

# Call the Hands

Issue No. 97

Aug/Sep 2026

## From the President

Welcome to this 97th edition of *Call the Hands* and associated occasional papers. Occasional Paper 213 has its origins in a presentation by vexillographer John Vaughan delivered to Society and Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) members in early August. John's presentation was one of several events conducted by the Society in conjunction with the ANMM throughout the year. Other events have included a presentation on the history of the WRANS and launch of the Society's most recent book, *Serving the Nation, Always underway 1948 – 1972*. This book is selling well. Obtain your copy via the Society's online [shop](#).

Occasional Paper 214 by WA Chapter President, David Nicolson is a story about renowned model maker Gerry Westenberg and David's connection with him through photography. Stories such as this and letters to the editor are always welcomed as they inform us of events, activities and matters of interest to members which may otherwise go unnoticed. Please also tell us how we are doing. Are our publications meeting your expectations?

Occasional Paper 215 records a historic milestone in the life of STS *Young Endeavour II*. David Jordan represented the Society at the coin placing ceremony on 7 August 2026. As a former STS *Young Endeavour* Voyage Captain, David provides valuable insights into this new vessel.

Society support to Navy is continuous and takes many different forms. The most recent activity was facilitation of a one-day naval history seminar to more than seventy Year Two midshipmen at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Outstanding presentations by several Canberra based naval historians and Society Vice President, Walter Burroughs were bookended by the Head of Naval Engineering, Rear Admiral Rachel Durbin and Professor Craig Stockings, UNSW Canberra who opened and closed the seminar respectively.

On page 16 you will find details of coming events. Of particular note is the 18<sup>th</sup> of November when the Society will conduct its 2026 AGM, a book launch and a twilight social cruise on magnificent Sydney Harbour. Full details will be promulgated in mid-September.

Finally, for our valued subscribers to this newsletter, you are invited to take up formal membership of the Society and become eligible to receive four editions of the Society's Flagship magazine, *The Naval Historical Review*, discounts on Society products and services and receive invitations to member events. Membership is value for money and easily obtained through the [website](#). I look forward to your joining.

Kind regards,  
David Michael



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of Australia

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## HMAS Basilisk

HMAS Basilisk was a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) depot base in Port Moresby, first commissioned on 1 January 1943. The initial basis for all Allied forces and strategy in the war with Japan was the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDACOM), established at the Arcadia Conference in Washington (22 December 1941-14 January 1942). The main objective of ABDACOM and Allied strategy in Southeast Asia was to maintain control of a defensive line that ran down the Malaya Peninsular and the southernmost islands of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) in order to retain Allied control of the Indian Ocean.

In the wake of Japan's rapid victories, the Allies were forced to retreat. In March 1942, the Pacific theatre became a US strategic responsibility and ABDACOM was replaced by the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA), which encompassed Australia, New Guinea, Papua, the Philippines, the western part of the Solomon Islands and most of the NEI. With Singapore, Malaya, the NEI and the Philippines lost to Japan, the Allies soon sought to establish new strategic bases in the SWPA.

Consequently, Port Moresby was chosen as the site for a new RAN establishment that was commissioned as HMAS Basilisk in the wake of the Battle of Milne Bay and Japan's failed amphibious assault on Port-Moresby. Moresby would prove central as a supply and staging area for equipment, stores and personnel essential to supporting the Allied campaign against the Japanese in New Guinea. The name Basilisk was chosen to commemorate HMS *Basilisk*, the paddle-steamer commanded by Captain John Moresby, RN, when he surveyed and named the harbour Port Moresby in 1873.



*Commander RBA Hunt OBE RAN (centre), pictured with his staff.*

Commander RBA Hunt OBE RAN, was appointed the first Commanding Officer of the new establishment. Having previously completed a hydrographic survey of the northern approaches to Australia and Port Moresby, Hunt had a sound knowledge of the area.

Because of its strategic significance, preparations for harbour defence measures at Port Moresby began before the formal commissioning of Basilisk. In September 1940, the War Cabinet approved a naval mining policy to provide for defensive minefields in preparation for the possibility of Japan entering the war. The following month, the coastal cargo ship Bungaree Commissioned HMAS *Bungaree*, 9 June 1941) was requisitioned as the RAN's sole minelayer. In August 1941, *Bungaree* began minelaying off Pyramid Point and Bootless Inlet just south of Port Moresby, and off Lolorua Island to the South West. The following month, equipment was requested for the laying of submarine indicator loops at Port Moresby. The loops were not laid until May 1943 - delayed by a lack of material and questions concerning the practicality of the loops in defending Port Moresby. Eventually the work was undertaken and loops were laid in the entrance to Port Moresby Harbour, known as Basilisk Passage.

Basilisk's first significant undertaking involved providing support to Operation *Lilliput*. Following victory at Milne Bay, the Allies went on the offensive, making preparations for the US and Australian armies to capture the Buna-Gona area. This involved the transportation of troops, weapons and supplies between Milne Bay and Oro Bay. In a series of convoys over December 1942-June 1943, ships were loaded in Australia, before sailing north to Port Moresby, Milne Bay and finally across to Oro Bay. The *Lilliput* ships, as they were known, were almost exclusively made up of merchant vessels from the Dutch shipping company Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij (KPM). *Lilliput* came with considerable danger and RAN ships - mostly corvettes - shouldered much of the responsibility for convoy escort duties. Even so, the operation was not without losses. In March and April 1943, the KPM ships SS *s'Jacob* and *Van Heemskirk* were attacked by Japanese bombers and sunk in Oro Bay. Several other naval and merchant ships were also seriously damaged over the course of Operation *Lilliput*. When the operation concluded, 60,000 tons of supplies and more than 3800 troops had been delivered.

With Basilisk operating as an important staging point in the New Guinea campaign, the establishment saw a flurry of activity providing victualing and refuelling services to the *Lilliput* ships, as well as to the RAN ships providing escort and search and rescue coverage. An indication of the operational tempo of Basilisk during the first three months following its commissioning is evidenced by the 150 merchant vessels and 76 Allied warships that made use of its facilities and services. The heavy demand for fuel for troop, cargo and escort vessels was met by the instillation of additional fuel storage facilities, with a capacity of up to 12,000 tons furnace oil, 5000 tons diesel oil and 5000 tons distillate. Two existing slipways were extended and a naval repair workshop constructed nearby.



Left: HMAS *Watcher* in the Basilisk Slipway. Right: The naval repair workshop at Basilisk.



*The view over Port Moresby township and harbour.*

As the New Guinea campaign scaled down, so too did the RAN presence in the region. Basilisk was reduced to an undefended base on 24 April 1945 and on 17 December, the base was decommissioned. Basilisk was commissioned for a second time on 14 November 1974. At the time, Port Moresby was among the more idyllic postings available to RAN personnel. Indeed, Jill James - who spent two years in Port Moresby when her husband was posted there - remarked "in what other country could you go swimming 12 months of the year? Yes, the weather is divine...Papua New Guinea has been our best posting and a valued experience for the whole family."

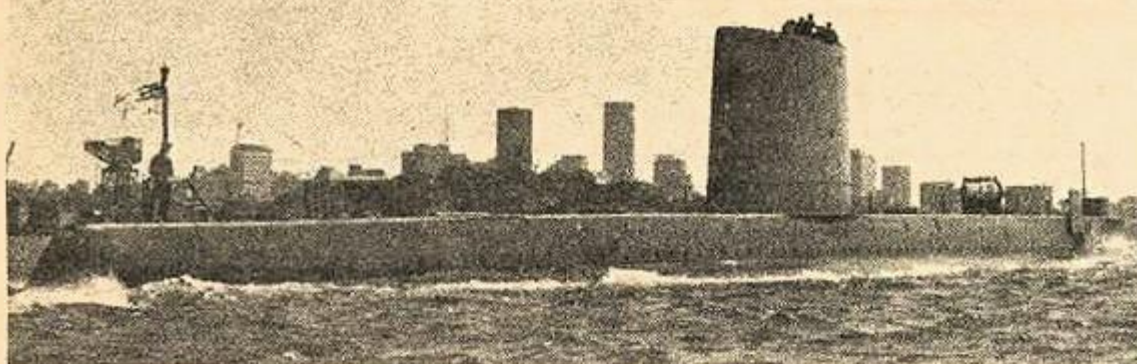
The second commissioning of Basilisk was part of Papua New Guinea's transition to self-governance and eventual independence. The Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) came into being in January 1973 in the lead up to independence in September 1975. As the former colonial administrator, Australia remained directly responsible for matters relating to Papua New Guinea's defence until the latter's independence. After independence, the two nations agreed that Australia would continue to assist, but not bear the entire responsibility for Papua New Guinea's security. The Australian Defence Cooperation Group (ADGF) assisted in this process, with Australian personnel from all three armed services on loan to the PNGDF. The ADGF provided training and technical support, as well as financial assistance and assets. Basilisk served as the administrative support base for the RAN personnel serving in the ADGF. On 31 January 1983, Basilisk paid off for the final time.



*Basilisk Commanding Officer, Commander Peter Pafford RAN, pictured with the ship's bell.*

This story is provided courtesy of the [Sea Power Centre - Australia](#).





## OTWAY JOINS THE FLEET

The Royal Australian Navy's second Oberon-class submarine, **HMAS OTWAY** (pictured), arrived in Sydney on October 7 after completing her delivery voyage from the United Kingdom.

The 2000-ton submarine, under the command of LCDR G. R. Dalrymple, approached Sydney underwater and surfaced off North Head outside Sydney Harbour.

The boat was delayed several hours in her passage from the south by heavy seas.

An estimated 400 people were at the wharfside to greet the submarine's seven officers and 55 sailors.

Some of the crew had been absent from Australia for up to five years, training in British submarine establishments and ships.

The first of the class, **HMAS OXLEY**, arrived in Australia in August, 1967. Two others are on order.

**OTWAY** berthed at the RAN submarine establish-

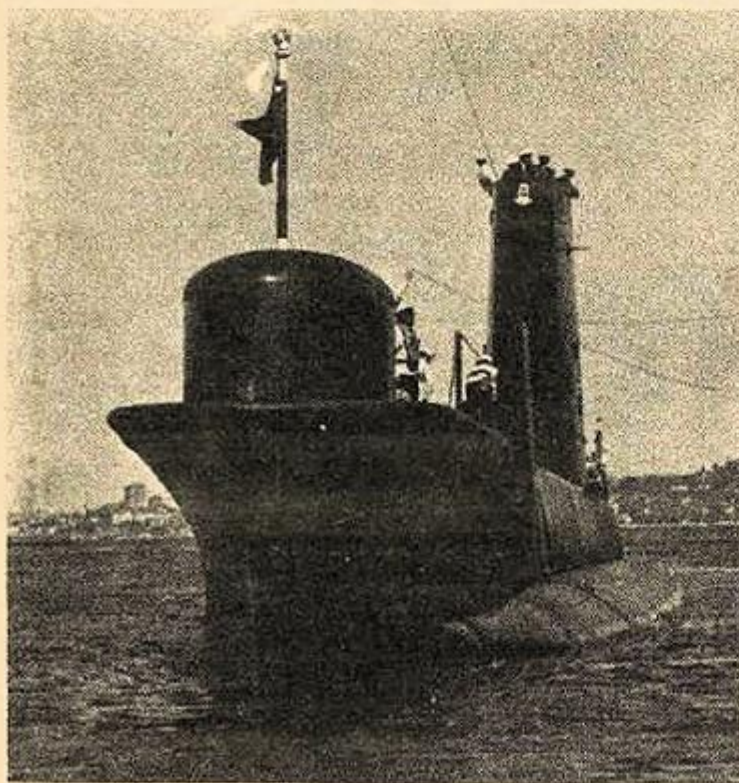
ment, **HMAS PLATYPUS**, at Neutral Bay.

The welcoming party was headed by the Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral G. J. B. Crabb.

**HMAS OTWAY** is 295 feet long and has eight torpedo tubes capable of firing different types of torpedoes.

The \$10 million submarine left Portsmouth, England, in July.

On her delivery voyage, **OTWAY** has covered long distances submerged, and called at Gibraltar, Dakar, Tema (Ghana), Simonstown and Durban.



## HMAS Warramunga to the Rescue of SS *Starr King*

During 1943 several Japanese submarines operated off the east coast of Australia. In all about 14 ships were torpedoed by these subs. Surface escorts for ships operating off the coast were in short supply and as far as possible an air escort was provided for ships sailing in groups.

On the 9th February three American ships, *Jim Bridger* (7180 tons), *Archbishop Lamy* (7176 tons) and *Starr King* (7176 tons) were to leave Sydney in company and to be covered by one aircraft in daylight hours. However *Starr King* was delayed in leaving by some two hours and was on her own without air cover. On the 10th February, four RAAF Hudsons were carrying out a diverging search off the coast and about 150 miles east of Sydney when they sighted an American Liberty ship down by the stern and sinking rapidly. It was *Starr King*. She had been attacked by the Japanese Submarine I-21 and had been hit by two torpedoes delivered one hour apart.

The new Tribal class destroyer HMAS *Warramunga*, based on Sydney while working up, was despatched at full speed and reached the stricken ship early in the afternoon of the 10th February. The crew of the *Starr King* had abandoned ship, there being no casualties. The ship was down by the stern but appeared to be stable, so the crew returned to the ship in an attempt to have the destroyer take her in tow.

Several attempts were made to take her in tow but were unsuccessful and further attempts became impossible as darkness fell. The crew were ferried to the destroyer in their lifeboats and she stood by the vessel in readiness to start work again as soon as the daylight hours commenced. However, at approximately 2.30 a.m. *Starr King* heeled over and sank. The crew were returned to Sydney aboard *Warramunga*.





## Cockatoo Island Aircraft Division

Recent discussion in the Naval Historical Society over a compass being offered to the Naval Heritage Collection by the estate of the late John Jeremy led volunteers down several lines of enquiry to determine its application. This included the possibility of the compass being an aircraft compass. This line was quickly debunked. However, it did remind us of an unusual activity performed in the Cockatoo Island Dockyard between the Wars.

In 1929, following the closure of the RAAF Experimental Station at Randwick, Wing Commander LJ Wackett and some of his team moved to Cockatoo Island to establish an aircraft department. Set up in the drawing office (Building 10) on the top of the island, the department carried out many repairs to civil and military aircraft, including Charles Kingsford Smith's famous Southern Cross.

In mid-1933, at Kingsford Smith's request, the aircraft department completed the design and construction of twin-engine monoplane passenger aircraft, the Codock. Further designs followed, and the department also embarked on the construction of high-speed small craft. The department was closed in 1934, but Wackett, later Sir Lawrence Wackett KBE, DFC, AFC, went on to found a company which became the nucleus of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation. CAC produced aircraft for the RAAF from before WW2 until the mid-1980's.



*The passenger aircraft Codock being prepared for its first flight.*

Further Reading:

[A short history of Building 10](#), Occasional Paper 165, published by NHSA July, 2023

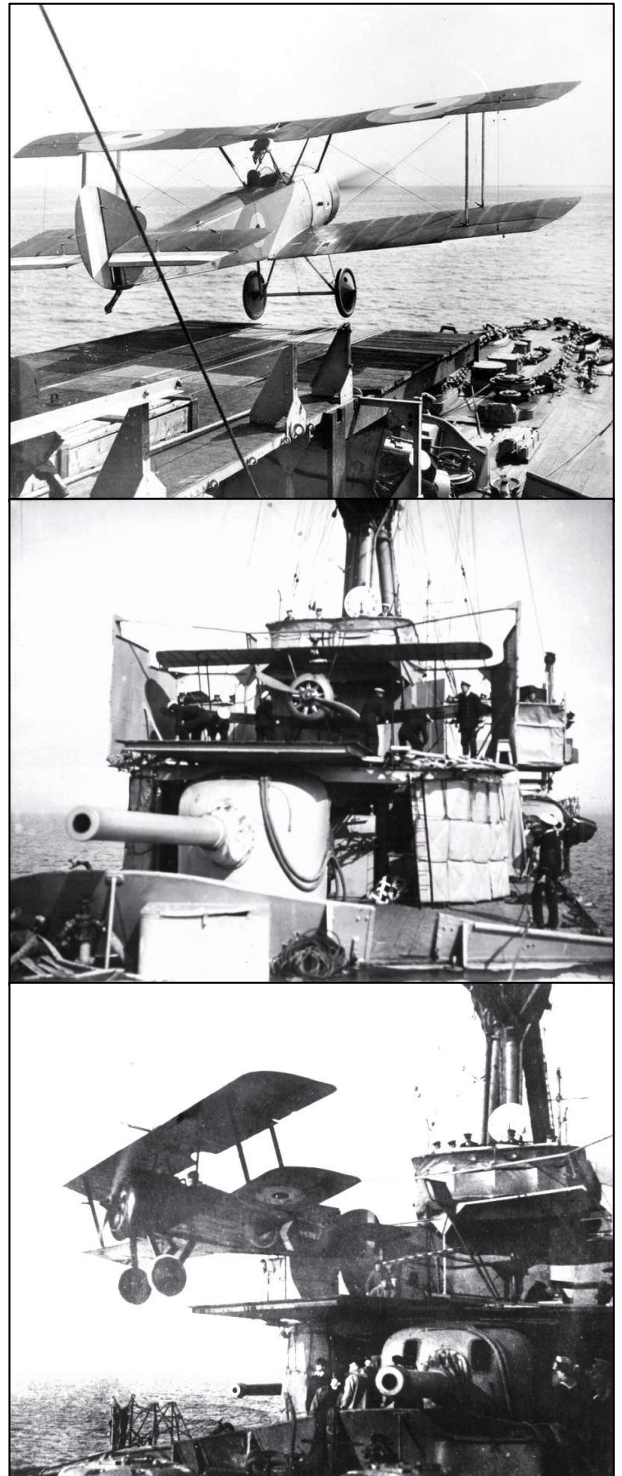
## Gun Mounting Launched Aircraft, WW1

A recent enquiry seeking images of the take-off platforms used on the Town class cruisers during WW1 brought the following images to light.

In August 1917 HMAS *Sydney* commenced a three-month refit at Chatham, where she was fitted with the first revolving aircraft launching platform to be installed in a warship. On arrival at Scapa Flow (Orkney Islands, Scotland) in December 1917, her commanding officer, Captain Dumaresq, borrowed a Sopwith Pup then being operated from a fixed platform on the cruiser HMS *Dublin* for use onboard *Sydney*. On 8 December 1917 the aircraft was launched successfully from Sydney's platform in the fixed position. It was the first aircraft to take off from an Australian warship. Nine days later the Pup flew off the platform turned into the wind; the first time any aircraft had been launched from such a platform in the revolved position. The revolving platform solved the problem of wind direction on ships without a flight deck.

While launching aircraft was possible, recovery onto a cruiser was not. Aircraft with floats such as the Sopwith Baby could land on the sea near the cruiser and be hoisted aboard. This method was used by HMAS *Brisbane* in 1917 with a borrowed plane. For land planes such as the Sopwith Pup, Camel and Strutter the recovery procedure involved the pilot ditching the aircraft near a friendly destroyer or cruiser to allow for his rescue. The aircraft usually sank or was destroyed.

Ditching was acceptable for these scouting aircraft of low relative value compared to ships. The priority was pilot survival, not aircraft preservation.



*HMAS Sydney (I), flying operations from platform over the forward 6-inch gun.*



## Tribute to Captain John Joseph Doyle AM, RAN Retd

John Joseph Doyle (affectionately known as Joe Doyle) was born on 11 October 1938 and entered the RAN College in 1952. He joined the surveying service initially as a Sub Lieutenant under training in HMAS *Warrego* in late 1958, until December 1960. He then joined HMNZS *Endeavour* for four months in the Antarctica and after promotion to Lieutenant in March 1961, rejoined *Warrego* for seven months in South Australia and Queensland waters.

Joe transferred to HMAS *Bass* in January 1962 for a year in Tasmanian and Queensland waters, then for the next five years served in *Barcoo*, *Moresby*, *Paluma* and again *Moresby* surveying around Papua-New Guinea, Queensland and Western Australia.



Joe went ashore to the RAN Hydrographic Office in February 1967, for eleven months before he rejoined *Moresby* in January 1968 for two years in Papua New Guinea, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland waters, being promoted Lieutenant Commander in March 1969.

In February 1970 he proceeded overseas on RN exchange to join HMS *Fox* in the West Indies, thence HMS *Hecla* in 1971 also in the West Indies and later in the North Atlantic and north coast of Scotland.

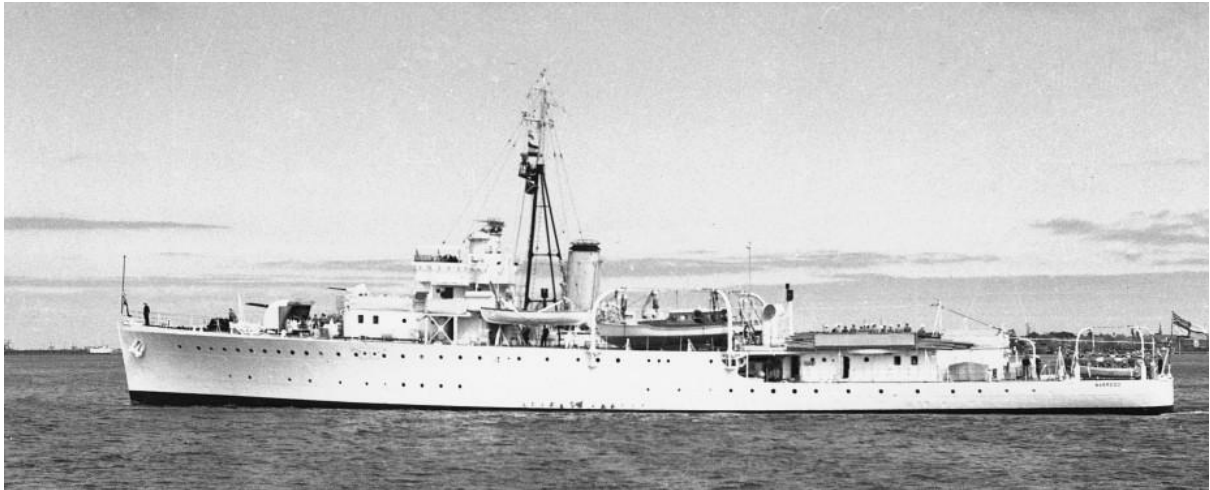
On his return to Australia in July 1972, Joe was posted in charge of the RAN Hydrographic School for nineteen months. He then obtained his first sea command in HMAS *Flinders* in April 1974, and spent the next twenty-one months in northern Australia and Papua New Guinea waters before being promoted to Commander in December 1975.

This was followed by command of *Moresby* in January 1976 for twenty-two months, and another short stint in the RAN Hydrographic Office before he attended the Joint Service Staff College in Canberra from January to June 1978 returning to the Office after the course. In January 1980, Joe assumed command of *Moresby* for the second time, working for two years in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

He returned to RAN Hydrographic Office initially as Deputy Hydrographer RAN, then Hydrographer RAN in January 1982, following the resignations of both Captains Calder and Pullar. He was relieved by Captain J.A.L. Myres RN in May 1982, reverting to Deputy Hydrographer.

He was promoted to A/Captain in December 1984, confirmed in 1985 and in the New Years Honours list for 1985 was appointed a Member of Military Division of Order of Australia, for service to the Hydrographic Branch as Deputy Hydrographer. He retired from the service in March 1989. Later that year he rejoined the RAN Hydrographic Office in a civilian capacity as Sailing Directions, Maritime Boundaries and Nomenclature officer.

Joe Doyle passed away on 16 September 2025. In his will he bequeathed a significant sum of money to the Naval Historical Society for which we are truly grateful. During his life Joe maintained a keen interest in naval history and made a significant contribution to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of the Hydrographic Service 'Leadline to laser: the Hydrographic Service, Royal Australian Navy 1920-1995' by R.J. Hardstaff.



HMAS *Warrego* in her white paint scheme as part of the RAN's survey fleet. RAN image



HMAS *Moresby* (II) (forefront) and HMAS *Cook*, oceanographic research vessel (background) steaming in company. *Moresby* (II) served from 1964 to 1997 and *Cook* from 1980 to 1990.

### **Further Reading**

[A Brief History of the Australian Hydrographic Service](#) by Kevin Slade, PSM & John Perryman, CSM, published in the March 2022 edition of the Naval Historical Review

Through the recently launched [Naval Graves website](#) you are invited to add details of the grave and service information about former naval personnel. By doing this you ensure they will not be forgotten by future generations.

[Register a Grave](#)

## Video of the Month

### Keeping the Fleet at Sea 1940

A 1940 Royal Australian Navy film showing the work behind the scenes to keep the fleet at sea. It includes scenes of work carried out in the Royal Edward Victualling Yard, on Spectacle Island and Cockatoo Island.

**Duration:** 10mins 37 secs.



**Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkGWIRW5jsE>

## Occasional Papers

Occasional papers accompanying this edition of *Call the Hands* are;

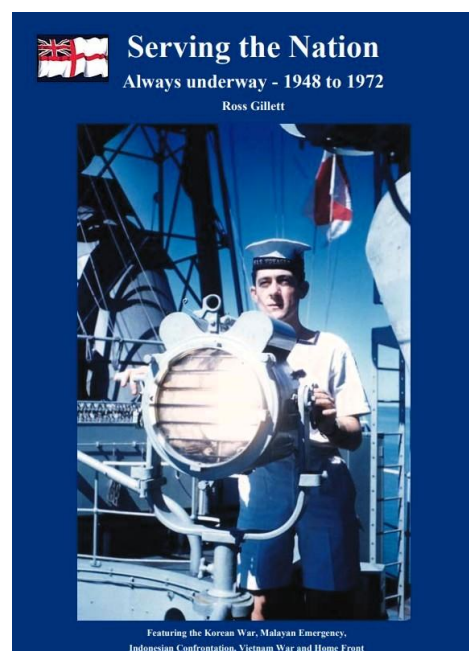
- Occasional Paper 213 - The Australian National and Maritime Flags
- Occasional Paper 214 - The Butterfly Effect
- Occasional Paper 215 -Young Endeavour (II) - an update

## Serving the Nation 1948 to 1972

Renowned Australian naval historian, Ross Gillett's latest book examines RAN activities during the 1950s and 1960s. These were demanding times for the Royal Australian Navy. The Navy was busy with intensive involvement in the Korean War, partnership with other navies to counter the communist insurgents against Malaya, Indonesian Confrontation against Malaysia and the war in Vietnam. Added to these challenges were the introduction and integration of 41 new warships into the Fleet and, on the home front, the never ending 'political battle' to secure the funds and personnel needed to perform the assigned tasks. The same years also witnessed the revitalisation of the Fleet Air Arm from its modest beginnings in 1948, through to a sophisticated generation of carrier-based warplanes. Despite this heavy tempo the Navy departed the 1960s in good shape, a major blue water navy in the region.

**Available in digital and paperback formats.**

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## The Photo of the Month



*A Sea Otter on the flight deck of HMAS Sydney late 1940s.*

The Supermarine Type 309 Sea Otter was a long-range maritime patrol sea plane produced by Vickers Armstrong (Aircraft) Ltd, formerly Supermarine Aviation Works (Vickers) Ltd, who produced the renowned Spitfire fighter aircraft.

As an amphibian the aircraft could land and take off from both land based runways and from the sea and had a range of 700 miles. The original Sea Otter Mk I was used primarily in the reconnaissance and communications role while the Sea Otter Mk II was a dedicated Search and Rescue (SAR) platform. The Sea Otter had a crew of three/four with the cockpit seated aft of a nosecone assembly. The front and sides of the cockpit were lined with Perspex windows to allow better observation for the crew. The biplane wing arrangement consisted of a lower unit fitted to the roof of the fuselage and an upper unit suspended high over the fuselage. In British service the Sea Otter was armed with a single 7.7mm Vickers K machine gun fitted to the nose and two 7.7mm Vickers K machine guns installed in the aft section of the aircraft. It could also carry 4 x 250 lb bombs.

The RAN acquired three Sea Otters in 1948 for use as carrier borne air-sea rescue aircraft and operated by 723 Squadron. They were embarked in the aircraft carriers HMA Ships *Sydney* and *Vengeance*, but with the increased usage of helicopters for air-sea rescue duties they were sold in 1953 and replaced by the Sycamore helicopter.

## News

### Australia lays keel for first Hunter Class frigate at Osborne

BAE Systems Maritime Australia has officially laid the keel for the Royal Australian Navy's first Hunter-class frigate at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia, marking a major milestone for the nation's future surface combatant fleet and anti-submarine warfare capability.

Derived from the British Type 26 Global Combat Ship design, the lead vessel—set to enter service in the early 2030s—will form the backbone of Australia's next-generation anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability while integrating advanced Australian-made CEAFAAR radar technology and U.S. combat system elements.

The ceremony at the Osborne shipyard adhered to long-standing naval tradition, featuring the placement of a commemorative coin beneath the ship's keel. This symbolic gesture is intended to bestow good fortune upon the vessel during both its construction phase and subsequent operational life at sea.



*Image courtesy of Department of Defence*

### RAN commissions 2 new patrol boats

The Royal Australian Navy has commissioned HMAS *Cape Spencer* and HMAS *Cape Hawke*, expanding Australia's Evolved Cape Class patrol boat fleet and strengthening its ability to conduct border protection, maritime security and constabulary operations in its maritime approaches.

HMAS *Cape Spencer* and HMAS *Cape Hawke* formally entered service during a commissioning ceremony at HMAS Cairns on 27 August, joining a growing fleet tasked with some of the Navy's most persistent maritime security responsibilities.

The two vessels were originally accepted by the RAN and operated as ADV vessels.

At 58.1 metres long, the vessels are designed to provide the endurance and flexibility required for operations across Australia's extensive maritime domain, including border protection, maritime constabulary duties, law enforcement support and engagement with regional partners.



*HMAS Cape Spencer*

*Image courtesy of Department of Defence*

## This Month in History - August

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 1848 | An historic tug-of-war between HMS BASILISK, (paddlewheel sloop), and HMS NIGER, (screw sloop), was conducted to prove the relevant efficiency of the two systems of propulsion. NIGER won the contest. Both vessels later served on the Australia Station.                                                                                                              |
| August 1900 | The Victorian Naval Brigade contingent to the Boxer Rebellion landed at Taku. They advanced to Tientsin next day, but fighting had ended and they were employed as police and firemen.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| August 1914 | HMA Ships PARRAMATTA, YARRA, and WARREGO landed parties at Rabaul. HMAS ENCOUNTER captured the German steamer ZAMBESI in St George's Channel, New Britain.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| August 1917 | HMAS SYDNEY became the first Australian warship to have aircraft capability when she was fitted with a launching platform at Chatham Dockyard. Mounted immediately behind and partly over the forward 6 inch gun it was the first revolving platform to be installed on a warship.                                                                                       |
| August 1928 | HMAS AUSTRALIA II sailed from Portsmouth on her maiden voyage to Australia.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| August 1934 | A Seagull amphibious aircraft from HMAS AUSTRALIA was blown from its cradle and wrecked, during a gale in the Great Australian Bight.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| August 1940 | HMAS HOBART'S amphibian aircraft, made a solo bombing raid on the Italian airfield at Zeila, Somaliland. Italian bombers retaliated by straddling HOBART with bombs.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| August 1942 | Australian Fleet Auxiliary BISHOPDALE while sailing for Brisbane from Noumea struck a mine in an Allied mine field which had been laid by HMAS BUNGAREE, there was no fire or casualties.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| August 1948 | The 20th Carrier Air Group, (comprising 805 and 816 Squadrons), was commissioned at the Royal Naval Air Station, Eglinton, England. The air group was formed to be embarked in the RAN's first true aircraft carrier, HMAS SYDNEY. 805 Squadron with Hawker Sea Furies and 816 Squadron with Firefly FR.4 aircraft                                                       |
| August 1952 | HMAS CONDAMINE began operational duty in the Korean War in the Haeju area on the Korean west coast as a unit of Task Unit 95.12.4 . Three days later she fired her first shots of the war with a bombardment of enemy positions on the mainland opposite Mudo Island.                                                                                                    |
| August 1955 | LEUT J. R. Bluett and LEUT P. McNay, (of 805 Squadron, RAN Fleet Air Arm), shot down a pilotless Auster aircraft, three miles to seaward off Sydney. The aircraft took off without its pilot from Bankstown Airfield, and flew over Sydney for two hours. Bluett and McNay, flying Sea Furies, fired a burst each into the Auster, which crashed in flames into the sea. |
| August 1966 | Confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia officially ceased. Several RAN units, including destroyer escorts, and the Ton class minesweepers, had been involved in the confrontation, mainly conducting anti-infiltration patrols off Singapore, and Sabah/Sarawak in East Malaysia.                                                                                   |
| August 1970 | The Admiralty abolished the daily rum issue and grog allowance in the RN.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| August 1976 | First Officer J. Baker, WRANS, became the first officer of the WRANS to be selected for the Royal Naval Staff College course at Greenwich, England.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| August 1980 | The keel of HMAS SUCCESS, a 17,000 ton replenishment vessel for the RAN, was laid by the Minister for Defence, Mr. D. J. Killen, at Cockatoo Island Sydney.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| August 1986 | HMAS VAMPIRE decommissioned at Garden Island, Sydney, for disposal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| August 1994 | HMAS KANIMBLA, was commissioned. KANIMBLA was previously the USS SAGINAW (THSS), which had been commissioned into the USN in 1971.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| August 2002 | HMAS CANBERRA (II) returned to Australia after a deployment to the Middle East region for Operation SLIPPER.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| August 2006 | HMAS FREMANTLE II decommissioned.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| August 2018 | The outstanding service of the Royal Australian Navy's Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV) was recognised with the presentation of the Unit Citation for Gallantry at a ceremony conducted by the Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove and former Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Tim Barrett at the Australian War Memorial                                                    |
| August 2020 | Retrospective VC awarded to Seaman Teddy Sheean for his actions during the loss of HMAS ARMIDALE on 1 December 1942. It was the first VC awarded to a member of the RAN.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| August 2024 | HMAS MELVILLE decommissioned at Cairns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |



## This Month in History – September

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September 1861 | HMVS VICTORIA, (CAPT W. H. Norman, RN), rescued the crew of the bark FIREFLY from a reef in the Sir Charles Hardy Islands off Queensland. The two vessels were searching for the ill-fated Burke and Wills trans-Australia expedition.                                                                                                                                       |
| September 1905 | VADM Sir Wilmot H. Fawkes, KCB, KCVO, was appointed Flag Officer Commanding the Australia Station. His flagship was HMS POWERFUL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| September 1914 | HMAS MELBOURNE landed a party of 4 officers and 21 petty officers, under LCDR M. A. Blanfield, on Nauru, to dismantle the German wireless station on the island.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| September 1916 | HMAS MELBOURNE joined the Second Light Cruiser Squadron for operations in the North Sea. The squadron was based at Rosyth, Scotland.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| September 1918 | HMAS MELBOURNE patrolled the Norwegian coast for German surface vessels.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| September 1926 | HMAS CERBERUS, (former HMVS CERBERUS, turret ship), was sunk as a breakwater in Port Phillip Bay, VIC.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| September 1932 | HMAS ALBATROSS carried out the first naval surface and air exercises off Darwin, NT. ALBATROSS used her guns in the exercise to sink the old Navy collier, HANKOW.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| September 1940 | The cruiser, HMAS SYDNEY, (CAPT J. A. Collins, RAN), and HM Ships DAINITY and ILEX bombarded Italian airfields at Scarpanto. Three Italian E-boats attacked the squadron, but accurate fire from ILEX sank two, and the other withdrew.                                                                                                                                      |
| September 1942 | HMAS ARUNTA escorted the freighter ANSHUN and the hospital ship MANUNDA into Milne Bay. ARUNTA departed the bay at 1500 to screen other ships, and that night a Japanese naval force sank the ANSHUN by gunfire, but left the hospital ship unharmed.                                                                                                                        |
| September 1945 | HMAS SWAN accepted the Japanese surrender at Namatanai, New Ireland.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| September 1952 | HMAS ANZAC (II) departed Sydney for Sasebo to begin her second tour of duty in Korean waters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| September 1962 | First Wessex helicopter delivered to the RAN FAA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| September 1969 | The RAN Clearance Diving Team 3 was awarded the USN Meritorious Unit Commendation for conspicuous service in Vietnam.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| September 1970 | The last recorded Sea Vampire Trainer flight took place. These aircraft were replaced by the CAC Aermacchi MB-326H (Macchi) from October 1970. The remaining six Vampires were sold during 1970-72 with most going to aviation museums.                                                                                                                                      |
| September 1980 | An Australian Squadron, consisting of HMA Ships MELBOURNE, PERTH, DERWENT, STALWART, and SUPPLY, and HMAS OTAMA was deployed in the Indian Ocean on an extended flag-showing cruise.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| September 1996 | HMAS SWAN was decommissioned at HMAS STIRLING, WA, after a career spanning 26 years. She was later gifted to the West Australian State Government, and sunk as a dive wreck in Geographe Bay.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| September 2004 | The mine-hunter HMAS DIAMANTINA, (LCDR Peter Bartlett, RAN), returned to Sydney after six weeks service in the Solomon Islands, as part of Operation Anode. During her deployment her ships company helped dispose of 230 pieces of WWII ordnance, ranging from hand grenades to 250 pound bombs. They also assisted in repairing medical equipment at the hospital at Taro. |
| September 2017 | HMAS HOBART III, lead ship of the HOBART class air warfare destroyers, commissioned.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| September 2023 | HMAS MARYBOROUGH (II) and HMAS LARRAIKA (II) decommissioned at HMAS Coonawarra.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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/>

## For the Diary

### Events at the Australian National Maritime Museum, 2026

During the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Australian Navy the Museum has generously supported the RAN. It has also partnered with the Naval Historical Society to host a series of events during the second half of 2026.

**12 September** at 2 PM      Book launch: [Salt in his Veins](#): The Life of Vice Admiral Sir Albert Poland KBE CB DSO DSC  
By Vice Admiral Peter Jones AO DSC RAN (Ret'd)  
[Registration](#)

**4 November**      [2026 Goldrick Seminar](#): Maritime Power and National Resilience at Hotel Realm, Canberra.

**18 November**, at 9:30AM      NHSA Annual General Meeting  
at 10:30AM      Book launch. First Gulf War: RAN Logistics.  
By Dr Victor Rudenno  
5 to 8PM      Twilight Sydney Harbour social cruise.  
Registration details will be provided in mid-September.

**19-20 November**      [Chief of Navy's History Conference](#)  
To Fight and Win at Sea: 125 Years of Australian Naval History' at Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.  
[Registration](#)



*Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney. NHSA image*

# John Jeremy Memorial Essay Competition

**It is time to enter if you have not already done so.**

**Entries close 16 October 2026.**

**Visit the [website](#) for details.**



**Download the [Flyer](#)**

The flyer is for 'The Naval Historical Society of Australia' (ABN 71 094 118 434), with the Patron being the Chief of Navy. It announces the 'JOHN JEREMY MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION 2026'. The text describes the society's aim to promote knowledge of Australian naval history and mentions John Jeremy as a long-standing Vice President. It states that original thinkers are sought who can promote discussion around Australian naval history. The competition is conducted in three divisions: Professional (Journalists, Defence Officials, etc.), Adult Novice (non-professional adults over 18), and Senior Students (aged 16-18). Prizes are listed in a table: Professional (\$1,500, \$500, \$200), Adult Novice (\$1,500, \$500, \$200), and Senior Students (\$1,500, \$500, \$200). It also mentions 'Highly Commended Entries' and a deadline of Friday 16 October 2026. A QR code and a photo of a man are also included.

**You can help.**

Please pass on the details to senior school students in particular.  
The prize money should be attractive to both the young and young at heart.

| Prizes          | 1st Place  | 2nd Place | 3rd Place |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Professional    | \$1,500.00 | \$500.00  | \$200.00  |
| Adult Novice    | \$1,500.00 | \$500.00  | \$200.00  |
| Senior Students | \$1,500.00 | \$500.00  | \$200.00  |

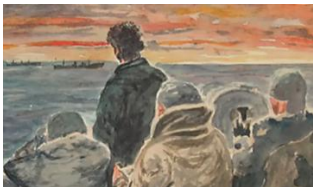
## Full Details

Competition details can be found on the Society's website, <https://navyhistory.au/>. Just select the button on the home page or scan this QR code above.



## Website Links

The Society is proud of the great variety of content on its [website](#). The following is provided as a guide to some of our key features. Have a surf.

|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Society Events</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>                | <b>YouTube Channel</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>            | <b>Follow us on Facebook</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>                                   |
| <b>Explore Naval Art</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>            | <b>Podcasts</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>                   | <b>On This Day</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>                                            |
| <b>Events on Google Earth</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>      | <b>Naval Heritage Sites</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br>     | <b>Chapel of Remembrance</b><br>Commemorative plaque<br><a href="#">Application form</a><br><br> |
| <b>Call the Hands, Back Copies</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br><br> | <b>Membership</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br>Please join us<br> | <b>SHOP</b><br><br><a href="#">LINK</a><br>Please browse<br>                                     |