



CALL THE HANDS

Issue No. 39 March 2020

From the President

Welcome to the March 2020 edition of Call the Hands. We hope you find the mix of contemporary and historic Australian naval stories of interest and provide feedback which is always appreciated.

Accompanying this edition are two quite different occasional papers. The first (OP 73) on ships badges and mottos, like many of our stories, arose out of a research query on the correct spelling of a ships name. HMA Ships Shepparton and Ballarat being the focus of attention. The former has been spelt with both either one or two P's and the latter with three or four A's at different times. In the case of HMAS Ballarat, the ships motto and its link to the Eureka Flag (1854) are also examined.

Occasional Paper 74 focuses on shipping (naval and support) in and around the Port of Darwin on 19 February 1942. It provides details of the damage and losses incurred by these vessels and provides an overview of other World War 2 heritage sites in the vicinity of Darwin.

Now in the 75th year since the end of War in the Pacific we are reminded that the ranks of our World War 2 veterans are diminishing. Sadly, Vice Admiral David Leach, AC, CBE, LVO who joined the Navy in January 1942 is one of them. The Society acknowledges his service of 43 years and leadership of the RAN for three of those years.

The publication of this issue coincides with the 78th anniversary of the loss of HMAS Yarra (2) on 4 March 1942. The example of courage and sacrifice by all her ships company including Leading Seaman Ronald Taylor are acknowledged in this edition through the inclusion of a link to short video on 'HMAS Yarra's last Stand' and biography of LS Ron Taylor. In the coming weeks we look forward to republishing the history of HMAS Yarra (2) in several digital formats. Written by Arthur Parry who left the ship and his mates just weeks before her loss it is story well worth reading.

For Society members, the March edition of our flagship magazine the Naval Historical Review will be posted to you or the Members page of the website by 9 March. It includes the New Entry Officers Course 61 winning essay by on the subject of Border and Resource Protection: Past Challenges and Future Opportunities for the Royal Australian Navy by Lieutenant Mellissa Chen.

Yours aye,

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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Ships Badges

A recent research enquiry on the HMAS Shepparton (1) ships badge highlighted discrepancies in the spelling of ships names creating a degree of confusion. The enquirer pointed out that 'one *Shepparton* insignia showed as 'Sheparton' spelt with one P. There were other insignias with the double P spelling.'

The research result showed that the Royal Australian Navy did not introduce a standard for ships badges until 1947. That is, ships in service during WW2 and those which decommissioned prior to 1947 in particular, did not have official ships badges. The standard design introduced is that with indigenous weapons under the crest.



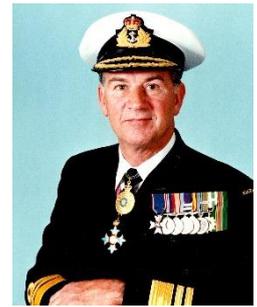
HMAS Shepparton (1), Bathurst Class
Minesweepers RAN image



HMAS Shepparton (2), Paluma Class Survey
Ship, Coastal (AGSC) off Darwin 18 May 2012.
RAN image

Vice Admiral David Leach, AC, CBE, LVO

Vice Admiral Leach passed away on 19 January 2020 at the age of 91. His funeral with full military honours was held at the Garden Island Chapel on 31 January 2020. Admiral Leach served as Chief of Naval Staff¹ from 1982 to 1985 during his distinguished 43-year career. He joined the RAN College as a 13 year old cadet midshipman in January 1942. The coffin of Admiral Leach was transported on a gun-carriage flanked by 136 junior sailors and the Navy Band. Six Commodores acted as pall bearers. As part of the ceremonial tribute a saluting gun battery fired 30 times and an honour guard of 24 fired a three-volley salute.



A gunnery specialist VADM Leach held two command appointments; HMAS Vendetta (II) (1964-66) with the Far East Strategic Reserve, and as the captain of HMAS Perth (II) during her second deployment to the Vietnam War between September 1968 and April 1969. Perth was an efficient and effective ship providing swift and accurate fire on enemy positions from the gunline. On one occasion Perth was the target of 30 rounds of counter battery fire from North Vietnamese gunners. Due to rapid ship handling none of the incoming shells found their target. This deployment earned Perth a US Meritorious Unit Citation which was presented to the ship by the US Ambassador Mr WL Rice on 28 August 1970.



Royal Australian Navy pallbearers carry the casket of the late Vice Admiral David Willoughby Leach AC, CBE, LVO, RAN (Rtd) from the Garden Island Chapel.



Captain Leach accepts a US Meritorious Unit Citation from US Ambassador Mr WL Rice on 28 August 1970. The Citation was awarded in recognition of the stellar performance shown by HMAS Perth during the Vietnam war.

VADM Leach's Obituary is available at: <https://navalinstitute.com.au/obituary-david-leach/>

¹ The position of Chief of Naval Staff was renamed on 19 February 1997 when it became Chief of Navy. Vice Admiral R G Taylor, AO was serving in the position at this time.

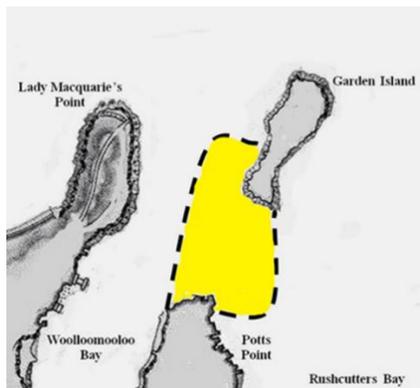
Captain Cook Graving Dock: 75th Anniversary

The Society is currently assisting Navy and Thales (licensed by the Department of Defence to manage and operate the Captain Cook Graving Dock) with plans for a commemorative event to mark the 75th anniversary of the official opening of the Dock on 24 March 1945. The Society's contribution to the anniversary is a new book on the history of the Dock with a focus on its construction. It has also nominated the Dock for engineering heritage listing by Engineers Australia. More details will be provided in a future edition.

These images provide an indication of the impact the Docks construction had on Port Jackson. Twelve hectares (30 acres) between Potts Point and Garden Island were reclaimed to construct the Dock, additional wharfage, workshops and service buildings.



Garden Island 2010 (edited)



Reclamation Area²



Garden Island 2010

Origins of the term, 'Graving' – as in a Dock

Our thanks to Society Committee member and volunteer Ian Phillips for the following;

The word "grave" or "graving" in "graving dock" originates from the practice of dismantling wooden ships and building a new one from the pieces. That was the very purpose of the first dry dock ever built in 1495, in Portsmouth, England; when Sir Reginald Bray was requested by King Henry VII to dismantle the ship Henry Grace à Dieu and from the pieces construct a new ship to be called the Sovereign. Such "graving" of a ship, i.e. the end of life, soul and legal entity of one ship for the creation of a new one, was a common practice and continued well in to the 19th century.

The process of graving was later understood to mean to clean, to remove barnacles etc, and subsequently coat or seal the hull of a wooden ship with tar. Thus, a classic dry dock is commonly known as a "graving dock" as it facilitates the graving process i.e. being the place where old wooden ships are cannibalized or repaired and turned into a new or a seaworthy ship.

The word comes from the middle English word graven meaning to clean and coat (the bottom of a wooden ship) with pitch.

Interesting Images: Captain Cook Graving Dock

While searching for particular images to include in the Societies new book on the Captain Cook Graving Dock a portfolio by professional photographer, Jon Reid was located on the web. If you enjoy good photography and have an interest in the Dock and HMAS Success this site is worth a visit.

<https://www.sharperstill.com/the-captain-cook-graving-dock>.

² Note: The point west of Garden Island in this image is incorrectly named. The correct name is Mrs Macquarie's Point.

Leading Seaman Ronald Taylor: 1918-1942

Ronald Taylor was born on 29 April 1918 at Carlton, Melbourne, fourth of ten children of Collingwood-born parents George Taylor, ironworker, and his wife Elsie, née Davey. Raised at Carlton and Port Melbourne, Ron was a typical boy of the time: he played cricket and Australian Rules football, went fishing and rode billycarts. He developed an interest in the Royal Australian Navy through watching warships entering port and from talking to sailors about life in the service. At the age of seven he became the mascot of the sloop HMAS *Marguerite* and was given his own uniform to wear on special occasions.

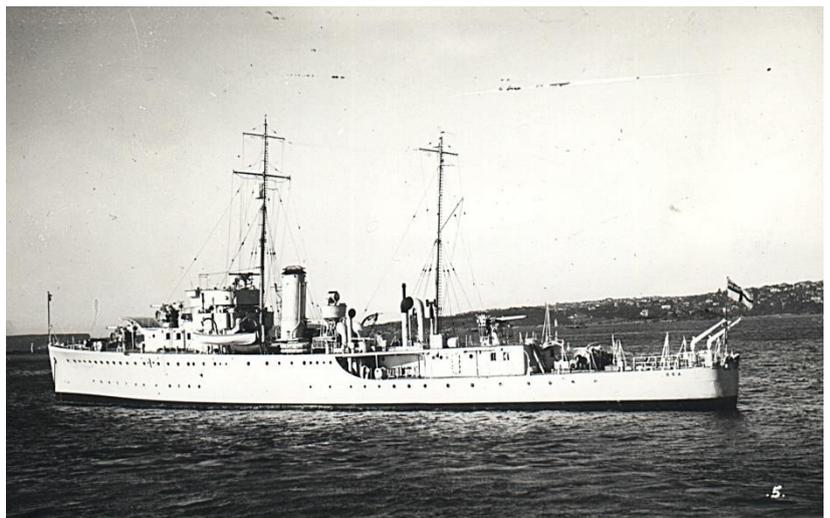


In 1930, during the Depression, George Taylor abandoned his family. The two eldest boys went to Queensland to work on a sugar cane plantation and the eldest girl found a job on a farm; Ron and his brother Ray stayed at home; the five youngest children were placed in institutions. Ron left school at the end of Grade 8 to work as a labourer. On 12 June 1935 he joined the RAN as an Ordinary Seaman. He was then 5 ft 6¼ ins (168cm) tall, with dark brown hair, brown eyes and a fresh complexion. Within 12 months he had gained almost two inches (5cm) in height and had an anchor tattooed in red and blue on his right forearm.

Taylor began his training at Flinders Naval Depot, Westernport. In April 1936 he was posted to the cruiser HMAS *Australia*. After undertaking a course in gunnery (April-September 1938) at Flinders, he served in the destroyer HMAS *Vampire* and in the cruiser HMAS *Adelaide* before transferring to the sloop HMAS *Yarra*, in August 1939. *Yarra* remained in Australian waters until August 1940 when she was dispatched to Aden to join the Red Sea Force. The ship took part in operations against Iraq in May 1941 and against Persia in August. 'Buck' Taylor was promoted Acting Leading Seaman and given command of one of *Yarra's* 4-inch (102mm) guns. *Yarra* was in the Mediterranean in November-December, escorting convoys which ferried supplies and troops to the allied garrison at Tobruk, Libya. On each of the four trips the sloop made, Taylor's gun was active in beating off enemy air-attacks.

By early 1942 *Yarra* was employed on escort duties between Java and Singapore. On 5 February she rescued 1804 people from the burning troop ship *Empress of Asia* which had been crippled by an air attack near Singapore. (Sir) Hastings Harrington later reported that Taylor had controlled his gun 'on this occasion, as on many others', with 'judgment and determination', and added that his 'keenness and courage' set a good example to those around him.

On 27 February 1942 *Yarra* was ordered to escort three auxiliary vessels from Java to Fremantle, Western Australia. Five Japanese warships intercepted the convoy on 4 March. Despite *Yarra's* gallant defence all four allied vessels were destroyed, with the sloop the last to be sunk. Taylor ignored the order to abandon ship and stayed alone at his gun, firing slowly and defiantly at the enemy until he was killed shortly before the ship went down.



Video of the Month: HMAS Yarra's Last Stand

This four minute Royal Australian Navy video describes the final action of HMAS Yarra (2) on 4 March 1942. Yarra was escorting a small convoy of ships from Java to Fremantle when it was detected and engaged by a superior force of Imperial Japanese Navy cruisers. HMAS Yarra's captain unhesitatingly placed his ship between the Japanese force and those he was charged with protecting fighting valiantly until she was overwhelmed and sunk. This extract from the Royal Australian Navy production "The History of the Royal Australian Navy Volume Two 1919-1945" recreates HMAS Yarra's last stand.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9ppb0fsYFM>



Photo of the Month:



RAN Sycamore Helicopter

By Editor: If any of our readers can provide background information on this photograph, we would like to hear from you.

News in Brief

Fighting force forms up for FCP



L-R: HMA Ships Hobart, Arunta, Stuart and Sirius unite off the east coast of Australia on their way to Bass Strait and the start of Fleet Certification Period 2020 (FCP20). RAN.

In a demonstration of maritime combat power, four Royal Australian Navy warships formed off Australia's East Coast to conduct a tactical transit in the opening stages of Fleet Certification Period 2020 (FCP20).

The formation signaled the start of the sea phase of FCP20, which is the Royal Australian Navy's first major training exercise for the year and focuses on mid-intensity high-end warfighting.

HMA Ships Hobart (III), Stuart (III), Arunta (II) and Sirius conducted the evolution on their way to Bass Strait. There they joined HMA Ships Canberra (III), Diamantina (II) and Huon (II) and Submarines Collins and Farncomb for several weeks of detailed maritime warfare exercises that graduate in difficulty and complexity. Commodore Flotillas (COMFLOT) Commodore Michael Harris said FCP20 was a demonstration of the Royal Australian Navy's rapidly advancing and highly capable sea and air control capabilities.

This year marks the first time an Air Warfare Destroyer has taken part in a Fleet Certification Period with HMAS Hobart providing air-defence to the Task Group while Minehunters *Diamantina* and *Huon* represent Navy's ability to insert minor war vessels into a large-scale activity alongside major fleet units and boost overall capability.

The surface and submarine combatants are also joined by a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A aircraft, a United States Navy P-8 and a Royal New Zealand Air Force P-3 which will test the Task Group's readiness against airborne threats.

Involving more than 2000 military personnel, the sea phase of FCP20 will continue in Bass Strait until 6 March 2020 with participating ships also visiting ports in Victoria and Tasmania.

This Month in History

March 1859	CDRE William Loring, CB, was appointed Commodore commanding the newly established Australian Squadron of the Royal Navy, which became independent of the C-in-C, India. His Flagship was HMS IRIS, and HM Ships NIGER, CORDELIA, ELK, and PELORUS completed the squadron.
March 1889	HMS CALLIOPE, (screw corvette), was dispatched from Sydney to Samoa to forestall German and American plans to annex the island.
March 1907	CMDR William Clarkson, ANF, and CMDR W. J. Colquhoun, DSO, ANF, departed Australia for Japan to conduct an in depth study of the Imperial Japanese Navy methods of ship construction, administration, and training. The pair then also visited the United States, Canada, and England, to observe similar activities. This information was then brought back to Australia to help with the further development of the Australian Naval Forces. Clarkson and Colquhoun were both ex State Navy officers. Colquhoun had been awarded the DSO, and twice Mentioned in Dispatches, for bravery and leadership while attached to the RN Brigade in South Africa in 1899-1900, while Clarkson had served onboard HMCS PROTECTOR in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and later went onto become a Vice-Admiral in the RAN.
March 1916	HMAS PIONEER, (cruiser), intercepted and sank the German supply ship TABORA off Dar Es Salaam, East Africa.
March 1921	HMAS CERBERUS, (former HMC turret ship), was moved to Corio Bay, VIC, and was re-commissioned as HMAS PLATYPUS II, (submarine tender).
March 1936	The Seagull amphibian aircraft, from HMAS AUSTRALIA, (cruiser), was damaged when it fell from a crane at Malta. AUSTRALIA was on exchange duties with the RN at the time.
March 1942	HMS NAIAD, (cruiser), was sunk while escorting a convoy to Malta. The cruiser's First Lieutenant, LCDR A. S. Storey, RAN, was awarded the DSC for conspicuous bravery in the operation. A Bar to the DSC was awarded to this officer some months later "for gallantry, skill and seamanship in a brilliant action against strong enemy forces" when serving in his next ship, HMS CLEOPATRA, (cruiser).
March 1947	HMAS GOULBURN, (minesweeper), was sold out of service and renamed BENITA.
March 1954	A whaler carrying 28 RAN personnel from Frankston Pier, to the aircraft carrier HMAS VENGEANCE, was hit and sunk by two freak waves. Two of the sailors onboard, (Recruits C. N. Collins and R. Jervis, from HMAS CERBERUS), were swept away and drowned. Neither body was ever recovered.
March 1958	805 Squadron, flying Sea Furies, decommissioned at NAS Nowra
March 1963	Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II signalled the destroyer HMAS ANZAC at the conclusion of the Royal Tour of Australia; "Splice the main brace". The RAN does not splice the main brace except on the order of the Commander-in-Chief.
March 1967	HMAS BOONAROO departed Port Wilson, VIC, on her first and only voyage to South Vietnam. A general freighter of the Australian National Line (ANL) she had been commissioned nine days earlier.
March 1975	First Sea King delivered to RAN FAA
March 1982	HMAS TOBRUK, (landing ship heavy), transported 10 Iroquios helicopters to the Middle East as part of a multi-national force of observers enforcing the cease-fire agreement between Egypt and Israel. RAN aircrew and maintainers operated the helicopters, which were based in El Gorah, in Northern Sinai. They were withdrawn in 1986.
March 1990	The first RAN Seahawk helicopter landing on a guided missile frigate was made on HMAS ADELAIDE, in Sydney Harbour. HMAS STALWART, (destroyer tender), was decommissioned after 22 years service. She was later sold to a Greek shipping company for conversion to a passenger ferry, and renamed HER MAJESTY M. In 1999 she was renamed TARA II.
March 1994	HMAS ENCOUNTER, (shore establishment at Port Adelaide), was decommissioned, marking the end of a century of naval presence in the Port Adelaide area.
March 2006	The landing craft heavy, HMA Ships WEWAK, (LCDR Williams, RAN), LABUAN, (LCDR M. A. Verho, RAN), and TARAKAN, (LEUT C. J. Doolin, RAN), along with two Sea King helicopters from 816 Squadron, (under the command of LCDR R. Jose, RAN, and LCDR S. Palmer, RAN, respectively), were committed to providing support, to clean up, and restore services to, the area around Innisfail, QLD, following the devastation of northern Queensland by cyclone Larry. Named operation Larry Assist, the three LCH'S were under the overall command of LCDR Williams, and designated as CTG 627.3 .

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 search methods are accessed via the Research page.

<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/research/on-this-day/>

Readers Forum

Vice Admiral David Leach, AC, CBE, LVO

Our thanks to Paul Martin for providing these images.

Gun carriage team made up of Junior Officers from HMAS HARMAN. Drill organised by (then) CMDR Paul Martin G+ who was Director of Surface and Air Weapons (DSAW) at the time. DSAW was also responsible for all ceremonial aspects in the RAN.

Senior officers visible right to left as escorts.
RADM Rourke
RADM Sinclair
RADM Crossley
RADM Knox
RADM Kennedy
RADM Martin (far side)



Retirement of VADM David Leach as Chief of Navy, 20 April 1985 in Russel Offices square.

Gathering of Gunnery Officers: 1986

(left to right)

Roger Cawthorn
Michael (Mick) Biddle
Geoffrey Morton
David Leach (VADM Rtd.)
Lee Cordner
Bryan Wilson
Gerry McLennan
USN Exchange Officer
Geoffrey Smith
Graham Harris
Paul Martin



Gathering of Gunnery Officers on USS Missouri during Fleet Review in 1986

S Class Destroyers

Whilst researching the Society's new book on the history of the Captain Cook Graving Dock volunteers came across the photograph below. This photograph is of interest because the Balls Head Quarry, today the location of HMAS Waterhen, provided more than 450,000 cubic metres of rock fill for the cofferdams and back filling around the Captain Cook Graving Dock during its construction. Volunteers also endeavoured to identify which S Class destroyer lying alongside the former HMAS *Tingira* in Balls Head Bay. Unfortunately, the ship could not be identified.



S Class Destroyer alongside *Tingira* at Balls Head Bay 26 May 1941. RAN image.

The RAN's five 'S' Class Destroyers; HMA Ships STALWART (1), SUCCESS (1), SWORDSMAN, TASMANIA and TATTOO built in the UK 1917/18, and commissioned into the RAN in 1920 were paid off into Reserve in the late 1920s to 1930. All five 'S' Class destroyers were later sold for breaking up on 4 June 1937 and eventually scuttled of Port Jackson. It is interesting to note that the buyer, Penguin Pty Ltd, Sydney was interested only in the valuable nonferrous superstructure (mostly bronze) around the bridge and wheel house to reduce the effect of the ships magnetic field.

Note, Tingira having been decommissioned in 1927 was eventually broken up in 1941 not long after this image was taken.

Further Reading: O.G. Ramsay, *The RAN's Destroyers*, published in the Naval Historical Review, March 1991 edition, available at; <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/the-rans-destroyers/>



HMAS *Swordsman* at anchor in Farm Cove, Sydney. RAN image

Controversy over Decision to Scrap S Class Destroyers

The following is the Newcastle Sun Newspapers page 1 story on Saturday 9 January 1937.

SCRAPPING OF OLD DESTROYERS: WASTED WARSHIPS

Five destroyers which Australia is about to scrap have years of service left. They could be fitted with anti-aircraft guns for coastal patrol, and used also as training ships. Those are the views of Rear Admiral H. J. Feakes retired, who urges strongly the retention of the destroyers, Swordsman, Stalwart, Success, Tasmania and Tattoo, now swinging at anchor off Garden Island and shortly to go to shipbreakers. "It would be iniquitous waste to scrap them," he said. He pointed out that Britain was retaining its C class cruisers, which are the same age as the S class destroyers. These destroyers have been dry docked regularly and well maintained. Their hulls are perfectly sound. "Why have they been kept until now?" if it is not for just such a time as this? Where is the sense in having kept them if they are to be scrapped just when they may be needed?' Admiral Feakes asked. The five cost approximately £1,000,000 to build, and could not be replaced to-day for £2,000,000. In the event of their being scrapped, as is proposed, Australia will 'get no ships to replace them, only 'vague talk of building ships at Cockatoo,' the Admiral added. Similarly, he said, it was inexplicable to observe that full use was not being made of the Adelaide, finest cruiser of her class, now being used as a depot ship, and the aircraft carrier Albatross, which cost £1,500,000.

By Editor.

On 4 June 1937 the then Acting Minister for Defence, Mr. H. V. C. Thorby announced the sale to Penguin Ltd, salvagers of Balmain for a total of £13,773. The average, price for each vessel being £2,754 which, compared with the price realised by the destroyer Anzac in August, 1935 was regarded as very satisfactory.

Stalwart' Revenge

John Bastock, in his book, *Australia's Ships of War* records that prior to being towed to sea for scuttling, the former HMAS Stalwart's hull was filled with a cargo of condemned onions. After scuttling, a freak current carried many of the rotting onions ashore, where they polluted Bondi and adjoining beaches, to the great indignation of the local residents.

Occasional Papers in this edition

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

- Occasional Paper 73: Ballarat or Ballaarat? Badges and Flags, Divisive or Not?
- Occasional Paper 74: World War 2 Arrived on the Australian Mainland: Thursday 19th February 1942

Society Matters

Volunteering with the Society

The Naval Historical Society of Australia is seeking volunteers to assist with all aspects of its role in preserving and promoting the history of the Royal Australian Navy.

The Society relies on the work of volunteers, men and women, for all of its day-to-day operations – both at the National office as well as the interstate Chapters.

Volunteers with IT skills to assist with general administrative processes such as membership, sales orders, digital imagery and website content on a regular basis in the Boatshed (head office) are sought. Work is also available in areas such as research, publishing, promotion, IT, sales, marketing and tour guiding.

A service background is useful but not critical. Many volunteers from diverse backgrounds bring specialist technical and professional skills, some are retired, and yet others are willing to lend a hand to whatever needs doing.

For those seeking interesting work in great surroundings or from home, we would like to talk with you.

Naval Historical Review

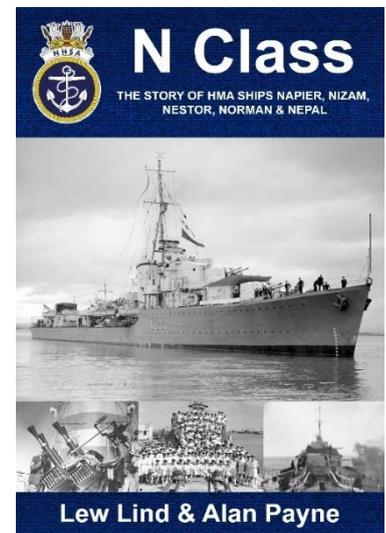
Become a member to receive quarterly copies of the Naval Historical Review the Society's flagship magazine. <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/membership/>.

N' Class Destroyers: Society Book Republished

The 'N' Class Destroyers book first published by the Society in 1974 has been republished in three electronic formats and is now available for sale in the Society's online shop. This story of HMA Ships Napier, Nizam, Nestor, Norman and Nepal takes readers through the story of each ship from commissioning, through extensive service during World War II until late 1945. The missions described cover the full spectrum of destroyer operations in the period.

The book is priced at \$15 for E-pub and Kindle versions and \$10 for a pdf version.

Download through the [Society's shop](https://www.navyhistory.org.au/shop/). <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/shop/>
More books will be republished in the coming months.



Garden Island Dockyard Heritage Tour

This heritage tours commences with a video on the history of Garden Island. Visits are then made to buildings which are now over 100 years old, the Captain Cook Graving Dock and other important sites rarely seen by the public.

At \$20 pp they are great value.

Details are available at <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/garden-island-tours/>



Promote these tours with friends and colleagues and you assist the Society.

Northern End of Garden Island Tour



Heritage tours of the Hill and its unique history are conducted monthly on a Sunday morning. Visitors travel via ferry from Circular Quay.

At \$25 pp they are great value.

Book on line;

<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/shop/>

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