CALL THE HANDS

Issue No.27 February 2019

From the President

Welcome to the February 2019 edition of Call the Hands. Now in its fourth year of publication *Call the Hands* is intended to provide; hitherto unpublished stories, additional insight into known issues and to keep you abreast of history in the making. Feedback from our readers and research queries from the community frequently inspire the stories.

Accompanying this issue are three Occasional Papers (OP). Papers 44 and 45 are previously published *Naval Historical Review* stories. OP 44 provides a close look at the challenges which confronted Gannet pilots. OP 45 describes a very well managed routine boarding by the crew of HMAS *Adelaide* in 2004 made more complex and dangerous by the threat from aggressive Iranian Navy small boats. OP 46 is on Lieutenant Commander Kenneth Robert Hudspeth DSC RANVR. His story was inspired by a research query. Hudspeth served with great distinction in Royal Navy midget submarines during World War 2. Thanks to reader feedback we bring you additional insight into the resignation of LCDR Hirst, Commanding officer of HMAS *Toowoomba* in 1942.

Whilst most of the community relaxed and enjoyed 'down time' in recent weeks it is timely to recall that there is invariably, a RAN ship at sea conducting operations or on standby to sail at short notice during these periods. This year it was HMAS *Ballarat* on duty in the Arabian Sea with the Combined Maritime Forces. *Ballarat* has been in the Middle East since November 2018 on operation Manitou. On January 8 and 9 her boarding party made its third seizure of narcotics. Over 3.1 tons of hashish were seized. Her previous interdictions on 21 and 23 December 2018 delivered more than 900kgs of heroin worth more than $279 million. The Society salutes *Ballarat* and her ships company for their outstanding contribution to countering terrorism and the disruption of narcotics smuggling. This is history in the making.

Hashish seized by HMAS *Ballarat* in the Arabian Sea, 8-9 January 2019. RAN Image.

We also recall other Christmas disasters to which the RAN has responded selflessly. These include Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. In response to the latter, which claimed the lives of six sailors and injured many more, Royal Australian Navy personnel responded in minimal time to play a critical role in search and rescue operations which commenced PM 27 December and continued for three days. RAN Sea King helicopters from HMAS *Albatross*, the duty response ship HMAS *Newcastle* and Sea Hawk helicopters also at *Albatross* rescued numerous yachtsmen.

Links relating to Operation Navy Help (Cyclone Tracy response) are also provided in this edition.
Finally, the Society is progressively loading its website with back copies of articles published since 1970. Copies of Call the Hands and Occasional papers are also available online. Articles can be searched by category as can naval events, "On this Day' be searched by date or era. I trust that you find the research capabilities of our website useful.

David Michael
President

In this Edition

Essay Competition: Autonomous Ships

The Society in association with Chatswood RSL is conducting an essay competition on the subject of autonomous ships and their advantages and disadvantages in a naval context. The *Naval Historical Review* and Society website home page provide full details.

Length: 3,000 words
Prizes: 1st prize of $1,000 and $250 to the runner-up.
Winning essay: Published in the NHR and web site
Closing date: 31 March 2019.

The Cruiser Choir

At the outbreak of WWII I was organist and choir master at St Andrews Church, Wahroonga. I mention this fact because it has a bearing on the short story I am about to tell.

Exactly one month later on October 3rd, I became a RAN bandsman and remained so until discharge nearly 6½ years later. I joined the navy as a pianist and double bass player (the largest of the string instruments). I was at FND for six months where I was taught to play the BB bass (the largest of the brass instruments) and when considered competent on this instrument was sent to sea on HMAS *Canberra* on 30th April, 1940 where I remained until that fateful day, August 9th, 1942.

There was virtually no music at sea and for a couple of weeks I was very seasick, homesick, and unhappy but in the Navy one learns to adapt and that is what I did. After *Canberra* I was pleased to be among the main draft sent to England to man *Shropshire*, remaining on her until drafted ashore in October 1944.
Routine aboard *Canberra* was quite different from that aboard *Shropshire.* Until Japan entered the war *Canberra* was engaged in long patrols looking for enemy raiders or else escorting fast troopship convoys to the South Atlantic, the Middle East and later to Singapore or thereabouts. We rarely played our instruments, often only getting them out for Church service in the torpedo space on Sunday morning.

Shropshire was a different matter. The war had changed. The island hopping programme was in operation and between hops we were often in one of the great bases such as Milne Bay, Sea Adler in the Admiralties, or Biak, only going to sea for exercises and gunnery practice or for another operation on the long road to Tokyo. There was an easier routine and more leisure to indulge in personal pastimes etc. It was at this time that I conceived the idea of a choir. My memory rather fails me here as I cannot for the life of me remember how I went about recruiting this purely voluntary group of about fifteen seamen, stokers, WT operators and even one bandsman. However, I did so and a most rewarding experience it proved to be.

The RC Chaplain gave us the use of his cabin during the first dog watch and the job of teaching the men was begun. With the exception of the bandsman I don't think anyone could read music and I soon found out that without a keyboard instrument it was going to be an uphill task. Fortunately, shortly afterwards Shropshire had to return to Sydney for docking and a few days leave. I visited an organ warehouse in Castlereagh Street (G.H. Naylor & Co.). There I saw a little pedal organ that was just what the doctor ordered. I told Mr. Naylor what the instrument was wanted for and he insisted on making a present of it and having it delivered on board next day.

HMAS *Shropshire*

In Milne Bay the choir prospered and the chaplain asked if we could accompany him to one of the destroyers for Sunday morning service. From this initial visit came requests from other ships including U.S. destroyers and even a US cruiser where the chaplain gave me a copy of the song and service manual of the US Army and Navy, complete with music. I treasured this little book as I was able to teach the choir several negro spirituals which it contained, and which were always popular.

Author unknown. Originally published in June 1988 edition of the Naval Historical Review

RAN FAA Skyhawks

The original order of 10 x A-4 Skyhawks, was actually for the T/A-4E variant. This order was announced on 26 October 1965. However, this procurement was altered in August 1966 following the first flight of the A-4F variant. It was this variant that was selected and purchased, but with no dorsal 'hump' and with specified avionics, which ultimately led to RAN Skyhawks being designated A-4G.

This first order consisted of 8 x single seat A-4G and 2 x two seat TA-4G. These were accepted at the Douglas Long Beach plant on 26 July 1967 and arrived in Australia onboard HMAS *Melbourne* on 22 Nov 1967, and unloaded in Jervis Bay the following day.

On 10 Mar 1970, a follow-on order for an additional 8 x single seat A-4G & 2 x two seat TA-4G was placed, despite no airframe losses at this stage. These were picked up from the US by HMAS *Sydney*, and were unloaded in Jervis Bay on 11 Aug 1971.

Over the course of the Skyhawks 17yr operational career with the RAN FAA, on VF-805 & VC-724 Naval Air Squadrons, 10 airframes were lost: 8 x single seat A-4G & 2 x two seat TA-4G!

In April 2012, the last surviving TA-4 returned to Australia, after it was gifted back to the RAN from the RNZAF, following decommissioning and sale of the remaining RNZAF Skyhawk fleet. N13-154911 (880), one of the 2 x initial TA-4G's acquired in 1967, now resides in the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

From Fleet Air Arm Museum Facebook post – January 2019
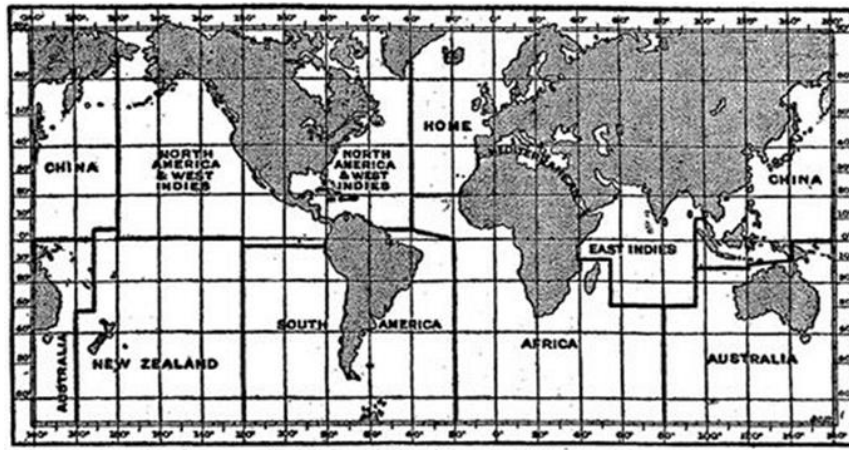
The Australia Station: 1859 to 1911

The Australia Station was the British, and later Australian, naval command responsible for the waters around the Australian continent. The Australia Station was under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, whose rank varied over time. In the years following the establishment of the British colony of New South Wales in 1788, Royal Navy ships stationed in Australian waters formed part of the East Indies Squadron and came under the command of the East Indies Station. From the 1820s, a ship was sent annually to New South Wales, and occasionally to New Zealand.

In 1848, an Australian Division of the East Indies Station was established, and in 1859 the British Admiralty established an independent command, the Australia Station, under the command of a commodore who was assigned as Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station. The Australian Squadron was created to which British naval ships serving on the Australia Station were assigned. The changes were partially in recognition of the fact that a large part of the East Indies Station had been detached to Australian waters, and also reflecting growing concern for the strategic situation in the western Pacific in general, and in Tahiti and New Zealand in particular. In 1884, the commander of the Australia Station was upgraded to the rank of rear admiral.

At its establishment, the Australia Station encompassed Australia and New Zealand, with its eastern boundary including Samoa and Tonga, its western edge in the Indian Ocean, south of India and its southern edge defined by the Antarctic Circle. The boundaries were modified in 1864, 1872 and 1893. At its largest, the Australia Station reached from the Equator to the Antarctic in its greatest north-south axis, and covered a quarter of the Southern Hemisphere in its extreme east-west dimension, including Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Melanesia and Polynesia.

On 1 January 1901, Australia became a federation of six States, as the Commonwealth of Australia, which took over the defence forces from all the States. In March 1901, the Commonwealth took over the colonial navies to form the Commonwealth Naval Forces. The Australian and New Zealand governments agreed with the Imperial government to help fund the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron, while the Admiralty committed itself to maintain the Squadron at a constant strength. In 1902, the commander of the Australia Station was upgraded to the rank of vice admiral. The boundaries were again modified in 1908. On 10 July 1911, King George V granted the title of "Royal Australian Navy" to the CNF.

The Australian Squadron was disbanded in 1911 and the Australia Station passed to the Commonwealth Naval Forces. The Station was reduced to cover Australia and its island dependencies to the north and east, excluding New Zealand and its surrounds, which became part of the China Station and called the New Zealand Naval Forces. In 1913, the Royal Australian Navy came under Australian command, and responsibility for the reduced Australia Station passed to the new RAN. The Royal Navy's Australia Station ceased in 1913 and responsibility handed over to the Royal Australian Navy and its Sydney based depots, dockyards and structures were gifted to the Commonwealth of Australia. The Royal Navy continued to support the RAN and provided additional blue-water defence capability in the Pacific up to the early years of World War II.

The map printed above illustrates our Naval Correspondent's article on the redistribution of the Fleet, which has effected a great change in the boundaries of the naval stations.

Royal Navy Stations 1919 including the Australia Station

In 1921, a separate New Zealand Station was established, and the New Zealand Naval Forces renamed the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. In 1958, the Australia Station was redrawn again, now to include Papua New Guinea.

The Australian Squadron

The Australian Squadron was the name given to the British naval force assigned to the Australia Station from 1859 to 1911. The Squadron was initially a small force of Royal Navy warships based in Sydney, and although intended to protect the colonies of Australia and New Zealand, the ships were primarily used for surveying and police work. The isolation of Australia from the rest of the British Empire meant the force was easily neglected, and by the 1870s, was perceived to be useless for its intended role. Following the passing of the Australasian Defence Act 1887, an additional 'Auxiliary Squadron' was assigned to the Station by the British Admiralty with the responsibility for protecting trade in the region. During the early 1900s, the Australian and New Zealand governments agreed to help fund the Squadron, while the Admiralty committed itself to keeping the Squadron at a constant strength.

As a British force, the Australia Squadron ceased on 4 October 1913, when the ships of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) entered Sydney Harbour for the first time. However, the term was subsequently used between 1926 and 1949 to refer to the ships of the RAN: after the decommissioning and scuttling of the battlecruiser HMAS Australia and other cutbacks, the term 'Australian Fleet' was thought to be inappropriate to describe the navy's strength. HMAS Melbourne served as squadron flagship between 1922 and 1928.

Royal Navy Ships of the Australian Squadron in Sydney Harbour, c1888 - 90

Photo of the Month:

The Royal Navy's HMS 'Orlando' in Sutherland graving dock on Cockatoo Island, Sydney, 1888-1890. The armoured cruiser was flagship of the Royal Navy's Australia Station from 1888 to 1897. Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Sydney Collection

News in Brief

HMAS *Hobart* returns home
December 2018. HMAS *Hobart*, the first RAN Aegis-equipped ship, returned home after wrapping up weapons and systems trials with the United States Navy off the US West Coast. *Hobart* returned to Sydney after spending three months in the US. In addition to testing the Aegis system, *Hobart* also became the first ship of its class and the first US Navy ally to demonstrate an ability to operate in synch with US forces through the Co-Operative Engagement Capability (CEC) – a sensor data sharing system.

Grave of Captain Flinders found
January 2019. The legendary explorer's grave was rediscovered by workers building the new London-Birmingham high-speed railway line. Matthew Flinders is credited with giving Australia its name. For 180 years the last resting place of explorer and navigator Captain Matthew Flinders has been lost among 40,000 other bodies in graves near Euston station. But archaeologists excavating St James' burial ground to pave the way for the new HS2 train terminus have identified the officer's grave out of the thousands at the site. The lead depositum plate – breast plate – put on top of Flinders' coffin when he was buried in July 1814 meant his remains could be formally identified.

Australia Day Awards
January 2019. Twenty three members of the Royal Australian Navy were recognised in the 2019 Australia Day Honours List. The Navy recipients were announced alongside 1,377 other Australians in the Honours List by the Governor-General and Chancellor of the Order of Australia, His Excellency the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd). The Australia Day Honours List recognises the contributions and service by outstanding individuals from right across Australia and in many fields. Ninety military awards were announced in the Honours List.

LCDR Ben Crowther who received a Conspicuous Service Medal

Australia day in Sydney.
January 2019. HMAS *Choules* was the guard ship for the Australia day festivities in Sydney. A 21-gun salute was fired from Bradfield Park in North Sydney and was received by the Governor of NSW, David Hurley, on board the *Choules*. Other RAN units involved were two MH60-R helicopters and HMAS *Gascoyne*.

This Month in History

February 1788	Governor Arthur Phillip allocated Garden Island, Sydney, to HMS SIRIUS for use as a ship's garden.
February 1788	HMS SIRIUS landed a party on Garden Island, Sydney, to prepare a ship's garden. Three sets of initials, 'FM', 'IR', and 'WB', were carved on a rock on the northern hill. These are now the oldest marks extant made by Europeans in Australia.
February 1884	HMVS CHILDERS, (torpedo boat), ran out of coal off the coast of Portugal and was forced to lay-to until found by the steamer Pathan which supplied her with enough coal to reach Gibraltar. To avoid a similar situation on the run from Malta to Alexandria she was diverted to Crete, and so became the first Australian warship to visit the Greek naval base at Suda Bay.
February 1909	Extract from Instructions to the Professional Officers of His Majesty's Dockyards: "When gangs or companies are working by candlelight, such candles only as are necessary are to be demanded, and when so working on board a ship, the Officer in charge of the work is to take care that no candle is used without a candlestick of the established Admiralty pattern, with a distinguishing number stamped thereon, so that the person using it may be traced".
February 1916	The RAN Bridging Train assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the bridges across the Suez Canal at Serapeum.
February 1917	SBLT R. S. Dallas, an Australian serving with the RNAS, shot down a German Aviatik aircraft over France. Dallas was flying a Sopwith triplane.
February 1929	Six Seagull Mk III amphibian aircraft embarked in seaplane carrier HMAS ALBATROSS at Melbourne.
February 1936	HMAS AUSTRALIA, (cruiser), exercised with 'Queen Bees', unmanned radio-controlled Moth aircraft, in the Mediterranean. HMA Ships AUSTRALIA and SHROPSHIRE, (cruisers), exercised together for the first time off Alexandria, Egypt.
February 1941	Three sailors from the minesweeper HMAS LISMORE drowned in Jervis Bay. They were returning to the ship in one of the ship's boats that was swamped in heavy seas. Those who lost their lives were ERA Edward Dunn, AB John Irving, and AB Tom Lee.
February 1944	HMAS LAUNCESTON, (minesweeper), and HMIS JUMNA, (sloop), sank the Japanese submarine RO-110, 20 miles south-east of Vizagapatam. RO-110 had torpedoed the merchant ship ASPHALION but was quickly tracked by the Asdic of the escort vessels.
February 1952	Union action meant that no tugs arrived to pull HMAS *Sydney* out of Fremantle harbour on her departure. In response, the ship initiated an action known as Operation PINWHEEL. The Sea furies of 805 and 808 Squadrons simply started the engines of the aircraft sitting on Sydney's flightdeck to pull herself clear. Sydney had arrived in Fremantle on 22/2/1952 on her return from Korea in the middle of industrial unrest on the waterfront.
February 1964	HMAS MELBOURNE, (aircraft carrier), and HMAS VOYAGER, (destroyer), collided in a night exercise off Jervis Bay. VOYAGER sank with a loss of 82 lives. The GC was awarded posthumously to CPO Jonathon Rogers, DSM, for conspicuous bravery in rescue following the collision. The subsequent inquiries and two Royal Commissions into the cause of the collision shook the RAN to its foundations.
February 1967	Clearance Diving Team 3, LEUT M. T. Shotter, RAN, arrived at Vung Tau. This was the first unit of the RAN to serve in Vietnam.
February 1969	The former HMAS ARUNTA, (Tribal class destroyer), sank north of Sydney while under tow to Japan for breaking up. While it was never proven the rumour at the time was that former members of ARUNTA's World War II crew had sabotaged the ship to prevent it reaching Japan to be scrapped.
February 1972	HMAS SYDNEY (troop transport), sailed from Vung Tau, Vietnam, on her last troop carrying voyage. SYDNEY was the only ship of the RAN to wear both the British White Ensign and the Australian White Ensign in the war. She completed four voyages to Vietnam before the Australian White Ensign was introduced on 1 March 1967.
February 1976	817 squadron re-equipped with the larger Sea King helicopter, which greatly improved the RAN's anti-submarine warfare capability.
February 1985	HMAS ATTACK, name-ship of the RAN's Attack class patrol boats, sailed from Sydney streaming a 38.7 metre paying off pennant. The patrol boat was transferred to the Indonesian Navy as a gift.
February 1992	CMDR Carolyn Brand, RAN, became the first female officer of the RAN to command an operational base when she took command of HMAS WATERHEN, (shore base, Sydney).
February 2003	The main body of Clearance Diving Team 3 arrived in Bahrain for service in the Persian Gulf/Iraq, as part of the Australian commitment to Operation Falconer, (the war in Iraq).
February 2005	HMAS ARUNTA, (CMDR W. Bairstow, CSC, RAN), provided assistance to the Panama registered container ship MV MSC DENISSE that was drifting southeast of Christmas Island with a flooded engine room. ARUNTA provided engineers to pump out the engine room. HMAS STUART, (CMDR P. Spedding, OAM, RAN), was also en-route to provide assistance. Both ships were employed on Operation Reflex II immigration patrols.

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/

Readers Forum

Garden Island (East) Critical Infrastructure Recovery Program
Work has commenced on the demolition of the existing Oil Wharf and eventual replacement of the both the Oil Wharf and Cruiser Wharf. Project completion is scheduled for early 2022. This project is of vital interest to the Society due to its impact on guided history tours conducted by the Society.
Thanks to volunteers for drawing attention to this animation showing the proposed construction process and example of the finished wharf currently in process. **Reference**: Defence Infrastructure website:
http://www.defence.gov.au/id/N2253/Default.asp

The *Toowoomba* Sackings/Resignation Revisited

Thanks to Peter Nunan for additional insights into the service of Lieutenant Commander Paul Hugill Hirst and HMAS *Toowoomba*. Peter refers to Occasional Paper 39 published with Call the Hands in November 2018. Peter wrote, "I was interested in Terry Feltham's Call the Hands piece on Paul Hirst's departure from Toowoomba. I've attached a follow up piece on that topic from my research for your consideration for a future issue."

'Like Terry Feltham I have been researching Paul Hirst and his departure from HMAS *Toowoomba* and the RAN (*Call the Hands*, Nov. 2018.). I've been surprised, again like Terry, at the lack of any accessible records on Hirst's departure—even *Toowoomba's* Reports of proceedings from its commissioning in October 1941 to November 1942 are not available. However, LCDR Hirst's record of service cards, RAN and Army) and Navy personal file provide some information.

The RAN cards from Hirst's appointment as a cadet midshipman on 31.12.12 to "terminated 3.8.42", and "retired list 27.4.59" show his progression through ranks and periods and places of service. A surprising entry is "Incurred the grave displeasure of the Naval Board by taking no steps for recovery of escapee from detention quarters G.I. on 13.4.28". A card also notes "App. For BOT Master's Licence 28 Mar.'46." Hirst's Army record lists him as a retired married grazier, Army number N483082. He was a captain from 18 September 1945 in 13 Small Ships Group. Before he was discharged in Hobart on 21.1.47 he served in Australia for 48 days and overseas [in New Guinea and Bougainville waters] for 424 days.

A Trove search revealed Hirst was the Hobart born son of an English born teacher. In Sydney, on 30 December 1929, he married Eve, the daughter of Sir Joseph, a former premier of New South Wales, and Lady Carruthers. In the late '30s the couple and their two children resided at their property *Carrick*, near Launceston. Three months before he joined the army, a newspaper advertisement of 23 June 1945 announced a clearing sale at *Carrick* with "…Mr. Paul Hirst is leaving the state." However, the family later returned and Hirst died at Low Head on 4 March 1973. His will identifies him as "Retired Naval Officer." Hirst's naval personal file in the Canberra National Archives reveals more, but, again with tantalising gaps. Four terse entries on the inside front cover read;

"Toowoomba in command on commissioning. 17.5.42 as Acting Commander [This is crossed out. Actually, the Naval Board meeting that approved this promotion since he was to be senior officer of four corvettes to join the Eastern Fleet took place on 8 July. The promotion was to come into effect "…from date of leaving Australia." *Toowoomba* received the news on 16 July. The Leading Steward somehow produced from somewhere a Commander's braided cap, and Hirst turned on beer for the entire ship's company.]
Inside the file are confidential reports. All are complimentary. Yet, in a by now familiar pattern, the latest is over a year before Hirst's departure. Dated 24 April 1941 it is signed by Captain G.D. Yates, commander of HMAS *Cerberus*, where Hirst was First Lieutenant. "Very able…firm and tactful…well liked… excellent leader…good messmate…keen sense of humour…" peppered the report with Yates recommending him for accelerated promotion.

9

Other reports ranging from service on HMS *Hood* in 1926 to HMAS *Australia* in 1931 where Hirst was in charge of midshipmen are in a similar vein stressing his leadership qualities and tact. The only jarring note came in 1930 when, after Commander (D) wrote of Hirst, then commanding HMAS *Success*, "A capable, keen, and zealous commanding officer…very good ability in handling ship,"

The commander of the Australian Squadron, RADM E.G.R. Evans RN added "Hirst is NOT gifted with average commanding officer's initiative and he lacks imagination." Evans, "Evans of the *Broke*," former Polar explorer with Scott, and hero of the 1917 Battle of Dover Strait when his ship HMS *Broke* and *Swift* defeated six German torpedo boats, possibly had very high standards. Possibly, too, he observed Hirst on a bad day, or maybe he was not a very good judge of others' imagination or initiative. The fact remains he was decidedly in the minority.

With the paucity of official records, personal letters come into consideration. Signalman Fraser's, quoted by Terry Feltham, which includes the sentence, "He resigned and so did we," is not the only one.   Three others are in Vic Cassell's papers, now at Canberra's Sea Power Centre.
Then Ordinary Seaman Norm Smith's two hand written pages of his service time include:-
"24 July.   Skipper resigns from Navy after conflict with authorities over need for refit."
And "7 August. On draft to *Geelong*.   Crew generally dispersed among fleet, fear of mutiny, I heard.   Wasn't conscious of problems myself—only an OD."

Alastair Templeton, who joined the ship after Hirst left, discussed it with Keith Maynard from the dispersed crew. After referring to the "mutineers of July 1942" Templeton asserts he and Maynard agreed "…Hirst was axed for refusing to take the ship to sea to join the Eastern Fleet without first being refitted."
Later Templeton wrote the ship's company ("bar four") was totally dispersed "---the usual procedure when there has been or perceived to have been a disciplinary upset." He listed those left on board as the First Lieutenant, a stoker petty officer, an AB, and a steward.

Signalman James Carpenter's interesting twenty-two closely hand-written pages cover from 2 December 1941 to the crew's dispersal. After detailing the damage to the ship he wrote, on 20 July, "We think we will not be sent away with the ship in such bad condition." Four days later came, "Since Commodore John Collins' inspection there has been uneasiness aboard not knowing what to expect."

The next day's entry is, "25.7.42   OUR BLACK SATURDAY…Commander Hirst after much conflict with the authorities resigned…This man was a victim of the system who must have left a big hole in the officer professional ranks."

In fact, the authorities finally concurred with Hirst's stand. The ship was refitted before deployment. But for Hirst it was a Pyrrhic victory. For all involved it would be best if the official records were found and made available' supplementing the lower deck's recollections.
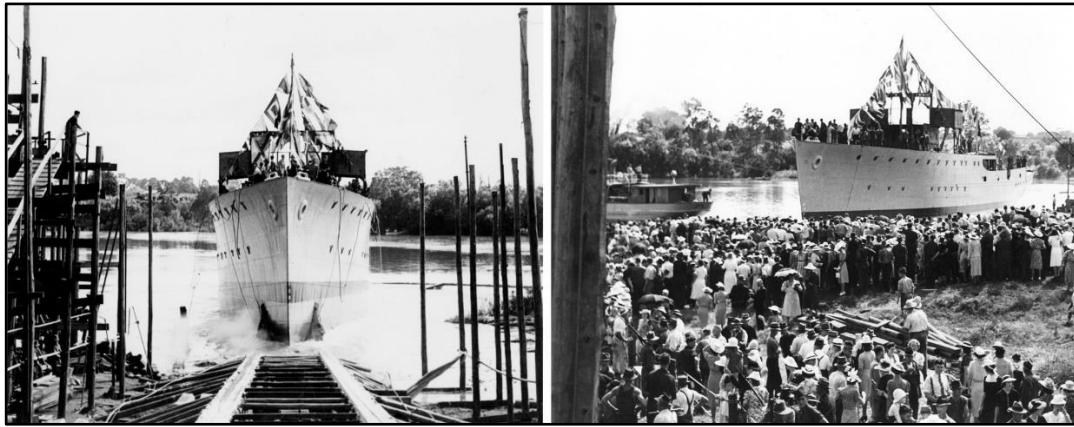
Toowoomba's launch had a common touch. The officiating lady was not a celebrity or the wife of one. She was Mrs. Cecil Lowther, the wife of the Maryborough shipyard's foreman patternmaker. Mr. Lowther was the well- known local poet "Bannerman."   In the week after the launch his poem, *Somewhere in Queensland*, eulogising the ship and her builders appeared in the *Maryborough Chronicle*. One stanza asks:-

Ma*y heaven protect her in years to come*
And the lads who man her well
While they do their part though far from home
Where the billowing oceans swell.'

Mrs Lowther, pictured above holding a bouquet of flowers, was the launching lady for Toowoomba. RAN Image

The prayer was essentially answered. *Toowoomba* came through the war. But it's a pity the heavens did not protect the career of an outstanding officer and keep together a happy ship's crew.

Toowoomba sliding down the ways on 21 March 1941 at the Walkers Yard, Maryborough, Queensland.

Operation Navy Help Darwin

Thanks to ex RAN members of the Society for drawing attention to this RAN video of Operation *Navy Help.* The humanitarian relief operation conducted by the RAN following Cyclone Tracy's devastation of Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974 remains the largest operation of its type in Australia. This 12.5 minute video recounts many of the RAN's activities in the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy and recognises the huge commitment of ships, aircraft and people to assist in recovery efforts.

Navy's contribution to the recovery of Darwin was also described in detail on 7 July 1986 by Commodore Eric Johnston AM, OBE, CStJ, RANEM, RAN, Administrator of the Northern Territory. Commodore Johnston was delivering the inaugural 'Eric Johnston Lecture', at the State Reference Library. His topic was *The Role of the Royal Australian Navy in Darwin, Post Cyclone Tracy*. This was a natural topic for him having been the Naval Officer Commanding Northern Australia at the time Cyclone Tracy struck.

References:
Occasional papers (Northern Territory Library Service); no. 5,
Eric Johnston Lecture no. 1
Operation Navy Help, Sea Power Centre Australia, video.
For God's Sake Send Help – They Sent the Navy, published March 1975 in the Naval Historical Review

Cyclone Tracy: Quick Facts
- Tracy was reported as a category four cyclone.
- It was small but intense, the radius of the galeforce winds was only 50km.
- Made landfall just north of Fannie Bay at 3:30am on Christmas Day 1974 and passed directly over Darwin.
- Wind gust of 217kph was recorded before anemometer at Darwin Airport failed. Maximum wind gusts have been estimated at up to 240kph.
- Darwin received 250mm of rain in 12 hours.
- Debris indicated a four-metre storm surge at Casuarina Beach.
- Sixty-five people died — 49 in Darwin and 16 lost at sea.
- At least 90 per cent of homes in Darwin were demolished or badly damaged.
- Total damage bill came to around $800 million or nearly $4.5 billion in today's money.
- More than 30,000 Darwin residents were evacuated after the cyclone, many never returned.

Sources include ABC and Bureau of Meteorology

HMAS *Voyager* Exhibition: Australian National Maritime Museum

On 10 February 2019 an HMAS *Voyager* exhibition will open at the ANMM marking the 54th anniversary of its loss with the loss of 82 lives in 1964.

The centre piece of the exhibition will be a 5-meter scale model of *Voyager* on loan from the Naval Heritage Collection. This exquisite model weighing more than 200 kilograms was built by Mr Ken Taylor and daughter Narelle in the Shoalhaven area. The exhibition will run for six months.

Occasional Papers in this edition

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

- Occasional Paper 44, Lieutenant Kenneth Robert Hudspeth, DSC, RANVR
- Occasional Paper 44, Fairey Gannett in the RAN
- Occasional Paper 45, HMAS Adelaide boarding in the Gulf 2005

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. 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
Website: https://www.navyhistory.org.au/garden-island-tours/

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. Current subscribers can unsubscribe by emailing the same email address.

Further Reading

There are hundreds of articles online at our website. Visit https://www.navyhistory.org.au/ for more stories and information