

CALL THE HANDS

NHSA NEWSLETTER
Issue No. 4 December 2016

From the President

Acceptance and the growing number of subscribers to *Call The Hands* is most encouraging as is the ready contribution of interesting stories from members. Thanks in this regard go to Tom de Voil and Peter Poland whose contributions on *HMAS Melbourne III* and lifting of the siege of Tobruk are featured in this edition.

The Society achieved an important milestone on 2 November with re-establishment of the ACT Chapter of the Society. Members can read more about it in the December edition of the Buzz, the Society's quarterly newsletter. The well attended inaugural meeting which was also attended by many non members from like minded organisations in the 'Navy Family' elected a Committee of four; Simon Cullen, Tony Vickers, Kathryn Spurling and David Manolas. With this talented and experienced team steering the Chapter an interesting range of activities and opportunities is anticipated for members.

In early November I was fortunate to visit Melbourne and meet with Victorian Chapter President, Rex Williams and the Bird Family at the Chapters new meeting place, the Glen Waverley RSL Club. Here it was a great pleasure to present George Bird with Honorary Life Membership of the Society. George has served on the Committee and as Treasurer for many years. More about George and his Service is in this edition.

The Society's National AGM was conducted in Sydney on 22 November following the Victorian and Western Australian Chapter AGMs in recent weeks. A few changes to office bearers occurred with the key change at the National level being the retirement of David McFall and election of Geoffrey Barnes to the Committee. We are most grateful for David's service to the Society over the past 22 years, a wonderful innings. Geoffrey is a also a long term member with a strong background in broadcasting and maritime museums. We will have a Committee of ten in 2017.

As always, our Society which is a not for profit organisation can only improve with support from willing volunteers. Our ambitious plan for the coming years has generated an interesting range of tasks which can be progressed from either home, the Boatshed or a combination of both. If you have an interest in volunteering please contact us at secretary@navyhistory.org.au.

As the year draws to a close I wish you and all your families a merry Christmas and happy New Year. Enjoy the festive season and stay safe. We will be back with the next edition in February 2017.

David Michael President

29 November 2016



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of Australia

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From the Editor

Welcome to the December edition of 'Call the hands'. I am pleased that the articles keep on coming for the newsletter and we are providing more fascinating information from members and contributors in each edition. Please feel free to contribute your own stories and photos as everything is worth sharing. The email for contributions is callthehands@navyhistory.org.au.

David Stratton
Editor

Naval Historical Review: 173rd Edition

The December 2016 edition of the Naval Historical Review, distributed to members quarterly is the 173rd. Editor, Walter Burroughs and Doris Shearman can take credit for the ongoing quality of this magazine. More than 1,400 articles have now been published in this, the Society's flagship publication, over its life of 45 years. Articles prior to 2011 have been uploaded to the Society's website, others will follow. In the mature state articles older than one year will be progressively loaded.

Become a member to receive the Naval Historical Review. <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/membership/>

Submarines: The history and future underwater warfare

The Government announcement earlier this year of a replacement submarine program is one of the most important naval initiatives of recent times as it largely dictates our future naval direction for the next two or three decades. The December edition of the Naval Historical Review will focus on submarines with information from an ABC Radio National program which provides a good generalist background to the submarine replacement program. This program also featured James Goldrick. This is followed up with a detailed look at the requirement by CDRE Bob Trotter OAM RAN Rtd, Patron of the WA branch of the Submarine Association of Australia and past National President of the Naval Association of Australia. This is a must read edition of the Review for those wishing to remain abreast of what the future holds for our navy.

NHSA ACT Chapter Inaugural Meeting

The inaugural meeting of the NHSA ACT Chapter took place on 2 November 2016. The meeting was chaired by NHSA President, David Michael and had 22 members and 10 non members in attendance. The 10 non members included representatives from the Naval Association of Australia, Naval Studies Group, Fleet Air Arm Association, Military History Society of Australia, Naval Officers Club and Australian Naval Institute. The meetings main agenda item concluded with a unanimous vote agreeing to formation of an ACT Chapter. A call for nominations for the Chapters inaugural committee resulted in the unanimous election of the following to the ACT Chapter Committee;

Simon Cullen (Leader),
Kathryn Spurling,
Tony Vickers and
David Manolas.

The interim committee members plan to call a full General Meeting in early 2017.

In his concluding remarks the Chairman noted the importance of all 'Navy Family' organisations liaising closely as in the case of the ACT Chapter of the NHS.



David Manolas, Kathryn Spurling, Simon Cullen and Tony Vickers

HMAS Armidale Presentation

In the November edition of Call the Hands attention was drawn to an invitation from the Military History Society of NSW to a presentation on *The Sinking of the Corvette HMAS ARMIDALE on 1st December, 1942* by Dr Kevin Smith.

After some apparent confusion the presentation has been rescheduled for Saturday 10 December 2016.

Saturday, 10 December 2016, 2.00pm – 3.00pm
Anzac Room, 99 York St Conference and Function Centre, Sydney
Entry is free.



RSVP is essential by Wednesday 7 December 2016 as numbers are restricted
(02) 9660 7225 / 0418 400 825 or email rsvp@militaryhistorynsw.com.au

HMAS Armidale: Survivors Diary

By David Michael

In November I was twice reminded of the long term impact on family and friends of naval personnel who pay the supreme sacrifice. I first met Jan Wong whose father was lost in HMAS Canberra during the Battle of Savo Island on 9 August 1942. Being born after his death it must have been difficult for Jan growing up without a father.

My second meeting was with Jane Marsh who holds an original transcript of an *Armidale* survivor's diary. It covers events between loss of the ship on 1 December 1942 and arrival in Darwin 10 December after rescue by HMAS *Kalgoorlie*. Jane advised me that her mother had been engaged to Sub Lieutenant James (Jim) Buckland who survived the sinking but was lost along with 28 shipmates sometime after their last sighting by a *Catalina* aircrew on 8 December. The original foolscap transcript of events which she treasured for more than 74 years was an important link with her beloved fiancé. The diary was written by a ships whaler survivor, most likely Leading Seaman Bool.



Jane intends transferring this important heritage item to the Naval Heritage Collection. A copy of the diary will be published in a future edition of 'Call the Hands'.

For the history of HMAS Armidale go to: <http://www.navy.gov.au/HMAS-armidale-i>

HMAS Melbourne II Presentation

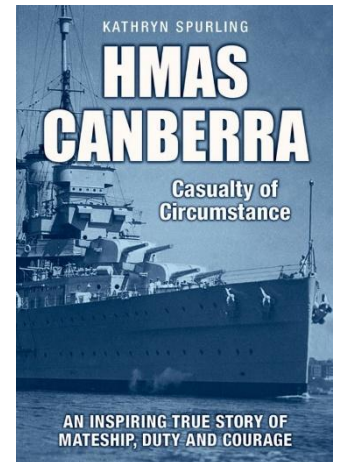
Recently Tom de Voil, a Society member, delivered a presentation on HMAS *Melbourne II* to the NHSA Melbourne Chapter. A copy is attached to this newsletter and is an interesting perspective by a former crew member. The presentation has also been published as a podcast and can be accessed via the following link; <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/podcasts/commander-tom-de-voil-ran-ret/>

Featured Books

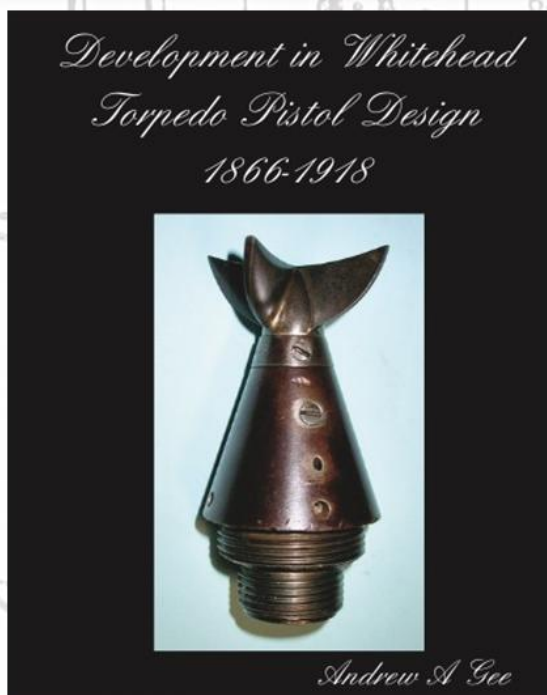
HMAS Canberra: Casualty of Circumstance

Kathryn Spurling is also the author of a book on HMAS *Canberra* I which was launched onboard HMAS *Canberra* III on Thursday 10 Nov 2016. According to Kathryn 'The story covers the time the ship was commissioned in 1928 to the last terrifying moments when HMAS *Canberra*'s fate was sealed. on 9 August 1942 in a war-ravaged Pacific Ocean. World War II was in full force and it was about to overwhelm those onboard the Australian Navy cruiser. But the events that lead to *Canberra*'s demise on that dark night are not so well known – until now. A tribute to the 84 men whose lives were lost, this book tells their stories and those of the men who survived – all share their motivations for joining the Navy and tell what it was like onboard.'

Kathryn is the author of eight books and the NHSA is pleased to have her onboard the newly created ACT Chapter Committee as her enthusiasm and knowledge will assist in the success of the Chapter.



TORPEDO PISTOL DESIGN 1866 – 1918



The invention of the self-propelled underwater torpedo by Robert Whitehead in 1866 was a quantum leap in naval weapons technology, changing naval battle tactics and strategies forever. No longer did ships have to tow explosive devices into the enemy ships using the Harvey's Sea Torpedo, or rammed an explosive head into the opponent's hull with a Spar Torpedo. The advancement in torpedo technology now provided a self-propelled "locomotive" or fish torpedo that could be launched and travel independently towards the destination target.

Upon reaching the target, a successful detonation relied solely on one key torpedo component – its pistol or fuze. As with its artillery counterpart, the fuze is the nucleus of the projectile and controls where and when the explosion should take place. Without a reliable firing/pistol mechanism, the torpedo has failed in its mission and is lost into oblivion.

This research of early Whitehead Pistol Design takes an exciting look into the development of the early torpedo pistol mechanisms, how they evolved to overcome obstacles, ongoing challenges and continuously improved to achieve consistent reliability.

Now available for the first time, the research paper has been privately published as a softcover Trade Book size of 8" x 10" (21x26cm), approx. 50 pages full of diagrams and photos and makes a great torpedo fuze reference book! It would be appreciated by any naval historians & collectors alike that have an interest in early vintage torpedoes.
The purchase price is \$65 AUD (Inc. Registered Postage Australia wide) and can be ordered by contacting Drew Gee at koto911@hotmail.com

75th Anniversary of lifting of Siege of Tobruk

December 9, 2016 is the 75th anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Tobruk, the port on the north coast of Libya that proved such a thorn in Rommel's side during the eight months that the siege lasted. The Australian War Memorial describes it as one of the longest sieges in British military history. A detailed account of the inshore Squadron during the siege is attached to this newsletter.

Royal New Zealand Navy 75th Anniversary

Sourced from: <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/new-zealand-accepts-first-us-warship-in-thirty-years>

On October 1, 1941, His Majesty King George VI approved the designation "Royal New Zealand Navy" for the regular element of the New Zealand Naval Forces.

The British Royal Navy originally provided security for the colony of New Zealand, but in 1846, the settlers bought their first gunboat. Later, the Waikato Flotilla operated from 1860 to 1865, and at the same time a Naval Artillery Volunteer corps was established to provide harbour defence. In 1884, the government purchased four new spar torpedo boats, and in 1887 it funded ships of the Australasian Auxiliary Squadron.

Before establishment of the Navy, the people of New Zealand paid for the construction of the battlecruiser *HMS New Zealand*, which served with distinction at the Battle of Jutland.

The Naval Defence Act 1913 formally established the New Zealand Naval Forces, and the old RN cruiser *HMS Philomel* was the first to be commissioned into it. From 1921, the forces were known as the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy, operating two cruisers and a minesweeper.

When Britain went to war against Germany in 1939, New Zealand also declared war. In recognition of the fact that the naval force was now largely self-sufficient and independent of the Royal Navy, the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy became the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), the prefix "royal" being granted by King George VI on October 1, 1941. Ships were then prefixed with HMNZS (His/Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship).

The Royal New Zealand Navy celebrated the anniversary with an International Naval Review in Auckland harbour which hosted the first U.S. warship to visit New Zealand in over 30 years. The New Zealand Navy's International Naval Review, which ran from November 16 to 22 November, saw the arrival of naval ships from 15 countries. These included Singapore's *RSS Resolution*, Japan's *JDS Takanami*, South Korea's *Rok Chungbuk*, Australia's *HMAS Dechaineux*, Indonesia's *KRI Banda Aceh*, China's *CNS Yancheng*, and India's *INS Sumitra*.



Fleet Entry, Auckland Harbour, November 2016

Honorary Life Membership: George Evan Bird

Honorary life membership was awarded to Victorian Chapter Treasurer and member of 19 years, George Evan Bird in November. This award recognised his loyalty to the Society and service to fellow members during this period. His outstanding, commitment and ready assistance to others is a rare commodity that the Society truly values.

George Bird, born in 1928 and joined the RAN as a Writer in 1946. He served for twelve years. Career highlights included postings to *HMAS Commonwealth* in Kure, Japan from 1949 to 1950, and as Captain's secretary in *HMAS Quiberon* and *Cerberus* as a CPO Writer. George is highly regarded by his colleagues as a thoughtful and generous man who has always worked hard in his work and private lives for the good of others. Naturally, as a Writer he is diligent with paper work and dedicated to whatever roles he undertakes. Well done George.



This Month in History

December 1798 – Lt Matthew Flinders, in the sloop *Norfolk*, celebrated Christmas day on the Derwent River

December 1803 – Cdr Matthew Flinders, seized on Mauritius. He was held for the next 5 years

December 1915 – *HMAS Huon* I commissioned at Sydney

December 1940 – *MV Triona* sunk by German raider off Nauru Island.

December 1947 – RN Air Station *Albatross* transferred to the RAN

December 1974 – HMA ships *Melbourne*, *Brisbane*, *Stuart*, *Supply*, *Stalwart*, *Hobart*, *Vendetta*, *Betano*, *Balikpapan*, *Brunei*, *Wewak* and *Tarakan* sail to Darwin for Cyclone relief operations

Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Details
10 Dec 16	Military History Society of NSW Presentation The Sinking of the Corvette <i>HMAS Armidale</i> on 1st December, 1942	Time: 1400 to 1500 Anzac Room, 99 York St Conference and Function Centre, Sydney
21 Feb 17	NHSA Presentation A perspective on Cockatoo Island and ship building.	by John Jeremy, NHSA Vice President and former CEO of Cockatoo Dockyard

News in Brief

- One of the Royal Australian Navy's largest maritime warfare exercises began in Mid November in several locations off the New South Wales coast. Exercise OCEAN RAIDER involved 11 warships and submarines, aircraft and more than 1,500 personnel from Australia and the United States in a three week program of maritime activities.
- Governments are investigating the disappearance of wrecks from the Battle of the Java Sea. Three Dutch shipwrecks dating back to World War II have mysteriously disappeared from the sea floor, Dutch defense officials say. The three warships were sunk by the Japanese during the 1942 Battle of the Java Sea, near the coast of Indonesia. In 2002, amateur divers found the wreckage, where 900 Dutch and 250 Indonesian-Dutch soldiers are buried. A team of divers recently went down to shoot footage of the wrecks prior to the 75th anniversary of the deadly battle, Dutch Navy spokesperson Paul Middelberg told 'The Two-Way'. "They dived for the wrecks to find that the wrecks were gone," he says. The remains of HNLMS De Ruyter and HNLMS Java are completely gone, the Defense Ministry says, while a large portion of the HNLMS Kortenaer is missing. The Royal Navy have also identified that the wrecks of HMS Exeter HMS Encounter, have been almost totally removed. A 3D map of the Java Sea floor showed the wreck of the destroyer HMS Electra had also been plundered, though a large section remained.

Photo of the Month



Wessex and Sea King Helicopters taking off from *HMAS Albatross* for flypast on 29/9/1984— photo by David Stratton

If you have a photo to share please send it to callthehands@navyhistory.org.au

Trivia Corner

1. In 1932 during the Great Depression the RAN could muster only three ships in full commission. Which ships were they?
2. What was the Squadron number of the RAN's first fighter squadron?

The answer to these questions will be provided in next month's newsletter.

Answers to last month's questions:

1. *Which was the first RAN warship to have red kangaroos on the funnel?*

The first known instance of an RAN warship affixing a red kangaroo to her funnel/superstructure occurred in 1955 when *HMAS Queenborough* was attached to the Royal Navy 6th frigate Squadron operating from Londonderry, Northern Ireland. The 6th Frigate squadron had as its squadron insignia the 'Red Hand of Ulster'. In keeping with that squadron's tradition, *Queenborough* conformed to the practice but also added a red kangaroo to denote her Australian origin.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/tradition/origin-ran-squadron-and-national-insignia>

2. *Which was the first RAN warship to transit the Panama Canal?*

On 18 April 1924 *HMAS Adelaide* I joined the Royal Navy's Special Service Squadron, led by the battle cruiser HMS *Hood*, flagship of Vice Admiral Sir FL Field, RN, which at that time was mid-way through a worldwide cruise. *Adelaide* joined the British squadron in Sydney and accompanied it throughout the remainder of the deployment reaching Portsmouth on 28 September 1924, having called at Wellington, Napier, Auckland, Suva, Honolulu, Victoria (BC), Vancouver, San Francisco, Panama, Colon, Jamaica, Halifax, Quebec, Topsail Bay and Conception Bay en route. During that cruise *Adelaide* became the first RAN ship to pass through the Panama Canal

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/ships-named-adelaide>

Subscription

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