From the President

As the world plunges deeper into pandemic tragedy Naval Historical Society volunteers will do their utmost to continue services as best, they can. With many volunteers used to working remotely, eighty percent of our services are unaffected. However, closure of our office and cessation of Garden Island history tours will cause financial stress and some delay in mailing products to our valued customers.

On the bright side, it is a pleasure to bring you our 40th edition of *Call the Hands*. This edition has a focus on catapult launched naval aircraft and their operation by R.A.A.F. personnel of No. 9 Squadron between 1935 and 1949. There is a significant amount of detail in the interesting 'video of the month' on cruiser launch and recovery operations as well as a table detailing the fate of various Seagull V aircraft operated by No. 9 Squadron. A number of whom lost their lives at sea in support of naval operations.

Three occasional papers accompany this edition of *Call the Hands*. OP 75 on RAN involvement in the Vietnam War coincides with the 45th anniversary of the end of that War on 20 April 1975. Our thanks to Captain Ralph T. Derbidge MBE RAN Rtd for providing the paper. The second paper by Greg Swinden looks at the impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19 on the RAN. OP 76 by Dennis Weatherall examines the development and operations of HMAS Assault as an amphibious operations training establishment during WW2.

If you have a previously unpublished paper of interest to fellow readers and wish to share it, we would like to hear from you.

The Society welcomes NUSHIP Sydney to her namesake city for the first time. *Sydney* arrived in Port Jackson on Friday on 27 March and is due to commission on 2 May 2020. She is the fifth RAN ship to bear the proud name. *Sydney's* arrival was 36 years to the day since *Sydney (IV)* arrived in Sydney Harbour. On that day the ships company marched from Circular Quay to Martin Place where they exercised their Freedom of Entry to the City of Sydney.

Less good news in March was cancellation of a Navy event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the official opening of the Captain Cook Graving Dock on 24 March 1945. Society volunteers had worked hard in recent months on two supporting initiatives. These were the publication of a new book on the history of the Captain Cook Dock and the Dock's successful nomination for engineering heritage listing by the Institution of Engineers, Australia. The book, which is an interesting pictorial history of the Dock's construction and later use is now available through the website shop. Details are on page thirteen.

Stay healthy,

David Michael

Support the Society

Although Call the Hands is a free service to the community, produced by volunteers there are costs. Our objective is simply to promote understanding of Australian naval history. Voluntary contributions are essential to deliver this service to readers. If you value our work **please consider a donation**. https://www.navyhistory.org.au/donate/

In this Edition

Aviator or Seaman or Both?

By Commander John van Gelder, RAN (Rtd)
September 2005 edition of the Naval Historical Review (all rights reserved)

It is now comparatively rare for a naval aviator to also qualify as a seagoing watch-keeping officer, but in previous generations it was relatively straightforward and kept one in the mainstream for possible later promotion and eventual sea command.

It was towards the end of 1960. After a little more than twelve months flying Fairey Gannets from HMAS Melbourne I received an Appointment to join the Type 15 Frigate, HMAS Queenborough, to qualify as a seaman officer. In those days officers were "Appointed" to ships and establishments, they were not "Posted." Furthermore, they were directed to "repair to their duty." This was a very civilized and olde worlde way of conducting business. Of course, the underlying message was that if one did not "repair to one's duty" on the "Appointed" date one was likely to be keel-hauled at the first opportunity, or suffer such other punishment as may be considered necessary.

It should be understood that at that time the proportion of commissioned aviators to non-flying officers was relatively high compared to the present situation in the RAN. The majority of Fleet Air Arm Pilots and Observers were granted a six year Short Service Commission on graduation from flying training. During the six year period some officers were offered a permanent commission. The Naval Board in their wisdom probably thought that there could be some value to the RAN in a small proportion of this unsightly and generally non-conformist gaggle of aviators. On award of a permanent commission, one entered the main stream of the Executive Branch and, of necessity, had to obtain a Bridge Watchkeeping Certificate to become a qualified seaman officer, in order to compete in the promotion process. It became an interesting prospect to regard one's flying experience as simply a specialization in the overall scheme of things.

Thus, it was on a beautiful spring morning in October 1960, I found myself going to sea for the first time as an officer in a frigate. Passing through Sydney Heads into an almost flat calm sea with a gentle breeze, I thought life was pretty good. From what little I could ascertain we were engaged in Officer of the Watch Manoeuvres

with a sister ship, HMAS Quickmatch and a submarine (whose name I can't recall). What I do recall is that there were a number of people on the bridge, all busy doing something, except me! The bridge of a Type 15 frigate is very spacious but I found there was virtually no place to hide. All I could do was keep as far away from the compass platform as I could manage and keep silent. After all, I was enjoying this unique experience and was quite convinced that I would not be required to contribute to the activity on the bridge because I knew absolutely nothing about what was going on.

My reverie was abruptly shattered by our very senior and experienced captain who invited me, in no uncertain terms, to join the cluster of individuals gathered around the Pelorus, and for the next manoeuvre I was to act as Officer of the Watch. This, of course, presented me with an immediate and serious problem since I had no idea about what was happening. Obviously, I needed assistance from some person with far more experience in these matters than myself. The answer became obvious. Standing nearby was the Navigator. If I could elicit information from him without my total ignorance becoming too public this seemed to be a reasonable solution to the problem.

From that point on the conversations and actions taken on the bridge were roughly as follows:
Over the radio from *Quickmatch*, who was acting as the Guide came: "Execute to follow – Formation One – standard distance – my course 090 – speed 14 knots … At the time *Quickmatch* was about 30 degrees off our starboard bow at about two miles distant.

The following dialogue ensued between the Navigator and myself:

Me: "Excuse me, what does Formation One mean?"
Navigator: "It means that we must finish up directly astern of *Quickmatch*"
Me: "Thank you." (I think to myself this is a simple relative velocity problem. Easy, just like joining a formation in an aircraft, an activity at which I was well experienced).
Me: "Oh, another thing, what does Standard Distance mean?"
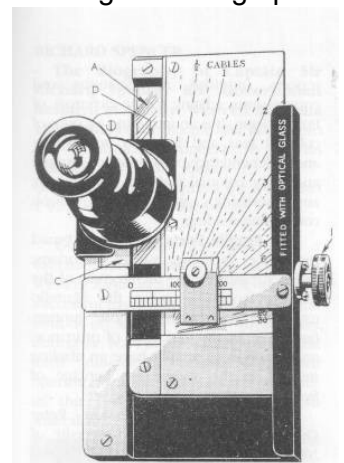Navigator: "It means two and a half cables or five hundred yards."
(I think to myself, thank goodness he explained the matter of cables and yards, because I did not know the length of a cable – well not exactly).

Next thing I hear over the radio is "Stand by Execute…"
I knew it was bound to happen and had been desperately wondering what I should do when it did happen. I had no choice. A voice of authority behind me said "… Come on, get on with it …" Here was my big chance. Not being a complete idiot and having heard other people use a similar expression I said "… Starboard 20, Revolutions 200…" The ship was turning and accelerating and I waited until steadying on a course which looked to be about right to bring us astern of *Quickmatch* at the required distance. Turning and lining up into *Quickmatch's* wake did not seem to be much of a problem, but we were doing nearly 20 knots and she was doing only 14. Here again the matter was simple. As in joining a formation in the air, reduce engine power when you judge the time is right and slide neatly into position.

Acting on this principle I reduced revolutions to give the ship 14 knots and she started to decelerate. Things were going very smoothly, but how did one measure distance between ships and in this instance it was to be Standard Distance precisely? Again the Navigator came to the rescue and in about 30 seconds flat. I was fully qualified on the use and intricacies of the Stuart's Distance Meter. Actually, I had used this little instrument in HMAS Australia some years previously; however, in intervening years matters of aviation had taken precedence and erased my memory.

Stuart's Distance Meter – a hand held instrument for visual ranging between 1/4 and about 15 cables distance, on objects of known height . (ie. ships' masthead height)

Lo and behold; there we were by sheer chance and good luck in station astern of *Quickmatch* at precisely the correct distance. Due to this surprising and unexpected outcome to the manoeuvre the Captain was moved to say to me: …. Well, I think that deserves a Bravo Zulu …. " I did not know quite how to take his remark since I had no idea what the term "Bravo Zulu" meant.

However, this remark was quickly followed up by him admonishing me to use the Battenberg for the next change of station, which was to join the submarine some distance away. Here we go again, an insurmountable problem. I had never heard of a Battenberg, let alone seen one. What followed was a 30 second crash course in the use of a Battenberg by the Navigator, which left me very little wiser.

As we were about to execute the next change of station I fiddled with the arms of the Battenberg, made an assessment of the course to be steered with my "trained aviator eyes" and went for it. I would like to think that others on the bridge thought I had used the less than efficient and clumsy Battenberg. But who knows?

Following this day we were engaged in an extremely intensive work-up period prior to joining the Far East Fleet for an equally intensive period of six months or so. To suggest that I was involved in an extraordinarily steep learning curve in matters of seamanship during this period would be a gross understatement.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed the experience immensely, to the extent that I found myself on the bridge of HMAS Queenborough some years later in a very different capacity indeed.

Battenberg course indicator

The Battenberg course indicator is a mechanical calculating device invented by Prince Louis of Battenberg in 1892 for taking station on other vessels whose range, bearing, course and speed are known. By extension, it has a range of other functions related to relative velocity calculations.

A number of versions of the device were produced and it proved particularly useful for station-keeping, such as ships moving in convoy during World War II. Manufacture of the instruments was contracted to Elliott Brothers, London. Devices based on the Battenberg indicator were also developed for determining course and distance in aviation and when making allowances for aircraft drift due to winds. Instruments were also manufactured for other navies, for example in the USA.

For the Mk 1 Prince Louis of Battenberg employed a firm of London instrument makers to build a prototype to his design. The device comprised:
- 2 *position bars* for setting the initial and final stations
- A *speed bar*, on which the speed of the ship (relative to the flagship [guide]) was set, and which was clamped at one end into the *diameter grove* by the *speed ratio clamp*
- A *guide bar*
- A *circular disc*

To use the instrument, the course of the flagship was first set on the guide bar. When the initial and final stations had been set using the position bars, the speed ratio clamp was set to show the ratio of own ship speed to the speed of the flagship (if the flagship was doing 10 knots, and the manoeuvring ship had 15 knots available, the clamp would be set to "1.5"). Ensuring that the pin beneath the speed ratio clamp was set within the diameter grove, the course required to take station could then be read off the circular disc

There were five versions of the indicator made.

Newspaper Article
Source: Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, Tuesday 14 December 1948

"Ducks " Stay Ashore; Sold As Scrap

Five R.A.A.F.. Seagull planes, were sold for scrap, for a total of £29/10/1, at Rathmines flying-boat base yesterday.

They were the last five planes of an original squadron of 18. They had served with the R.A.A.F. for 12 years.

The planes were sold at a Commonwealth Disposals Commission sale of surplus R.A.A.F. stores and equipment. Four of the Seagulls had engines. The initial bid on each plane started at £.2. The lowest price was £2/10/ and the highest £12/10/. Two others brought £5 and another £4/10/. Five Seagull Bristol Pegasus VI. engines were sold, subject to approval, at £3 each.

Known affectionately in and beyond the service as "ducks" and "old faithfuls," the Seagulls saw service as naval spotters on H.M.A. ship *Canberra*, *Sydney*, *Perth*, *Hobart*, *Australia*, *Manoora* and *Westralia*. Three planes and crews were lost on *Sydney*, *Canberra* and *Perth*.

The planes were removed from the ships at the end of the war and stored at Rathmines.

First Casualty

The original No. 9 Squadron, R.A.A.F., flew them during the war. This squadron was disbanded when the "ducks" came ashore.

Members of No. 9 Squadron claim one of the "ducks" was the first R.A.A.F. plane shot down in the last war.

The Commonwealth Government bought 18 Walruses from the British Navy in 1936. After slight modifications, they were re-named Seagulls by the R.A.A.F. They were made by the Supermarine Aviation Company, which later turned out the famous Spitfires.

The forerunner of the Seagull was a wooden-hull plane. The Government bought six of these in 1923, at £100 each. This was the beginning of flying-boat training in Australia.

"The R.S.P.C.A. should take action against anyone who harms the old 'duck,'" Flying Officer 3. W. Wylie said after seeing the planes sold.

"Like Battleships"

"It certainly grieves one to see the old faithfuls end up on the scrap heap, after giving such wonderful service," said Warrant Officer C. Wishart, a No. 9 Squadron member. "They were built like battleships and performed like them"

Warrant Officer Wishart has been associated with the Seagulls since they landed in Australia. Flying Officer Wylie flew them through the war. The Seagulls were she only aircraft at Rathmines in 1939, Squadron Leader E. J. Stocker said. There had been fewer fatal accidents in them than any other type of plane in the R.A.A.F.

Squadron Leader Stocker also flew Seagulls throughout the war. Warrant Officer Wishart said the first Seagull casualty, and the first of the war, was the plane from HMAS Sydney. It was shot down in the Middle East desert on July 19, 1941.

"The Arabs pinched everything they could lay their hands on," he said. "They even grabbed the anchor." "Maybe they wanted it for their ships of the desert;" Flying Officer Wylie suggested.

"When things were really grim in the Middle East in 1940, one of our fellows machine-gunned Italian headquarters in Somaliland in a 'duck,'" Warrant Officer Wishart said. "That was not a bad effort considering they had a top speed of 90 knots-with a strong wind behind them.

Head Wind

"I remember taking off from Bundaberg, at 2 p.m. We expected to be in Brisbane about 5 p.m. We flew into a head wind and at 5 o'clock we were still over Bundaberg. We put her down again and stayed the night. Yes, they were a great old ship."

No. 9 Squadron was presented with a crest signed by King George V., Flying Officer Wylie said. A ship's bell, engraved with the names of three captains, was given them from H.M.A.S. Albatross. The mementoes are in the mess at Rathmines. *Albatross* was the first Australian ship to carry a Seagull.

Other R.A.A.F. equipment sold included a wicker basket, two sewing machines, two gantry cranes. two toasters, a ton of aircraft spark plugs, a vacuum cleaner, two huts, and salt bath.

The Seagull V in Australian Service

The following table summarises the fate of Supermarine Seagull V aircraft operated by the R.A.A.F. from 1935 to 1949 including those which were lost whilst flying off ships of the Royal Australian Navy.

A2-1	6/2/45 2 CRD for conversion to components
A2-2	5/2/40 On the morning of 15.2.40, Sqn Ldr D.A. Connelly. And Plt Off R.H. Thompson were practicing landings when the engine caught fire. They were unable to extinguish the flames and forced landed about 10 miles south of Point Cook. The old Bay paddle steamer *Weeroona* was on a picnic cruise to Sorrento when smoke was sighted and the crew of A2-2 were rescued and taken to Queenscliff. The aircraft burned to the waterline and finally submerged (R.A.A.F. Accident Report). 19/2/40 Acft officially written off.
A2-3	Airframe offered by CDC for sale by tender by 6.9.46
A2-4	Airframe offered by CDC for sale by tender by 6.9.46
A2-5	23/5/45 Water looped after landing slightly nose down at Rathmines. Both mainplanes wrecked plus other damage. 21/6/45 Approval given for conversion to components.
A2-6	30/8/43 Aircraft sunk after heavy landing in position 12.00S 146.35E."At 0530 hours, A2-6 was photographing an outbound convoy from Cairns and flying at 200 feet when the engine failed. Flg Off H. Dowsley landed at the rear of the convoy in a fairly heavy sea. The Seagull began shipping water, so on the orders of the Captain of HMAS SWAN, Dowsley, together with the navigator, Flt Sgt L. Deacon, and the WO/AG, Flt Sgt T.H.L. Beasley, and as much gear as could be salvaged, were taken off and the aircraft sunk by naval gunfire in 925 fathoms of water.
A2-7	31/5/40 Converted to components after being damaged during landing in October 1939.
A2-8	Airframe offered by CDC for sale by tender by 6/9/46.
A2-9	8/2/43 During dive bombing training sortie, the aircraft was seen to dive and not recover before crashing into the sea near Storey Island, off Bowen, Qld, at 0900 hours. It sank in 12 fathoms of water and the crew, Lt J.H. McWhae RN, Flt Lt D.J. Hocking and Plt Off E.C.S. Seller were killed. Bodies were recovered 11.2.43
A2-10	14/10/36 Crashed into sea after bad landing off Point Cook, Vic. "At 1100 hours, Plt Off J.P. Godsell of the Seaplane Training Flight at Point Cook was practicing landings when a bad alighting was made causing the aircraft to overturn and become submerged. The accident occurred about 200 yards from the East Jetty at Point Cook. The pilot and AC1 A.H. Hoffman both suffered slight injuries, shock and lacerations. The aircraft is beyond economical repair."
A2-11	5/3/42 Accident while approaching to land "At 1153 hours, Sgt T.F. Pickering was alighting on Lake Macquarie, NSW, when the aircraft nosed in and fell over on its back. Sgt Pickering was killed and AC1W.F. McConnell was seriously injured."
A2-12	12/10/43 Assessed as beyond economical repair. Approved for conversion to components
A2-13	¼/43 Aircraft damaged "At 1225 hours, Plt Off R.G. Bonython of 9 Sqn based at Bowen, Qld, had just taken off when at 150 feet the engine lost power. The pilot swung left and landed in a small paddock three-quarters of a mile from the aerodrome. Long grass obscured potholes and the port oleo tore from its fitting, causing the aircraft to ground loop. Aircraft beyond economical repair. 18/12/43 Assessed as beyond economical repair. Condition deteriorated due to exposure since damaged.
A2-14	28/5/47 Authorised by CDC for write off. 6/9/49 Action completed.

|	
A2-15	28/11/38 Struck wires and caught fire near Archerfield, Qld. "The aircraft of No 5 Squadron was stationed temporarily at Archerfield. On the morning of 28.11.38, the pilot, FlgOff M.J. Wiber called on the Commissioner of Police and stated that he intended to carry out a flight on this day and suggested that he take a Police Officer with him for the purpose of searching for a missing woman. Constable Young of the Water Police was detailed to accompany the aircraft. The aircraft left Archerfield at about 12.10 pm and proceeded to the vicinity of Alberton Ferry. It was seen soon afterwards following the course of the Albert River upstream. At 12.22 pm it collided with a span of high tension wires which cross the river near the Ferry. The time was established by the stopping of electric clocks in the area. The high tension wires are at a height of 50 ft above the water, held by towers 90 ft high on either side. After striking the wires, the aircraft appeared to fly normally for about 200 yards then veered sharply to the left and crashed into the south bank of the river, bursting into flames on impact. The aircraft was completely destroyed and all occupants (Flg Off M.J. Wiber, Aircraftsmen E.A. Everett and A.D. Milner and Const G.R. Young) were killed. Examination of the wreckage disclosed a length of half-inch wire firmly caught beneath one of the valve rocker arms of the engine.
A2-16	22/5/42 On landing at Rathmines during the pilot's first night solo, the aircraft appeared to swing violently then capsized. Observer was killed and the pilot injured. Aircraft was damaged beyond repair. 30/6/42 Converted to components.
A2-17	28/4/41 Shot down by enemy aircraft near Suda Bay during the evacuation of Crete and lost while flying from HMAS Perth. "On 28th of April, the Walrus (sic) when on dawn patrol was shot down by two Dorniers after a spirited fight which lasted 20 minutes. The crew. Flt Lt Beaumont, Sub Lt Brian and PO Tel Dan Bowden succeeded in getting into a rubber dinghy and after many hours were picked up by HMS Havoc. "….then our starboard petrol tank caught fire and it was not long after that we crashed into the water"' (HMAS Perth' by Alan Payne)
A2-18	9/9/41 Damaged in heavy landing. 'AUSTRALIA left Durban on the 2nd September on escort duties and returned on the 7th. Next day the ship sailed for Aden with a convoy consisting of the troopships *Mauretania* and *Nieuw Amsterdam*. The Walrus aircraft was catapulted on the 9th to carry out a patrol and on landing in a swell was damaged, the hull being twisted and some frames buckled' ('HMAS Australia' by M.A. Payne) 24/12/41 Category 'G' at Aden for repair
A2-19	12/9/43 Missing 'On 9th September, A2-19 arrived at Byproduct *[code name for Kiriwina]* from Goodenough Island with Plt Off R.G. Bonython. On the 11th at 0400 hours, Bonython, with FlgOff R.A. Kelley of No 30 Sqn as navigator, set out to search for the missing Beaufighter A19-132, believed shot down by enemy fighters. At 0400 [?] hours, Byproduct signaled A2-19 to return, as weather had closed in. No reply was received from A2-19
A2-20	23/5/39 Blown from moorings onto beach at Port Moresby, PNG – badly damaged (R) *(Date also reported as 25.3)* Late 1939 Approval given for conversion to components but hull to be preserved for instructional purpose.
A2-21	21/6/40 Flying from HMAS Sydney was spotting for the fleet guns during the bombardment of Bardia, when it was attacked by RAF fighters who believed the amphibian to be Italian. The Seagull crew believed the fighters to be Italians! "With our slow speed we had no chance to maneuver. Anyhow, the first burst from the Italians had shot away our aileron controls. Bursts from the second plane, right on our tail, riddled the rudder and the after section of the hull until it looked like a sieve. Most of the tailplane struts were shot away. And we could see a line of bullet holes sawing off the port lower main plane. It seemed dollars to doughnuts that the old Seagull would be blown to pieces within a few seconds…..... We were dead meat actually but they didn't seem to like our bullets. Or perhaps they thought we were done anyway.' Flt Lt Thomas McB Price managed to land the badly damaged aircraft at Mersa Matruh, where it broke up on landing. ('HMAS Sydney' by Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins)
A2-22	21/2/43 "At 1130 hours, Sqn Ldr S.G. Stilling attempted to land on the runway at Nowra in crosswind conditions, resulting in a ground loop. The aircraft tipped onto the port float, forcing it into the port lower mail plane. The wind strength at the time was about 20 knots and gusty." Scrapped in 1944.
A2-23	1/11/39 HMAS Hobart left Singapore to patrol the west coast of Sumatra and the Sunda Strait. *Hobart's* aircraft was used extensively for reconnaissance work and on the 1st November, the aircraft was catapulted for night landing practice. Due to the darkness and inexperience of all parties the Walrus crashed into the sea and the damaged aircraft was recovered with the greatest difficulty. Next day HOBART returned to Singapore. While in port, a replacement aircraft was provided from the RAF base.
A2-24	6/4/41 HMAS Australia, together with HMAS Hobart, sailed for Wellington, NZ, on April 4th. Before their arrival on the 6th, the aircraft was catapulted but failed to rise and crashed into the sea. The aircraft from HMAS HOBART was in the vicinity and rescued two survivors, but the body of the pilot, Lt J.J. Hoath, RN, was not recovered. Aircraft was operated by 9 Sqn at the time of the crash. (*Note: Cause was later stated to be catapult failure*)

Source: http://www.adf-serials.com.au/2a2.htm

Video of the Month

Royal Navy Instructional Film (1940) - Using catapults to launch aircraft from ships

This 29 minute video shows in great detail the equipment and process used to launch and recover aircraft from catapult fitted ships in the 1940s.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dmNyts7f1w
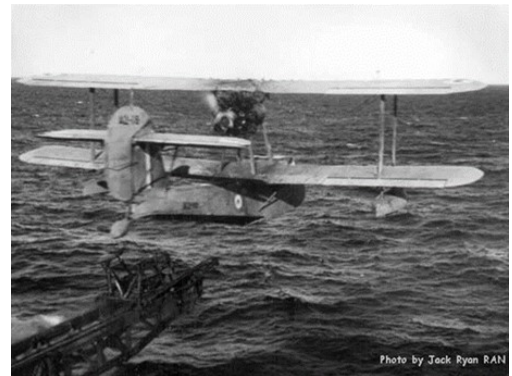
Photo of the Month:

HMS Anson
Captain Cook Graving Dock circa August 1945

A King George V class battleship, HMS Anson initially served in the European Theatre and in March 1945 sailed with HMS Duke of York to join the British Pacific Fleet. By the time she arrived in the theatre, hostilities were all but over.

She left Sydney on 15 August for Hong Kong with *Duke of York*, and along with a task force of other ships from Britain and the Commonwealth, accepted the surrender of the Japanese forces occupying Hong Kong. She was also present in Tokyo Bay during the official Japanese surrender.

Following the war *Anson* was the flagship of the 1st Battle Squadron of the British Pacific Fleet and helped to liberate Hong Kong. After a brief refit, *Anson* sailed from Sydney to Hobart in February 1946 to collect the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester (the Duke was then Governor-General of Australia) and return them to Sydney.

Anson arrived back in British waters on 29 July 1946 and after a short refit was returned to peacetime duties. In November 1949, *Anson* was placed in reserve and in 1951 she was towed to Gare Loch. On 17 December 1957 she was purchased for scrap by Shipbreaking Industries at Faslane Scotland.

News in Brief

Australia's Third & Final Air Warfare Destroyer Arrives in Sydney

Sydney residents had their first glimpse of their city's namesake ship with the arrival of NUSHIP Sydney at Garden Island naval base on 27 March 2020. The Hobart-class guided missile destroyer entered Sydney Heads and made her way through the harbour, with contractors and ship's company embarked. The 147-metre warship sailed from Osborne, South Australia, where she was built. Sydney is the last of three Hobart Class ships built for the Royal Australian Navy and is based on the Navantia F100 frigate design. She is the final of three ships of the Hobart class guided missile destroyers. Her sister ships are HMAS *Hobart* (III) and HMAS *Brisbane* (III). The keel of *Sydney* was laid down on 19 November 2015 and launched on 19 May 2018 by Mrs

NUSHIP Sydney arriving in Sydney Harbour

Judy Shalders in Osborne, South Australia.
Sydney will commission into the Royal Australian Navy in May 2020.

Australian minister laid keel for US Navy's new littoral combat ship

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne, laid the keel for the US Navy's new Independence-class littoral combat ship (LCS) USS Canberra.

The keel laying ceremony was held at Austal USA's shipyard in Mobile, Alabama, on March 10, 2020. The LCS 30 will be a 127-metre-long frigate-sized vessel designed to support focused mine countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare and surface warfare missions. It is the second warship to bear the name USS Canberra in honour of HMAS Canberra, lost at the Battle of Savo Island in 1942 along with three US heavy cruisers.

USS Independence

Podcast of Interest

"Reminiscences of my Naval career" by Rear Admiral Guy R. Griffiths AO DSO DSC RAN (Retired)

This podcast which runs for 73 minutes is a video of the presentation made by RADM Griffiths to the Military History Society of New South Wales on 7 March 2020.

Available at: http://www.battleforaustralia.asn.au/RADM_Griffiths.php

This Month in History

April 1858	The following ships were on the Australia Station:-Sailing vessels; IRIS, (26 guns), *Sappho*, (12 guns), and *Bramble*, (tender).Steam screw vessel; *Cordelia*, (11 guns).
April 1895	The RN Depot at Circular Quay, Sydney, was transferred to Garden Island.
April 1900	CAPT Hector McDonald Laws Waller, DSO and Bar, RAN, one of Australia's greatest naval commanders, was born at Benalla, VIC.
April 1910	The second Australian torpedo boat destroyer, HMAS Yarra, was launched at Dumbarton, Scotland.
April 1912	The boys training ship HMAS Tingira, (CMDR C la P. Lewin, RN), was commissioned. *Tingira* was laid down as a clipper ship *Sobroan*, in Alexanda Hall & Co, Aberdeen, Scotland, and launched in 1866. In 1891 she was purchased by the NSW Government, and became the Nautical School Ship *Sobroan*, and was moored off Balmain, Sydney, where she operated as a home and school for delinquent boys and orphans. She operated as the boys training ship for the RAN for the next 15 years, and produced over 3,000 'graduates' for the fleet. The name is aboriginal for 'open sea'.
April 1917	A Sopwith Baby seaplane was embarked in HMAS Brisbane, (cruiser), at Colombo, to hunt down the German raider WOLF. *Brisbane* was the first ship of the RAN to carry an aircraft operationally. The Australian-born CAPT J. S. Dumaresq, RN, took command of HMAS Sydney, (cruiser). CAPT J. Glossop, CB, RN, who had commanded *Sydney* when she sank the German cruiser SMS *Emden* in 1914, returned to Australia to take command of the RAN base at Garden Island.
April 1924	HMAS Australia, (battle-cruiser), was ceremoniously scuttled off Sydney Heads as part of the Washington Treaty, which limited fleet sizes, (the RAN was included as part of the RN under this treaty). *Australia* was followed to her final resting place by the remainder of the Australian Fleet, and hundreds of patriotic citizens in private vessels.
April 1939	HMAS Vendetta, (destroyer), transported the body of the Australian Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, to Devonport, TAS, for burial.
April 1942	HMAS Bendigo, (minesweeper), picked up 50 survivors from the Dutch merchant vessel *Dupliex*, sunk off Java Head. The patrol vessel HMAS Laurabada, (LEUT Ivan Champion, RANVR), evacuated the last troops and civilians from New Britain as the Japanese advanced southward.
April 1948	HMAS Mindari, (Gunnery Instruction Centre located at Woolloomooloo, Sydney), was decommissioned. In recent times the site was occupied by the Gunnery Art Gallery, which referred to its previous use.
April 1955	817 Squadron, flying Fireflies, decommissioned at NAS Nowra
April 1958	The Indonesian Navy ship *Hang Tuah*, (ex HMNS Morotai, ex HMAS Ipswich), was sunk in a bombing attack off North Borneo. The WWII Mitchell bomber was piloted by an American mercenary pilot who received $US 5000 for the operation.
April 1964	The first of three Bell Iroquois helicopters ordered for the RAN were received by the Fleet Air Arm.
April 1968	HMAS Acute, (Attack class patrol boat), was commissioned. She was transferred to the Indonesian Navy on 6 May, 1983, and renamed *Kri Silea*.
April 1972	HMAS Tobruk, (Battle class destroyer), was sold out of service for breaking up in Japan. The former destroyer *Tobruk*, and frigate *Quiberon*, left Sydney Harbour for the last time, under tow of the ocean going tug *Sumi Maru* No. 38, bound for Japan and breaking up.
April 1985	The prestigious Royal Geographic Society of Australia's J. P. Thompson Foundation Gold Medal, was awarded to the survey vessel, HMAS Flinders, (LCDR G. J. Bond, RAN), for the survey of, and production of, a new chart for a recently discovery passage through the Great Barrier Reef near Mackay. This passage was named Hydrographers Passage.
April 1997	Ex-HMAS Vampire, (Daring class destroyer), was transferred outright, as a gift from the Australian Government to the Australian National Maritime Museum, in Sydney.
April 2002	HMAS Kanimbla II returned to Sydney after service in the Middle East as part of the maritime force assigned to Operation SLIPPER.
April 2006	The oil replenishment ship HMAS Westralia, (CMDR T. Crawford, RAN), entered port for the last time when she berthed at HMAS Stirling, Perth, WA. During her 17 years in service, *Westralia* steamed 458,254 miles, and conducted 1269 replenishments at sea.

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/

Readers Forum

Flag Etiquette and Protocol

Occasional Paper 73 on ships badges and the Eureka Flag, published in March 2020 triggered a research query relating to the way the Australian National Flag (ANF) is flown at HMAS Creswell[1].

The query from Laurie Watson and Geoff Cole who were RAN College 1961 Entry Cadet Midshipmen and now volunteers at the Creswell Museum related to where the ANF should be flown in a shore establishment. Traditionally, it was always flown from the masthead of the Jackstaff[2], as it is in HMA Ships not underway. The question was, if HMAS Creswell is not underway, why shouldn't the ANF fly from its jack staff the same as a ship not underway?

Following advice from John Vaughan and John de C. Douglas, the following is provided in response.


Above, ANF flying at HMAS Creswell

Left, The HMAS Creswell quarterdeck. In this image circa 1980s the ANF is flown at the truck. A yardarm (unseen) was used for flag hoist training.

The layout of the *Creswell* parade ground resembles the deck of one of HMA Ships with the Jackstaff wearing the ANF at the stem and the AWE worn from the peak of the gaff. It is accepted that all shore establishments are supposedly "at anchor", but not one of them has a traditional Ensign Staff right aft. Instead, they have a mast fitted with one or two yards and a gaff, that should be pointing aft, to wear the Australian White Ensign. The position of this mast should not be anywhere other than a suitable position, that is 180° from the Jackstaff. We must accept that by custom, a shore establishment, as far as the White Ensign is concerned, could be construed as being under way. We all know it's not, but we accept that.

As both masts are rigged with a gaff, the respective flags are hoisted to the Peak of the Gaff the No 1 position on such fully rigged masts. In the case of HMAS Creswell and *Cerberus* where both masts (at the imaginary bow and stern) have gaffs the senior position, the peak of the gaff must carry these two most important flags.

An important issue in relation to both HMA Ships *Creswell* and *Cerberus* which are training establishments, is the need to set the correct example to trainees. Both these establishments fall down badly as far as a Jackstaff is concerned. Ideally both these establishments should revert to having a Jackstaff that is both 180° from the Ensign Mast and should consist of a mast with yard or yards and no gaff. Then, the Jack could be worn in the correct position at the Truck.
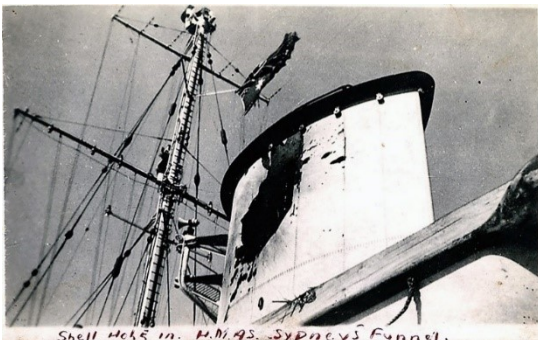
ANF BATTLE FLAG at gaff of HMAS Sydney and Shell damage to *Sydney's* forward funnel during the Cape Spada action, 19 July 1940

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[1] HMAS Creswell is a shore training establishment located on the south-western shores of Jervis Bay, 180 kilometres south of Sydney.

[2] The Jackstaff is situated at the bow of a ship and is a single spar, a tapered pole without a Yard or Gaff just a halyard to the truck.

LEUT Eli Kincaid USN: Gunnery Officer

The following was received from Received from Richard McMillan in response to an image in our March edition of CTH.

"I saw that my old friend LEUT Eli Kincaid USN is identified only as a 'USN Exchange Officer' in the caption at the foot of p.9. Eli was a Surface Warfare Officer with an extensive knowledge of USN above-water weapons and their employment. He served in the RAN Tactical School in 1985-86 and was famous for his sense of humour. Professionally, one of his greatest contributions to the RAN was as the author of the first RAN tactical guidance on employment of Harpoon, and training of FFG plotting and command teams to maximise their knowledge of its capabilities and their prowess in its employment. Being Eli, the first AFTI article he wrote included an obscure reference to the weapon capabilities achieved through 'PFM circuitry:' as the Editor of AFTI in 1986, it seems I was the first one to ask him about that circuitry, and then could only agree with him that the new weapon did indeed contain pure effing magic.
Regards,
Richard McMillan

SS ZEALANDIA

Our Thanks to Robert Fieldes for pointing out the incorrect spelling of SS Zealandia in Occasional Paper 74 on the bombing of Darwin published in March 2020. The online version has been corrected.

SS ZEALANDIA was built in 1910 and owned by Huddart Parker Limited. After being charted to the Union SS Company of New Zealand until 1913 for the trans-Tasman run, she became a troop ship in WWI. During this time, she transported both Australian and United States troops to Europe. *Zealandia* was again requisitioned during WWII for transport operations around Australia, the Pacific and Asia, most notably to Singapore and Timor.

Zealandia was moored in Darwin during the raid on 19 February 1942 having transported an anti-tank company from Sydney. Once the stored ammunition on board began to explode, the ship was abandoned with the loss of two crew members while, 142 others survived.

SS Zealandia

Occasional Papers in this edition

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

- Occasional Paper 75 - The Royal Australian Navy's Commitment to the Vietnam War.doc
- Occasional Paper 76 – The Navy and the 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic
- Occasional Paper 77 – HMAS Assault WWII Combined Operations Directorate Establishment – Port Stephens NSW

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/.

New Book: 75 Years of Service: The Captain Cook Graving Dock, Sydney

This story of the Captain Cook Graving Dock commemorates the 75th anniversary of its opening on 24 March 1945 by the then Governor General of Australia, His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester. In addition to details of construction, this book provides detail about the opening ceremony, the Civil Constructional Corps members who laboured on the project, the war artists who captured the mood of the time and dock operations since 1945.

This book leaves readers in awe of those who conceived, designed and built the Dock during World War 2. When conceived in 1940 the militant Japanese Empire was expanding throughout Asia. The only other dock capable of taking capital ships was under threat in Singapore. Designed to accommodate the largest warship afloat the Captain Cook Dock was to become the largest civil engineering project ever undertaken in Australia to that time.

The Dock remains a significant National asset expected to continue serving the Royal Australian Navy and Australia for decades to come.

Price

The book is priced at $20 for a pdf version which can be downloaded from the Society's website shop or in print at $30 posted to an address anywhere in Australia. Mobi and Kindle versions will follow.

Order online at, https://www.navyhistory.org.au/shop/

Society Office Temporarily Closed

The Society closed its Garden Island Office in the Boatshed, Garden Island on 26 March in response to the current pandemic. Fortunately, many of its functions continue from remote locations. Others have had to be placed on hold including, the conduct of guided tours and the distribution of physical products ordered online or by other means. These will be dispatched at the earliest opportunity.

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 publications@navyhistory.org.au. Current subscribers can unsubscribe by emailing the same email address.