

# CALL THE HANDS

Issue No. 7

April 2017

## From the President

Welcome to Call the Hands. Our focus this month is on small vessels that played a large role in Australia's naval history. Similarly, some individuals and small groups who are often overlooked are covered. We look at a young Australian, the little known WW1 naval pilot, Lieutenant R. A. Little who became an ace flying with the Royal Navy Air Service and 11 sailors from HMAS Australia who participated with distinction in the 1918 raid on Zeebrugge.

As many stories cannot be covered in detail I hope you find the links and recommended 'further reading' of value. Likewise, the list of items included in 'this month in history' is larger. This may wet appetites to search our website for relevant stories of interest.

I would like to acknowledge the recent gift of a collection of books and DVDs to the Society's library by Mrs Jocelyn Looslie. Sadly, her husband, RADM Robert Geoffrey Looslie, CBE, RAN passed away on 5 September 2016 at age 90. His long and distinguished career of 41 years commencing in 1940 included four sea commands. One of these was the guided missile destroyer HMAS Brisbane (1971–1972). During this period Brisbane conducted its second Vietnam deployment.

David Michael

## From the Editor

Occasional Paper 6 published in March 2017 listed RAN ships lost over a century. Whilst feedback was positive we acknowledge subscribers and members who pointed out omissions which included; HMA ships Tarakan1, Woomera and Arrow. The tragic circumstances of their loss and the lives of their sailors underscores the inherent risks our men and women face daily at sea in peace and war. A self-published book by Allen Lyne "Lost – The Stories of all ships lost by the RAN" published in 2013 may be of interest.

New subscribers can e-mail us at [callthehands@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:callthehands@navyhistory.org.au) to be added to the distribution list.

30 March 2017

## In this Edition

Page	
2	Society Matters
2	Not Forgotten: HMAS Ships Tarakan1, Woomera and Arrow
3	ANZAC Day 2017 in East Arnhem Land: HMAS Patricia Cam remembered
4	This Month in History
5	East Arnhem Land to commemorate HMAS Patricia Cam
5	Lieutenant Robert Alexander Little, DSO and Bar, DSC and Bar, RNAS
5	RAN Participation in British Raid to Block the canal at Zeebrugge, Belgium
6	Photo of the Month
6	Stage One of the Garden Island (East) Critical Infrastructure Recovery Program
7	Other News
7	Trivia Corner



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## Society Matters

### 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.

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

### Member Presentations

Date	Event	Details
3 April 17	NHSA Presentation, Canberra  In All Respects Ready, Australia's Navy in World War 1	by Dr David Stevens Legacy House, Deakin, ACT <a href="https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/in-all-respects-ready-australias-navy-in-world-war-1/">https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/in-all-respects-ready-australias-navy-in-world-war-1/</a> Non Members welcome but please call us first.
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 <a href="https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/sydney-april/">https://www.navyhistory.org.au/event/sydney-april/</a> Non Members welcome but please call us first.


### Volunteering



The Society is very successful at what it does but we are also ambitious and have a busy plan for 2017 and beyond. To achieve our many and varied tasks we need more volunteers near and remote. Should you have an interest please contact us for details.

[secretary@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:secretary@navyhistory.org.au)

## Not Forgotten: HMAS Ships Tarakan, Woomera and Arrow: Occasional Paper 6 Addendum

These three fine ships and members of their crew were lost during peace time activities. They were unfortunately omitted from Occasional Paper Six published in March 2017.

<b>HMAS Tarakan</b>  Extensively damaged by explosion on 25 Jan 1950 at Garden Island, Sydney with the loss of 8 lives including one dockyard tradesman. Tarakan did not return to sea service and decommissioned 12 March 1954.	
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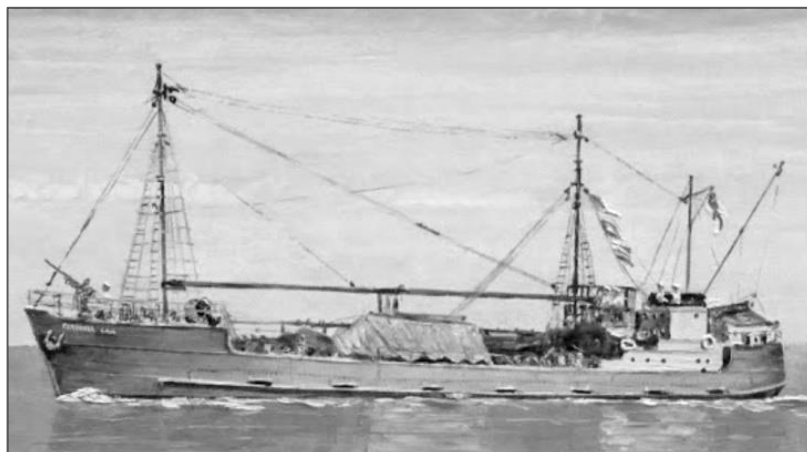
<p><b>HMAS Woomera</b></p> <p>Lost off the New South Wales Coast on 11 October 1960 with the loss of 2 lives. She sank after an explosion and fire during ammunition dumping operations.</p>	
<p><b>HMAS Arrow</b></p> <p>Lost on 25 December 1974 in Darwin Harbour with the loss of 2 lives. She was driven ashore and sank under Stokes Hill Wharf during Cyclone Tracey</p>	

**Further Reading:**

Australia Remembers 1945 to 1995, John Date, June 1995 edition of the Naval Historical Review available at: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/australia-remembers-1945-1995/>

**ANZAC Day 2017 in East Arnhem Land**

As part of its ANZAC Day ceremonies this year the East Arnhem Regional Council will dedicate a memorial at Yirrkala, in NE Arnhem Land to the 1943 sinking of HMAS Patricia Cam. ‘They will commemorate those Balanda (non-indigenous people) and Yolngu (local people), who stood as brothers in arms, in mortal combat on those now distant days’. The service will be led by the Rev. Noel Kentish, son of the Rev. Leonard Kentish who was taken prisoner of war after the sinking of Patricia Cam and flown by seaplane to the Aru Islands where he was beheaded by his captors. Descendants of the ship’s company who lost loved ones in the sinking of HMAS Patricia Cam off the Wessel Islands on 22 January 1943 will be present.



**HMAS Patricia Cam**

Members can expect to hear more of the Patricia Cam and related ‘Top End’ stories in a coming edition of the Naval Historical Review.

**Further Reading:** Commercial trawlers in Two Wars, Grahame Andrews, June 2011 edition of the Naval Historical Review, <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/commercial-trawlers-in-two-wars/2/>

## This Month in History

23-30 April 1915	HMAS AE 2 operations in the Sea of Marara to support the Dardanelles Campaign culminating in her sinking by the Turkish torpedo boat Sultan Hissar.
22 April 1916	HMAS Australia and HMS New Zealand, (battle-cruisers), collided north-west of Horn Reef in the North Sea. Australia was in dockyard hands for two months while repairs were made, and missed the Battle of Jutland.
7 April 1917	LEUT R. A. Little, an Australian serving with the RNAS, outfought and out-maneuvred 11 German Albatross ID aircraft in a dogfight over France. Little was flying a Sopwith tri-plane. German ace, Baron von Richtofen, who witnessed the combat, urged Fokkers to produce a similar tri-plane. Biography at: <a href="http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/little-robert-alexander-7207">http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/little-robert-alexander-7207</a>
22-23 April 1918	British raid on the German held ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend in occupied Belgium
12 April 1941	The siege of Tobruk started and went on for 242 days. The 'Tobruk Ferry' involved RAN destroyers making 139 runs. HMA Ships taking part were Stuart, Vampire, Vendetta, Voyager, Waterhen, Parramatta, Nizam, and Napier, whilst Yarra took part in escort duties in the area.
24 April 1941	Operation Demon, (the evacuation of Greece from 24-29 April), commenced. HMA Ships Perth, Stuart, Vampire, Vendetta, Voyager, and Waterhen, all took part in evacuating troops.
09 April 1942	Japanese carrier-borne aircraft sank the destroyer HMAS Vampire, (CMDR W.T.A. Moran, RAN), and HMS HERMES, (light aircraft carrier), off Trincomalee, Ceylon. CMDR Moran, and 7 ratings from VAMPIRE were lost in the action. A total of 590 survivors from both ships were picked up by the hospital ship VITA, and landed at Colombo.
10 April 1943	LEUT L.V Goldworthy, RANVR recovered ground, magnetic and acoustic mines from ports in England. He was later awarded the George Cross for his bravery and gallantry in rendering safe mines between April and June 1943'.
14 April 1944	LEUT M. H. Shean, RANVR, commanding a midget submarine, successfully laid charges in Bergen Harbour, Norway. A floating dock was severely damaged and the merchant vessel BARENFELS was sunk in the attack. Shean was awarded the DSO.
11 April 1945	The Australian Government cancelled the building of 10 frigates for the RAN. The ships were to be: Balmain, Bogan, Campaspe, Murrumbidgee, Namoi, Nepean, Wharburton, Williamstown, Wimmera, and Wollondilly.
14 Apr 1945	The cost of operating the RAN for one day was estimated at Pounds100,000
1 April 1955	Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, announced the decision to commit Australian forces to the Far East Strategic Reserve, (FESR), in Malaya. The Navy's contribution was to include two frigates or destroyers and an annual visit by HMAS MELBOURNE, (aircraft carrier). The first two RAN warships sent to South East Asia as part of the FESR were the destroyers HMAS ARUNTA and HMAS WARRAMUNGA. The FESR duties for the RAN continued until 1970.
19 April 1964	HMS DUCHESS, (Daring class destroyer), arrived in Sydney on loan to the RAN as a replacement for HMAS VOYAGER. DUCHESS was later purchased outright by the Australian Government.
17 Apr 1967	HMAS Hobart fired on enemy truck parks and petrol stores at Xom Vinh and Quan Tay, Vietnam. Hobart was the first RAN ship to be committed operationally to the fighting in Vietnam.
23 April 1969	CPO A. V. Rashleigh and AB A. J. Sherlock, of the RAN Clearance Diving Team 3, carried out an underwater night search of the hull of MV HERADIA at Vung Tau, Vietnam, after the capture of a Viet Cong diver alongside the ship. Knowing that another enemy diver was in the vicinity, they continued their search until they found an explosive charge secured alongside the ship. After removal of the charge they re-entered the water and captured the enemy diver.
5 April 1971	The guided missile destroyer HMAS Brisbane, (CAPT R. G. Loosli, RAN), commenced her second deployment to Vietnam by shelling enemy bunkers and supply trails in the Long Hai hills.

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/>

## Lieutenant Robert Alexander Little, DSO and Bar, DSC and Bar, RNAS

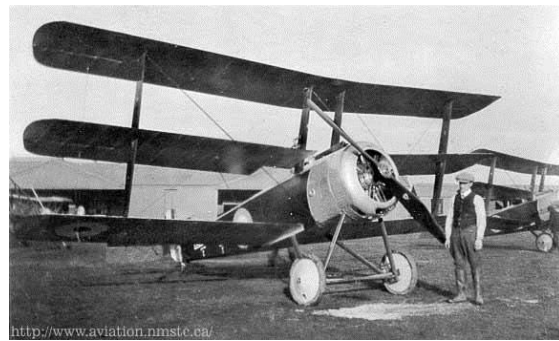
Being unsuccessful at joining the Point Cook Military Flying School in 1915 Robert Little sailed for England in July 1915, at his own expense. He learnt to fly and later enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service as a probationary temporary sub-lieutenant on 14 January 1916.

The Australian Dictionary of Biography says 'Little is officially credited with a tally of 47 enemy planes brought down. He is Australia's World War I ace of aces: the next officially recognized 'victories' of Australians were 39 by his friend Major R. S. Dallas and 29 by Captain A. H. Cobby. Little ranks eighth of all British Commonwealth aces and fourteenth of all aces from both sides of the conflict. Major (Air Vice Marshal) R. R. Collishaw, his commanding officer in 'Naval 3', wrote of him: 'Little had an outstanding character. Bold, aggressive and courageous yet he was gentle and kindly ... his example was a tribute to the high standards of Australian manhood'.

The end came on the night of 27 May when he went up alone from Ezil le Hamel to intercept enemy bombers in the dark. Fatally wounded in the groin, he crashed near Norviz where he was found next morning. He was buried in the village cemetery at Norviz and subsequently in Wavans British cemetery, France. He was 22.'



Lieutenant Robert Alexander Little,  
DSO and Bar, DSC and Bar, RNAS



A Sopwith Triplane. Image courtesy of [www.earlyaeroplanes.com](http://www.earlyaeroplanes.com)

More details at: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/little-robert-alexander-7207> and <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/the-great-war/great-war-at-sea-in-air/the-aces/3244-captain-robert-alexander-little-dso-and-bar-dsc-and-bar.html#sthash.YXU8BhqV.dpbs>

## RAN Participation in British Raid to Block the canal at Zeebrugge, Belgium

On the night of 22-23 April 1918 Artificer Engineer W. H. V Edgar, RAN, and 10 ratings from HMAS Australia, (battle-cruiser), loaned to a variety of British ships participated in the raid to block the canal at Zeebrugge, Belgium.

The object of the raid was to deny the use of the canal to German submarines and destroyers operating in the North Sea. Despite heavy casualties suffered during the raid, none of the Australians were killed or wounded.

Subsequent awards for gallantry were made to 7 of the RAN participants:

- DSC - Artificer Engineer W. H. V. Edgar, RAN, (one of only two awarded to an RAN officer in WW I),
- DSM - LS G. J. Bush,
- DSM - LS D. J.O. Rudd (who was later convicted as a mutineer in the 1919 HMAS AUSTRALIA mutiny),
- DSM - LS G. E. Staples,
- MID - AB H. J. Gillard,
- MID - AB L. T. Newlands,
- MID - Stoker N. J. McCrory (was also awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre as he had previously served in the RANBT at Gallipoli, and the AIF in France, before re-joining the Navy in 1917).



The other four sailors who participated were Leading Stokers W.J. Bourke, R. Hopkins, G.J. Lockard, and J. Strong.

Full details at: Australian Sailors at Zeebrugge, by Commander Greg Swinden and John Perryman  
[http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Semaphore\\_2007\\_6.pdf](http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Semaphore_2007_6.pdf)

## Stage One of the Garden Island (East) Critical Infrastructure Recovery Program

In March 2017, the Prime Minister referred this significant package of work to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for review. If approved, work will commence in Financial Year 2017-18.

The aim of the works is to address severe condition, capacity and compliance issues with two existing wharves at the Garden Island. The proposed works include demolishing two existing wharves and building a new wharf in their place in a revised alignment. It is also proposed to extend an adjoining wharf to limit the new realigned wharf's protrusion into Sydney Harbour. The new realigned wharf is proposed to be equipped with new engineering services, wharf furniture, and a crane to replace those that will be removed during demolition.

The existing wharves can be seen in Figure 1 while the proposed realigned and extended wharves can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 1: Existing Wharves



Figure 2: Proposed Wharves

## Other News

Rather than duplicate the good work being done by others to pull together current RAN news, readers may have a variety of websites to select from. For example, the Navy Victoria Network's newsletter collates RAN specific items from various sources and presents them to subscribers in a monthly newsletter. Other provide daily news or alert subscribers when stories are published.

**Useful sites;** Navy Media Room, <http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room>, Australian Naval Institute, <http://navalinstitute.com.au/>, Submarine Institute of Australia, <http://www.submarineinstitute.com/>, Navy News, <http://www.defence.gov.au/news/navynews/>, Naval Today, <http://navaltoday.com/> and the Navy Victoria Network:

## Photo of the Month



**LCH and Work Boat sheltering in Wahday Creek,  
Cairns during Cyclone Hamish, 12 March 2009**

## Trivia Corner

Q. Which RAN destroyer had three funnels?

The answer to this question will be provided next month.

Answer to last month's question:

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

A. 1. HMAS Parramatta 1

However, speculation continues about whether or not Parramatta can be credited with victory in the Mediterranean against a submarine on 16 November 1917. This action occurred following a torpedo attack on the Italian transport *Orione* and subsequent salvage activities.

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

A. 2 HMAS Stuart 1

On the night of 29/30 September 1940 Stuart attacked the Italian submarine *Gondar* with depth charges. The following morning the submarine commander was forced to surface and abandon his vessel, which then sank after the explosion of scuttling charges. Stuart and HMS *Sindonis* rescued all but two of *Gondar*'s crew.

## Subscription

Should you become aware of others who wish to receive *Call The Hands* they should be advised to register by e-mailing the Society at [callthehands@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:callthehands@navyhistory.org.au).

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