. It looks out across the Flow to the east. The small road that leads past it carries on to the empty Port War Signal Station higher up the hillside. The cemetery is beautifully maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and contains the graves of sailors from both World Wars. There is a Cross of Sacrifice at the centre, between two shelters, in one of which there is a visitors' book and the site is surrounded by a low wall of local stone. It contains the graves of 445 Commonwealth sailors from the First World War, 109 of which are unidentified. The majority are from the cruiser HMS Hampshire, which struck a mine while carrying Lord Kitchener from Scapa to Russia in 1916; the battleship HMS Vanguard which blew up at its mooring in 1917; and the destroyers HM Ships Narbrough and Opal which were wrecked when they ran onto the Pentland Skerries at high speed in fog in 1918. The cemetery also contains the graves of 14 German sailors who died while their fleet was interned in Scapa Flow between 1918 and 1919. Two hundred Second World War burials include 26 men from the battleship HMS Royal Oak, which was sunk during a bold raid by U-47 on 14 October 1939.

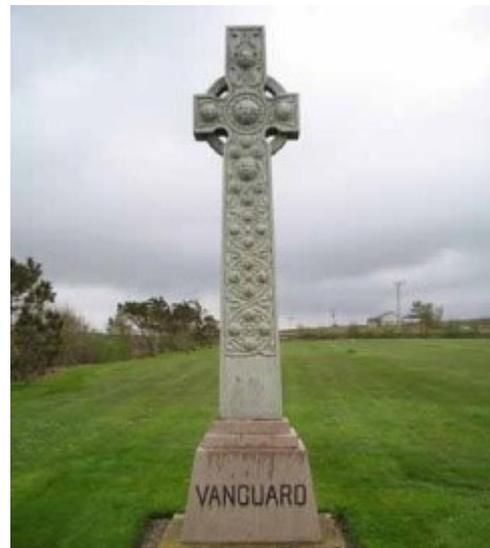


Australians were closely involved with the loss of the *Vanguard* which suffered a massive internal explosion on the night of 9 July 1917 caused, it is believed, by faulty cordite charges, incorrectly stowed. HMAS Sydney was the nearest ship, anchored about half a mile away; her boats were the first on the scene and rescued the only two men to survive the disaster. Unfortunately, two of her own sailors were on board the battleship and were lost.

Both men, Stoker Robert Thomas Houston and Stoker Leslie William Roberts, were unlucky enough to have been sentenced to seven days cells on 3 July, and appear to have been serving their sentence in *Vanguard* as no other cells were available. They would have spent their last week with little or no bedding and daily picking two pounds of oakum, which was weighed when given to them and then again when received back.

Like most of the 804 men who were lost in *Vanguard*, they have 'no known grave but the sea'.

- Aged 36, Houston was a veteran of the SMS *Emden* action in November 1914. He was the son of William and Annie Houston of Strabane, County Tyrone in Ireland but his mother had later remarried becoming Annie Peebles of Paisley in Scotland. He is commemorated on the Naval War Memorial on Plymouth Hoe in Devon and on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. His service certificate survives in the National Archives of Australia showing that, like many others, he transferred to the RAN from the RN in 1914.
- Roberts, aged 31, was born in England, but his family had moved to Australia and at the time of his death, his father, William, lived in Drummoyne, Sydney. Like Houston he is commemorated on the Naval Memorial in Plymouth and at the Australian War Memorial.



The Vanguard Memorial in Lyness cemetery is dedicated to all those who died in the disaster, including the two men from HMAS Sydney. (D Hobbs)

When the RAN ships left Scapa Flow to return to Australia in 1919 they left behind the graves of four of their own, who reflect the varied backgrounds of sailors of that time:

- Stoker Rowland Edward Bond is buried in area B just inside the main entrance and to the east of the path. He served in HMAS Australia and died on Christmas Day 1916 of acute inflammation of the kidneys, having been transferred to the Hospital Ship *Soudan*. He was the son of Charles and Catherine Bond of Kensington Park, Adelaide, South Australia.
- Able Seaman Arthur Stacey served in HMAS Melbourne and is buried in area B. He died of pneumonia on 18 October 1916 aged 38 after being transferred to the Hospital Ship *Plassy*. He had transferred to the RAN from the RN before the war and was the son of James and Eliza Stacey of Shepton Mallet, Somerset.
- Stoker William George Henry McCarthy is buried in area F near the Cross of Sacrifice. He served in HMAS Sydney and died of heart failure on 30 August 1918, aged 44, while the ship was engaged in operations in the North Sea. He was the son of William and Mary McCarthy and left a wife Laura, who lived in Plymouth, Devon. He was another who had transferred from the RN, joining *Sydney* prior to her initial delivery voyage in 1913.
- The youngest of the four was Boy 1st Class Frank David Tavender who served in HMAS Sydney and died in an accident on 26 January 1918 aged just 16. His father, David, lived in Angaston, South Australia. Like two of the others, he is buried in area B.

RAN casualties for World War I, including RN serving with the RAN and RAN serving with the RN amounted to 171, of whom 13 were killed in action; 13 were accidentally killed; 36 were missing presumed dead; 86 died of illness; 4 died as prisoners of war and 19 were drowned. For a war best known for its huge death toll, the RAN figures are relatively small, but each in its own way represents a tragic loss. Moreover, although it might seem that the sea, accidents and influenza were a greater threat than German guns, the Grand Fleet's role remained essential.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/those-they-left-behind-ran-memorials-lyness-naval-cemetery-orkney>

Newspaper Clipping

Navy News 7 March 1969

DEATH OF CAPTAIN HOWDEN

The death has occurred in London of Captain Harry Leslie Howden, formerly one of the widest known personalities in the RAN.

The late Captain Howden (pictured) was 72 years of age and became ill while in London on a holiday trip from his home in Applecross, Perth.

Born in New Zealand where he was educated, he preferred life in the Navy to a business career.

He served with the Grand Fleet in World War I, was at the British Embassy, Tokyo in 1928 and during 1931 (Commander) he was awarded the OBE for service while in command of HMAS MANTIS on Yangtze-Kiang River, China.

After service with Intelligence at the Admiralty, London, he was appointed to command the cruiser HMAS HOBART in which he remained for three years.

HOBART, after service in several theatres, was the last ship to leave Singapore before the island capitulated to the Japanese.

She had survived many aerial bombing attacks and had to flee to sea before completing refuelling.

Captain Howden was mentioned in Despatches for his service in Singapore and Java.

Captain Howden, who was honoured with the CBE in 1940, was Captain of the Royal Australian Naval College in 1942-43



and NOIC, WA, from 1946-1951.

Captain Howden never forgot his "fighting men" as he called HOBART'S ships company and despite age and occasional illness, he made a yearly visit to Sydney to be with HOBART veterans in the annual ANZAC Day march.

Which reminds one of a story told of Captain Howden while he was NOIC, WA.

At that time he was keenly interested in hunting and made outings regularly with a club.

On one occasion his horse stumbled at a high log and became "stranded".

As one of the huntsmen galloped by, Captain Howden was told to "jump off".

"What! desert my ship?" he roared back.

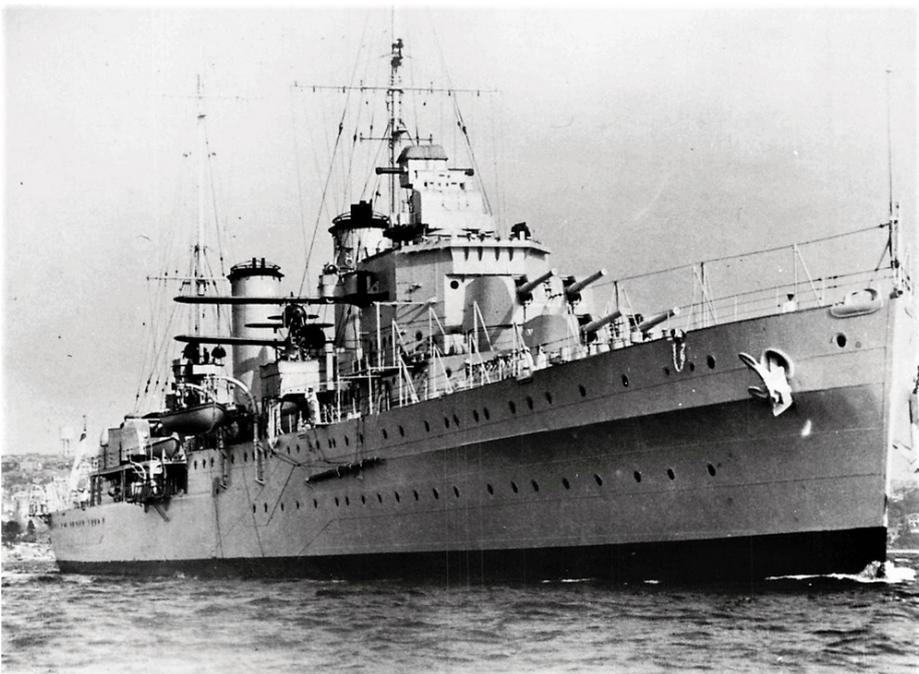
Captain Howden was awarded the CBE for his services in the evacuation in 1940 of all British military forces from Berbera in British Somaliland.

At the time, invasion by the Italian Army was imminent.

Later he was presented with the Union Jack that had flown over Government House in Berbera.

The flag was recovered from an Italian general captured in North Africa.

On special occasions Captain Howden flew the flag at his home in Perth.



HMAS Hobart leaving harbour in her pre-war paint scheme.
RAN Image

Australian Naval History Video and Podcast Series: Season 4

The Naval Studies Group at UNSW Canberra has now produced 44 episodes involving over 80 different speakers on notable events in the history of the Royal Australian Navy. These excellent podcasts are produced in conjunction with the Submarine Institute of Australia, the Australian Naval Institute, Naval Historical Society and the RAN Seapower Centre.



The final episode of season 4 will be published in December 2019. It, along with many other interesting subjects including; Clearance Diving in the RAN, RAN Coastwatchers, Medical and Dental Services in the RAN, The RAN in Russia 1919-1920, The Melbourne Collisions, Australian Naval Leaders and the exploits of HMAS AE 2 in World War I make intriguing listening.

Available at: <https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/podcasts/video-and-podcast-season-4>

Video of the Month

Women in the Navy

This video was produced in the 1950's and offers a unique insight into the embryonic Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS). Much has changed since then and today women are employed across the length and breadth of the Royal Australian Navy in a wide variety of roles both at sea and ashore.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3cbVywPMo8>



Christmas Day Off Korea

I recall this amusing little story as told by my former captain of a large destroyer, from his earlier days during the Korean War (1951-53). My CO was a gunnery officer of the old school, a bluff hearty officer, who could easily drown out all microphone broadcasts as soon as he came up to the bridge and asked for a briefing from the navigator, with his deep booming voice.

Apparently, during the Korean War, he was the gunnery officer of an old wartime Loch Class frigate on the gun line off the Korean Coast. A feature of this campaign was the relative absence of seaborne threat, so ships customarily used to lay a danbuoy to register their position during bombardments of the coast, from which the navigator could accurately determine range and bearing of any target within range. Thus, when called upon to provide bombardment or

interdiction fire, the ship merely had to steam up to her buoy and open fire with the minimum of preparation, then steam off again before attracting any counter-battery fire from the North Korean Communists.

This Christmas Day it had been decided to dispense with hostile activity and three ships of the frigate squadron had anchored in sight of each other to accord the Holy Day suitable respect. After the usual church services onboard it had been agreed that each ship's gunnery officer would visit each other's vessel for mutual collaboration (and hospitality). The senior ship's boat was to be used to ferry the gunnery officers from ship to ship. All went well until, on passage between the second and junior ship of the squadron, the anchorage suddenly came under fire from enemy mobile batteries on the shore. With shell bursts erupting all around them, each gunnery officer realised that none of the ships would be able to reply effectively until they returned to their ship, and in unison they immediately demanded the cox'n of the motor cutter head for "My ship – over THERE...". To solve the obvious dilemma, they then hurriedly agreed that the motor cutter should head instead for the NEAREST ship, so that at least one ship could commence returning covering fire, whilst the other officers proceeded with dispatch to their own respective ships.

I understand that appropriate response was promptly forthcoming from the first frigate to get her gunnery officer back onboard, whereupon all ships left the anchorage in a hurry, providentially screened by a seasonal snowstorm. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away...

My Captain advanced in the Service in due course to become Admiral Commanding Royal Yachts and finally, Governor of Western Australia (a unique distinction this century, as he had joined the Service as a boy seaman in about 1936 and I remember my Buffer telling me that he had scrubbed the port whaler when the CO had scrubbed the starboard!)

LCDR R.J. Francis, RANR

Originally published in Naval Historical Review March 2001

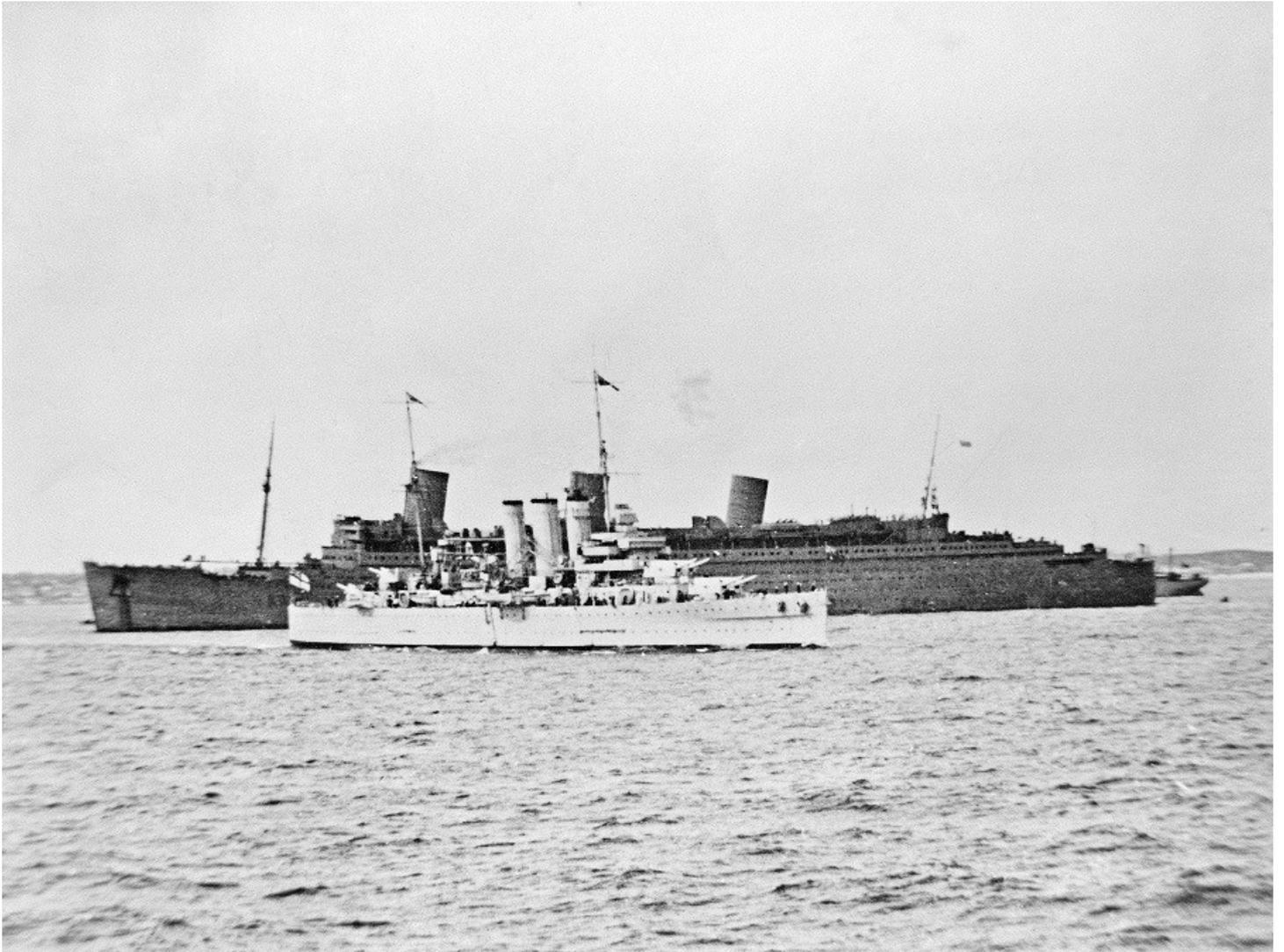


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05890.039

Royal Navy Loch class frigate HMS Mounts Bay (F627), photographed from HMAS Sydney III, probably in Kure Harbour, Japan

Photos of the Month:



HMAS Australia (2) and RMS Queen Mary in Sydney Harbour, 1940 RAN image

The RAN flagship HMAS Australia (2) at 10,000 tons is dwarfed by the Cunard Line's 81,237 ton Queen Mary.

This photograph was taken shortly after *Queen Mary* was converted to a troopship by Cockatoo Island Dockyard prior to it being escorted by *Australia (2)* and other RAN ships taking New Zealand and Australian troops to Europe. The May 1940 convoy which included seven great liners became known as the 'million dollar convoy'. The liners were *Aquitania*, *Mauretania*, *Empress of Japan*, *Empress of Great Britain*, *Empress of Canada*, and the *Andes*. RAN escorts for the convoy included, at different times; *Australia (2)*, *Canberra (2)*, and *Adelaide (1)*.

News in Brief

Australian Navy Canberra-class LHDs achieve full operational capability

The Royal Australian Navy's two Canberra-class landing helicopter docks (LHDs) and their associated landing craft have achieved final operational capability.

HMA Ships Adelaide and Canberra, their 12 landing craft and amphibious supporting organisations achieved the milestone in early November, confirming their ability to deliver and deploy the full scope of amphibious operations. This year, for the first time, both ships participated in exercise Talisman Sabre.

Canberra has returned to her home port at Garden Island, while Adelaide is deployed to the South-West Pacific.



Australian Navy's final air warfare destroyer completes trials

The Royal Australian Navy's third and final guided missile destroyer (DDG), the future HMAS Sydney, has completed sea trials and should be ready for delivery in February 2020.

Following *Sydney's* sea trials, final production work including the integration of the MH60-R helicopter, will be completed ahead of the ship's provisional acceptance into service in February 2020.



Australian Navy's LADS Aircraft completes final flight

The Royal Australian Navy's laser airborne depth sounder flight (LADS) has completed its final sortie after 26 years of outstanding service. This world-leading capability was developed in South Australia and since 1993 has been providing the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian government survey data for coastal and reef waters that are dangerous or difficult to survey by traditional ship-based methods.

Over its life, LADS has charted vast areas of the Australian coast and has deployed to the Cocos Keeling Islands, the sub-Antarctic, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand collecting hydrographic data to improve safety for all shipping.



In total, the LADS Flight has flown more than 3,000 sorties, conducted 186 surveys and covered an area of more than 50,000 square kilometres. In line with the Defence White Paper 2016, the current hydrographic capabilities of Navy will be replaced by commercial hydrographic companies through the HydroScheme Industry Partnership Program (HIPP).

This Month in History

December 1791	Philip Parker King, (son of Governor Phillip Gidley King, RN), was born on Norfolk Island. He was the first Australian to reach flag rank in the RN.
December 1855	The steam war sloop HMVS VICTORIA, (CAPT Lockyer, RN), sailed from the Thames on her maiden voyage to Australia.
December 1911	SBLT A. M. Longmore, RN, an Australian serving in the RN, successfully landed a Short S27 aircraft fitted with airbags on the Medway River, England.
December 1915	The last personnel of the RAN Bridging Train, (RANBT), left Suvla Bay at 0430 making them the last Australians to depart the Gallipoli Peninsula. A 50-man team under SBLT C. W. Hicks, RANR, had been left behind to maintain the pier near Lala Baba, and had been subjected to several days of heavy Turkish shell fire before they were evacuated, early on the morning of the 20th. HMAS PIONEER, (cruiser), engaged German forces at Nazi Bay, East Africa. An attempt to land was beaten back by the defenders.
December 1917	HMAS AUSTRALIA was damaged in a collision with HMS REPULSE
December 1918	The Australian Government approved the purchase of aircraft carried in ships of the RAN based in the UK. The decision was later rescinded on the grounds that maintenance facilities were not available in Australia. The aircraft were returned to the RN before the ships left for Australia.
December 1919	HMAS SYDNEY, (light cruiser), patrolled the Timor Sea as beacon ship for Ross and Keith Smith's flight from England to Australia. The aviators recorded the cruiser was sighted exactly on station.
December 1934	The Royal Standard was hoisted by HMAS AUSTRALIA, (cruiser), at Brisbane, at the commencement of a Royal Tour of New Zealand and the Pacific Islands by the Duke of Gloucester.
December 1939	The German pocket battleship GRAF SPEE took the first Australian naval POW's of WWII, after sinking the merchant ships DORIC STAR and TAIROA, in the South Atlantic. The Australians were DEMS ratings of the RANR.
December 1943	HMAS KALGOORLIE, (minesweeper), picked up 29 survivors from HMAS ARMIDALE's whaler, 150 miles north-west of Darwin. ARMIDALE was sunk by Japanese bombers off Timor.
December 1944	The 21st Minesweeping Flotilla, HMA Ships BURNIE, LISMORE, MARYBOROUGH, and TOOWOOMBA swept shipping lanes in Bass Strait, following the attack on the merchant vessel ILISSOS, by the German submarine U862.
December 1947	The RN Air Station at Nowra, NSW, was transferred to the RAN.
December 1952	HMAS ANZAC, (destroyer), bombarded North Korean troop positions at Cho Do and Sok To Islands, inflicting heavy casualties.
December 1962	The newly formed 16th MCM Squadron arrived in Australia with the six Bird class minesweepers.
December 1967	The guided missile destroyer HMAS PERTH, (CAPT P. Doyle, RAN), relieved USS GOLDSBOROUGH as command ship of Task Unit 77.1.2 off Vietnam.
December 1970	HMAS PERTH, (guided missile destroyer), withdrew from the fire line off Vietnam and celebrated Christmas Day at Hong Kong. During the day the ship was visited by the Minister for the Navy, Mr. D. J. Killen, MHR.
December 1976	HMAS DOOMBA, (minesweeper), was scuttled off Dee Why, NSW. DOOMBA had been built in 1919, and commissioned as HMS WEXFORD, but was sold in 1921 to the Doomba Shipping Company based in Brisbane. In 1939, on 3 September she was requisitioned by the RAN, to become an auxiliary minesweeper, and commissioned as HMAS DOOMBA. She later became an anti-submarine escort, before being paid off from the RAN in February 1947, and converted into a lighter.
December 1983	A sailor and an RAAF fitter were killed when a RAN Wessex helicopter, piloted by SBLT M. Henche, crashed in Bass Strait.
December 1989	After 27 years of service the RAN's Wessex were decommissioned.
December 1995	HMAS OVENS, (Oberon class submarine), decommissioned at HMAS STIRLING, WA.
December 2004	HMAS Kanimbla II sailed from Sydney for Indonesia via Darwin for Operation SUMATRA ASSIST in the wake of the Boxing Day Tsunami.
December 2007	The first two MRH-90 Taipan were accepted into service in Brisbane.
December 2018	HMAS Gascoyne II returned to Australia after completing the longest voyage undertaken by a vessel of its class. Gascoyne, along with sister ship, HMAS Huon, had visited ports and exercised in the Republic of Korea, Japan and the Philippines. Gascoyne and Huon steamed in excess of 4,000 nautical miles during the voyage and were the first Australian Mine Warfare vessels to travel to the Republic of Korea

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

The Navy in Tasmania

Occasional Paper 67 on the History of the Navy in Tasmania published last month drew several responses from readers which are greatly appreciated. Several readers pointed out omissions of RAN Ships with Tasmanian connections. Commander Robert Curtis, Commanding Officer, Navy Headquarters Tasmania added extra value. He wrote,

'Dear David,

May I please take issue with a couple of minor errors in Dennis Weatherall's otherwise wonderful paper on the history of the Navy in Tasmania? A grave sin is to refer to LTCOL David Collins as Army. He was in fact a Royal Marine. His enormous grave adorned with the Globe and Laurel stands only 400m from my headquarters in St David's Park. In fact, that he was a RM was one of the major issues as to why Tasmania to this day has a north vs south, Boags vs Cascade mentality.

At the same time as Collins directed Bowen to relocate to Sullivan's Cove, LTCOL William Paterson (NSW Corps) established a colony in the mouth of the Tamar River. On direction from Governor King this settlement was to fall under the command of Collins, his superior by seniority. Paterson replied "I shall not take orders from a Naval Officer" (Marines being part of the Navy ministry). This set up the north vs south Tasmanian divide set at 42 Deg S, which persisted in a physical sense until the two colonies were formally joined in 1812, and still persists emotionally to some degree today.



Colonel David Collins,
1896



Monument commemorating the first Governor of Tasmania, David Collins who arrived 18 February 1803 and established a settlement on the present site of Hobart. Image by Graeme Saunders

The second point, is that in listing ships with Tasmanian connections, he misses HMAS Dechaineaux. Emile Dechaineux was born in Launceston and educated at the Friends School in Hobart (still exists today and one of Hobart's three elite colleges). He left Tasmania to join RANC in 1916. His family were successful medical practitioners and there is still a Dechaineux Building in central Hobart named after his father. Therefore 50% of the RAN submarine fleet are named for Tasmanians (the only Australian state, as I refer to in my quarterly ROP - to be wholly "girt by sea").

One last thing, in casting our minds into the future, it is heartening to see that the third of the new Hunter class ASW frigates will be named HMAS Tasman, not only in honour of the Dutch explorer, but associated with so much history and many geographic features associated with Tasmania.

Yours aye,
Bob Curtis'

By Editor: Another omission from the list of ships in Occasional paper 67 with Tasmanian connections was the Armidale class patrol boat, HMAS Launceston (3). An updated version of the paper is now available on the Society's website.

Stories about WRANS

Jackie Morgan a member of the Navy Women (WRANS-RAN) Qld Association recently contacted the Society questioning why stories about WRANS never appear in *Call the Hands*. In her message Jackie pointed out the important service of many WRANS over the decades. As an example, she used the recent 100th anniversary on 1 November 2019 of formation of the original Government Code and Cypher School (or Intelligence HQ) in UK which later became known as Betchely Park during WW2.

Australia's association with Bletchley Park was 'Monterey' house in South Yarra where there were many military and civilian personnel, including a WRAN by the name of Joan Duff who was the first woman recruited to the historic Special Intelligence Bureau at Monterey House in early 1941. Joan worked alongside the senior Intelligence officer for so long, she was included in the WRAN's but not allowed to wear the uniform or transfer to other employment which she desired. For security reasons she was not permitted to transfer to the Army as a nurse.

Jackie also pointed out that in Brisbane during WW 2, a house at Ascot called 'Nyrabilia' was a smaller version of Monterey House in South Yarra. Eventually Monterey relocated to this house to better 'attack' the intelligence from the Pacific and Japan. 'Nyrabilia' was also staffed by many WRANs. Similarly, naval observation posts in Sydney during the WW2 were largely staffed by WRANs.

On the latter role Jackie pointed out that 'Japanese submarines approaching Sydney, were first detected on radar by a WRAN. The American officer in charge scoffed at her when she reported it but when the submarines attacked he wanted her log book....As she said in her interview....".....she knew what he was going to do. Destroy the evidence so he couldn't be reprimanded. "What did she do.....high-tailed it up to the headquarters and handed over her log book to the senior officer there.'

By Editor: The Society acknowledges that more stories about the service of WRANs need to be told as do stories about the RAN's smaller Branches. We would also like to provide stories on more specialized technical subjects. However, we are constrained by time and volunteer numbers. As always, readers can assist by bringing to our attention matters of significance which they consider should be shared with others.

Joan Duff: The Also WRAN and Modest Spy

Aged just 20, Joan Duff was chosen to work alongside the head of Navy signals intelligence, Lieutenant Commander Jack Newman, as he built his secret directorate at Monterey House in Melbourne. When she met LCDR Newman, Joan had no special skills, not even touch typing, though she could speak passable French. For reasons unknown to her the powerful Newman asked her to start work that day.

She initially worked in traffic analysis. That is, monitoring who was talking to who – Japanese ships, submarines and shore bases. Joan, like her colleagues had no idea what was being said and no one ever had the big picture. Staff in Monterey House were not allowed to talk about their work or even associate with each other after leaving the building.

Joan was officially designated personal assistant to Newman. She was never given a uniform as Newman was concerned he'd lose her if she enlisted. Joan was later transferred to another unit in Victoria Barracks where she worked on a secret project called 'radar for ships'.



Joan Duff at age 20, Assistant to the Head of Navy Signals Intelligence. SMH image by Mark Jesser

Reference: The Sydney Morning Herald, Tony Wright column: the modest spy and Monterey, Australia's Bletchley Park, July 6, 2017. Accessible at, <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/tony-wright-column-the-modest-spy-and-monterey-australias-bletchley-park-20170706-gx5mxu.html>

Further Reading: The Secret Code-Breakers of Central Bureau: How Australia's signals intelligence network helped win the Pacific War, by David Dufty. Published by Scribe

Occasional Papers in this edition

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

- Occasional Paper 68 - Bristol Sycamore in the RAN
- Occasional Paper 69 - The Naval Garden on Garden Island, Sydney

Society Matters

Annual General Meeting

The following members were elected at the recent AGM.

Office Bearers

President David Michael
Vice Presidents: John Jeremy AM
Treasurer: Nick Horspool
Hon Secretary: David Blazey

Committee

Peter Brigden Tony Townsend
Walter Burroughs Ian Phillips
Kingsley Perry Colin Randall



Committee 2019-20. L to R Tony Townsend, David Blazey, David Michael, John Jeremy, Kingsley Perry, Ian Phillips, Walter Burroughs, Nick Horspool and Peter Brigden.
Absent Colin Randall



A strength of this Team is their diverse backgrounds. Only half have service backgrounds. The others include; ship design building and repair, financial accounting, law, small business, marketing, engineering and mining. A weakness, is the lack of female representation although there have been female committee members in the recent past. To this end the Society would appreciate and value female members and volunteers stepping forward at any time. Our agenda always exceeds available resources.

Naval History Quiz

Test yourself and friends with the attached naval history quiz. We shall provide you with the answers in February 2020.