

CALL THE HANDS

Issue No. 6

March 2017

From the President

Welcome to the 6th edition of Call the Hands a newsletter for Society members and the broader Navy Family. If you feel others will enjoy it please pass it on.

In many ways this edition is a tribute to the 758 RAN personnel who lost their lives in nine ships during 1942. That year has been described by the Sea Power Centre in a recent Semaphore (Issue 1, 2017) as the RAN's darkest year. Last month we drew attention to the many significant 75th anniversary commemorative events planned for this year. The Occasional Paper circulated with this edition of Call the Hands provides full details of all vessels lost over the RAN's 116 year history.

1 March 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the Australian White Ensign. To this end an article on the AWE and the history of its predecessor flags is featured in the Naval Historical Review (VOL 38 No 1, March 2017). It is currently being distributed to members. Another important story in The Review is the history of HDML 1321 which recently sank in Darwin harbour. Readers appreciative of a quality journal, free of advertising, may subscribe by joining the Society. Membership at \$45 per annum represents extraordinary value. There are benefits.

The Society is very successful at what it does and we are ambitious with a busy plan for 2017 and beyond. To achieve our many and varied tasks we need more volunteers near and remote. Our current team of dedicated regular volunteers is working at capacity. Should you have an interest please contact us for details.

David Michael



From the Editor

Welcome to our new subscribers and thanks again to readers who alert us to stories of interest and provide stories, images and other information. Please keep them coming.

We would like to share the following feedback received from RADM Andrew Robertson RAN ret in relation to Occasional Paper 5 and HMAS Vendetta's accident in Williamstown Dockyard published in February.

'Congratulations on a most interesting publication. You may know that CMDR G.G.O.Gatacre, RAN (Later RADM) was the navigator of HMS Rodney, the 16 in battleship which was the main unit which sank the Bismark. His book "Report of Proceedings" makes interesting reading.

Vendetta and the dock caisson. I was the captain of the Quickmatch in the dock. The disaster would have been far worse than you say if the one ancient girder in the caisson had not held, for Vendetta would have surfed in on top of Quickmatch and some 450 personnel been in extreme danger especially as the tide was flooding. It was a case of R.J.Robertson versus A.J.Robertson and the girder stopping maybe the RAN'S worst peacetime disaster. The dockyard maties were superb and joined our sailors replacing hull plates in the bottom of the dock as the water rose.'

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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/>

Tours of Garden Island, Sydney

Tours of Garden Island provided by Society volunteers on Thursdays are very popular with organized groups and retired naval personnel and their families. Tours of 1.5 to 2 hours which take in historic sites and buildings in the Dockyard including the Captain Cook Graving Dock are preceded by an introductory video in the Boatshed, Garden Island. Groups and individuals generally arrive by ferry from Circular Quay but arrangements can also be made for groups arriving by coach. The cost is \$20 per person. Should you be interested in booking a tour start by visiting the website, calling or e-mailing the Tour Coordinators. A special offer is being made to members with the March mailing.

Phone: (02) 9359 2243 Thursdays only
 E-Mail: tours@navyhistory.org.au
 Website: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/garden-island-tours/>

Member Presentations

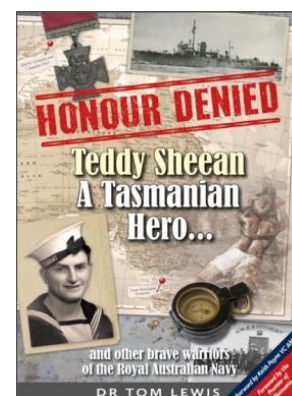
Date	Event	Details
18 April 17	NHSA Presentation, Sydney The Sinking of the Corvette HMAS Armidale on 1st December, 1942	by Dr Kevin Smith Combined Services Club, Barrack Street, Sydney https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/sydney-april/ Non Members welcome but please call us first.
27 March 17	NHSA Presentation, Melbourne The World's First Guided Missile	by Major-General Mike O'Brien Waverley RSL, Glen Waverley https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/melbourne-march/ Non Members welcome but please call 03 98508497

Featured Book

'Honour Denied: Teddy Sheean A Tasmanian Hero and other brave warriors of the Royal Australian Navy'

This book by noted Tasmanian military historian and naval officer, Dr Tom Lewis OAM, was recently launched by the Premier, Will Hodgman, the book explores the story of Teddy Sheean, one of Tasmania's best known wartime servicemen.

More detail at: <http://navalinstitute.com.au/honour-denied-book-on-teddy-sheean-launched/> and <https://avonmorebooks.com.au/?page=3&id=85>



Recently Published Papers

2017 – Commemorating 1942, The Royal Australian Navy’s Darkest Year

SEMAPHORE, John Perryman, Sea Power Centre – Australia, issue 01, 2017
http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Semaphore_01_2017.pdf

The fall of Singapore: A Maritime Perspective

James Goldrick, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, published 14 Feb 2017
<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/fall-singapore-maritime-perspective/>

New Guinea WW2 – A Maritime Campaign

Jozef Straczek, Sea Power Centre Australia
<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/new-guinea-ww2-%E2%80%93-maritime-campaign>

HDML 1321

A major story in the March 2017 edition of the Naval Historical Review features the history of Harbour Defence Motor Launch (HDML) 1321 and Operation Copper in 1945. This historic Fairmile which later served as a training ship and coast watcher, HMAS Rushcutter sank in Darwin Harbour in October 2016. A group called SAVE HDML 1321 has been formed to recover her and display it at the Darwin Military Museum as a permanent memorial to Z Special Unit and Special Forces.

<http://www.ship1321.com/>



Featured Museum: Darwin Military Museum

Set in tropical gardens by the sea the Darwin Military Museum displays a collection of items that interpret the history of the Defence of Darwin. Another major attraction, developed in association with the Northern Territory Government is the Defence of Darwin Experience which tells the story of those men and women who lived and worked in Darwin during World War II. It provides a sense of what it was like to have witnessed the first bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942.

<http://www.darwinmilitarymuseum.com.au/>

Evacuation of Tjilatjap, Java in March 1942

Many readers will be familiar with the loss of HMAS Yarra on 4 March 1942 but less familiar with the role played by RAN corvettes in the evacuation of civilians from Tjilatjap on the south coast of Java in March 1942. Yarra was lost after sailing from Tjilatjap on 2 March 1942 to escort 3 ships (depot ship Anking, tanker Francol, and minesweeper MMS-51) to Fremantle

On 7 March 1942, exactly 3 months after Pearl Harbour, Japanese land forces reached Tjilatjap. This followed the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942. For the Allied ships in the area there were few alternatives in South East Asia but Tjilatjap, the small port on the mid-south coast of Java until it was heavily bombed on the 4th and 5th March 1942 with the loss of the KPM supply and repair ship Barentsz and a number of other KPM ships and the floating dock and floating crane, which had been towed from Batavia.

A flotilla of 5 RAN corvettes undertook the hasty evacuation of Tjilatjap in early March 1942. These ships included;

HMAS Bendigo (Lt S.J. Griffith, RANR)

With 73 evacuees embarked sailed on the night of 1 March 1942 and arrived Fremantle on 8 March.

HMAS Burnie (Lt T. Christy RANR)

Sailed 2 March 1942 and arrived Fremantle on 8 March.

HMAS Goulburn (Cdr B. Paul, RANR)

Sailed 2 March 1942 escorting the Dutch vessel *Generaal Verspeijk*. Both ships arrived Fremantle on 10 March.

HMAS Toowoomba (Lt. Cdr. P.H. Hirst, R.A.N)

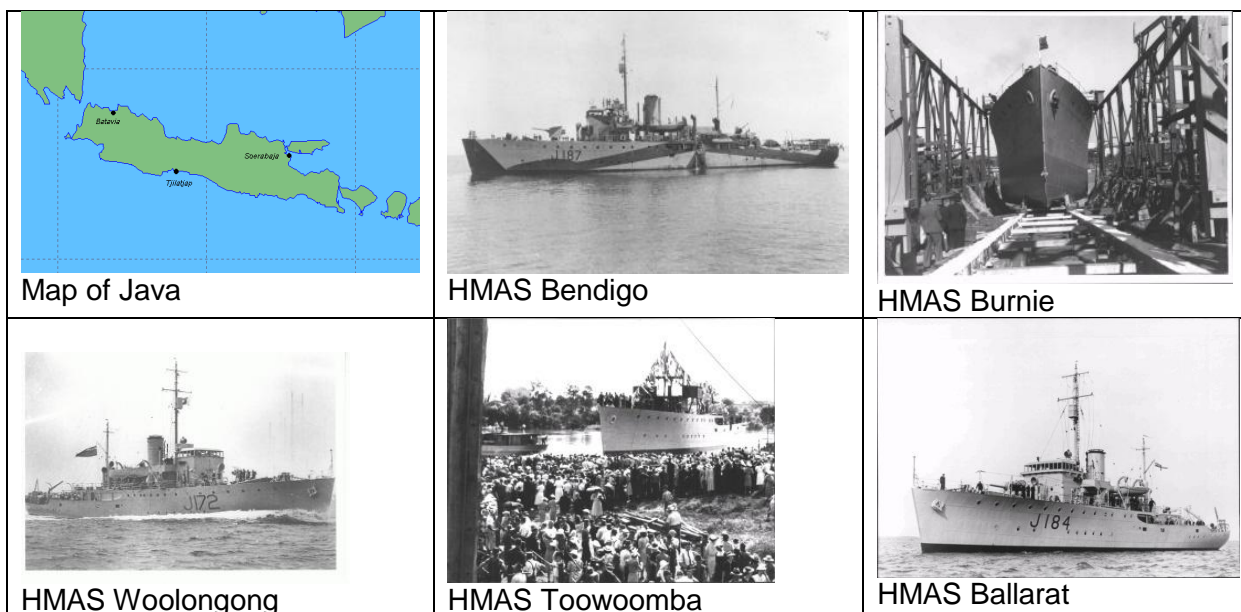
Sailed Tjilatjap 2 March 1942 and reached Fremantle on 9-10 March.

HMAS Wollongong (Lt G.A. Keith RANR)

Sailed Tjilatjap 2 - 3 March 1942 and arrived at Fremantle on 9 March.

HMAS Ballarat (Lt Cdr A.D. Barling, RANR)

Ballarat was the last vessel to leave Tjilatjap on 3 March 1942 having remained behind to scuttle HMS *Gemas*, a small unseaworthy minesweeper. She reached Fremantle on 9 March 1942.



News in Brief

- Indian Naval Ship *Betwa* Upright after Un-docking Accident. FFG *Betwa* which tipped off its blocks in Mumbai dockyard on 6 December has now been righted following a complex salvage operation. The Indian Navy is optimistic it will be repaired inside its scheduled upgrade which completes in April 2018. Sourced from: <http://navaltoday.com/2017/02/23/indian-navy-frigate-ins-betva-upright-again/>



- HMAS Leeuwin Site Development: Following a four day Design Forum in September and community input, a draft Vision Plan was released in December 2016 by the Fremantle Council and Department of Defence. It encapsulates the broader community's vision for the site which includes the following;
 - Adaptively reusing the Drill Hall for a range of civic functions such as a learning and interpretive centre, exhibition space, men's shed, childcare centre, and café
 - Retaining the Junior Recruits Memorial in situ and creating an expanded setting and space for reflection and commemoration
 - Spatially re-interpreting the former parade ground and providing a major ceremonial and community focal point, catering for farmers markets, an outdoor cinema and all ages play space.

http://www.eastfremantle.wa.gov.au/Profiles/eastfremantle/Assets/ClientData/Documents/Leeuwin_Vision_Plan/EndorsedLeeuwinVisionPlan_13December2016.pdf

This Month in History

Links are to related stories published by the Naval Historical Society of Australia

- 01 Mar 1901 Formation of the Commonwealth Naval Force under section 51 of the Australian Constitution with the States transferring their Naval Forces and all employed in them to the Federal Government.
<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/australasian-naval-forces-and-commonwealth-naval-forces/>
- 01 Mar 1942 HMAS PERTH, (cruiser), was sunk by enemy action. 23 officers and 333 ratings lost their lives.
<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/japanese-destroyers-in-battle-of-sunda-strait/>
HMAS HOBART, (cruiser), evacuated 512 refugees from Padang and landed them at Colombo.
- 01 Mar 1967 The RAN adopted the Australian White Ensign which was hoisted in all ships and establishments. Requisitioned supply ship HMAS BOONAROO commissioned into the RAN.
<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/the-australian-white-ensign/>
- 03 March 1942 HMAS BALLARAT, (minesweeper), sank HMS GEMAS, (minesweeper), at Tjilatjap, Java, to prevent it falling into enemy hands. The vessel did not have the range to reach Australia.
- 04 March 1942 The sloop HMAS YARRA, (LCDR Robert Rankin, RAN), MMS 51, (minesweeper), sunk in the Indian Ocean by Japanese fleet of 3 cruisers.
<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/loss-of-hmas-yarra-4-march-1942/>
- 07 Mar 1942 Australian Coastwatcher SBLT A.R. Olander, RANVR, was believed executed by the Japanese in New Britain.
HMAS IPSWICH, (minesweeper), was launched at Mort's Dock, Sydney.
- 31 March 1967 HMAS HOBART, (guided missile destroyer), fired the first RAN shots in the Vietnam War at Viet Cong assembly points in Quang Ngai Province in support of an attack by the US Marines 37 Battalion.

HMAS Leeuwin: A Short History

In August 1941, an announcement was made regarding the establishment of a new Naval Depot near Preston Point as the existing Depot in Cliff Street (then known as HMAS Leeuwin), Fremantle, was deemed inadequate to meet the increasing demands. Construction work began shortly after and by the following year the majority of Navy presence in Western Australia was concentrated at Preston Point and the name HMAS Leeuwin was transferred to this site.

The drill hall was one of the first buildings to be constructed on the site in 1942. During WWII, torpedo maintenance activities were undertaken at Leeuwin for Allied submarines. The main torpedo maintenance area was located in the northern portion of the site adjacent to the jetty alongside the Swan River.

Following the end of WWII, HMAS Leeuwin was adopted for use as a training facility for reservists and then national servicemen, with the first intake being in August 1951. In July 1960, HMAS Leeuwin began to be used as a Junior Recruit (Naval) Training Establishment (JRTE). Boys between the ages of 15 and 16 years were eligible to join, and attend the JRTE for one year to undertake basic naval training and further their secondary education prior to being posted to a more specialised training facility. The first intake comprised 150 recruits. During this period a number of WWII era buildings were adapted for classroom purposes or were demolished to make way for new accommodation for the Junior Recruits.

In 1984, the site ceased being used as a Junior Recruit (Naval) Training Establishment. At its closure, approximately 13,000 Junior Recruits had passed through HMAS Leeuwin. Following decommissioning, the site was formally taken over by the Australian Army and became Leeuwin Barracks. In 1987, the Western Australian University Regiment began using the site as temporary accommodation and this became permanent by 2009.

Source:

http://www.eastfremantle.wa.gov.au/Profiles/eastfremantle/Assets/ClientData/Documents/Leeuwin_Vision_Plan/EndorsedLeeuwinVisionPlan_13December2016.pdf, accessed 27 February 2017

Photo of the Month



HMAS Hobart receiving mail in Vietnam 1967

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

Trivia Corner

1. Which was the first RAN ship to sink an enemy submarine in WW 1?
2. Which was the first RAN ship to sink an enemy submarine in WW 2?

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

Answer to last month's question:

Q. *Which was the first RAN ship to have radar installed?*

A. HMAS Australia II. Australia was fitted with Type 286 radar in Liverpool in November-December 1940. HMAS Shropshire was fitted out with a full outfit of radars a year later.

For more detail go to <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/radar-equipment-hmas-shropshire/>

Subscription

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