



Call the Hands



Issue No. 93

Oct/Nov 2025

From the President

Welcome to Issue 93 of *Call the Hands*. It is the fifth and final edition for 2025. It is accompanied by five occasional papers on a broad range of subjects. These plus the *Naval Historical Review* to be published in early December should arm you with plenty of reading material for the festive season. I am most grateful to the authors who generously make their papers available to the Society.

As always, the stories in *Call the Hands* are selected to cover a variety of eras throughout history. Examples in this edition include the story about Admiral Zheng He and his 15th century Ming Dynasty voyages and Occasional Paper 203 about the presentation of the captured German flag from Bita Paka in 1914.

Public offers to gift heritage items to the Society or Navy frequently arise. In such cases the Society acts as an intermediary connecting the potential doner with the appropriate Defence officer. A recent example was the offer of a model of the LST, HMAS *Tarakan* (I) from the Lucy Osburn-Nightingale Museum at Sydney Hospital. The model which had been on display for more than 10 years no longer suited the current exhibition. The model was built by Stoker Harry Shand, a survivor of the explosion and fire in *Tarakan* alongside Garden Island, Sydney on 25 January 1950. Harry Shand built and donated the model in appreciation for being nursed back to health at Sydney Hospital. Navy did accept the model.

With Remembrance Day approaching it is interesting to recall that not all ships companies had the pleasure of returning home immediately after hostilities ceased. Following WW1, the RAN cruisers *Australia*, *Melbourne* and *Sydney* were involved in the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet at Rosyth and transfer to Scapa Flow for internment. Units of the RAN flotilla of six Torpedo Boat Destroyers continued to patrol waters in and around the Ottoman Empire following the Russian Revolution. It was very much 'business as usual' for the RAN until the middle of 1919, when the fleet arrived back in Australian waters. The story following WW2 was similar. Many major RAN units did not return to their home ports until the second quarter of 1946. They had been employed in post-war operations including the occupation of Japan, mine clearance operations and troop repatriation.

Finally, as years end approaches members are reminded that the 2025 Annual General Meeting and social event is scheduled for Tuesday 18 November. A separate reminder to register will be promulgated in the coming days. Society volunteers will take a break over Christmas – New Year with the Boatshed closed from 11 December to 13 January. A skeleton staff will however attend to urgent matters and ensure orders are fulfilled.

Kind regards,
David Michael



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Gascoyne to the Rescue on Christmas Day 1944

In a violent tropical rainstorm on Christmas night, 1944, the crew of a small ship of the Royal Australian Navy, HMAS *Gascoyne*, dramatically rescued from fire about 1300 men, mostly American troops, who were aboard the Dutch transport *Sommelsdijk* (9227 tons), then lying with other vessels in the harbour at Guian, Samar Island, in the Philippines. They also saved the *Sommelsdijk* herself from destruction. As a result of the exploit, in which the rescuers were hampered not only by driving rain, but also by rolling clouds of smoke which made visibility almost negligible, three members of *Gascoyne*'s crew were decorated and another mentioned in despatches.



At the time, *Gascoyne* was part of a hydrographic task group operating in Philippine waters and had dropped anchor after she had been engaged in surveying the Guian roadstead throughout Christmas Day. The Allies were building a big aerodrome nearby, and it had become necessary to bring stores, machinery and all kinds of equipment into the harbour in ships of fairly deep draught. The charts that the Allies had did not show much detail and were not considered sufficiently reliable for taking big ships in close to land, except in cases of urgency. *Gascoyne* had therefore been allotted the job of preparing a better chart. Her officers and crew knew that it would be dangerous work, and that they, and their small vessel, would probably become the target for numerous Japanese bombers.

Having finished work on Christmas Day, had their baths and changed into dry clothes, offices and ratings were looking forward to sitting down and enjoying their Christmas dinner, which they had to have at night and which was to have been a pleasant interlude amid the unpleasant and never-ceasing calls and obligations of war. That Christmas dinner, just started, was destined never to be finished.

A few minutes after 7.50 pm, when Lieutenant Peel, Commander R. B. A. Hunt, OBE, RAN, Senior Officer of the Hydrographic task group, and other officers were seated at the table in the wardroom, and were being served with soup, the Officer of the Watch reported that a small burst of red tracer bullets from one of the ships in harbour had been sighted. This sighting was followed by a 'Red Alert', which was passed from shore. Further investigation showed that an explosion of some sort, not particularly violent, had been seen by officers and men on *Gascoyne's* bridge in the direction of merchant ships anchored off Guian Pier. As no other signal was issued, it was assumed, wrongly as it turned out, that the explosion had been caused by blasting on land. No aircraft could be sighted or heard, and the signal 'Condition White' or, in other words 'All Clear', was soon passed by the shore signal station. They had hardly settled down again, however, when a signal was received from the *Sommelsdijk*, informing *Gascoyne* that she was on fire and asking for help.

There was an immediate rush to the deck from the wardroom and Lieutenant Peel took up his station on the bridge. *Gascoyne* was, in naval parlance, at four hours' notice, which means that normally, it would have been four hours before she could have raised steam. Peel, however, ordered that steam be provided with all despatch. So readily did the engine room respond, that twelve minutes after the signal had been received from the *Sommelsdijk*, sufficient steam had been raised on one boiler for moderate speed.

The anchor was weighed, and in the torrential rain *Gascoyne* started to cover the one and a half miles between herself and the Dutch vessel. To help find his way through the mostly uncharted but numerous reefs and shoals that separated the two ships, Peel ordered a harbour defence motor launch to precede *Gascoyne*, but the launch soon ran onto a shoal, thus proving the wisdom of the precaution Peel had taken to save his ship from a similar fate.

Altering course swiftly, he found an open passage to *Sommelsdijk*, which was now burning fiercely, and approached her from leeward, only to observe that a large number of small craft were clustered about her, preventing *Gascoyne* from getting alongside. He hailed loudly to *Sommelsdijk*, and, as he did so, the rain increased in intensity. Fierce red and yellow flames and huge clouds of smoke were now issuing from the holds in the forward part of the ship, and as the deluge became heavier, the smoke grew in density and went spiralling upwards in great rolling billows.

It was at this stage that the Engineer Officer reported to the bridge that the second boiler, which had been flashed up from cold, was ready for use. Peel ordered full speed ahead and dashed alongside, manoeuvring his ship so skilfully that it stopped exactly where he wanted. Led by the Engineer Officer as Damage Control Officer, ratings from *Gascoyne* jumped

aboard *Sommelsdijk*, and after they had secured the two vessels to each other, dashed towards the forward holds. They were clad in asbestos fire-fighting suits and breathing apparatus, and were dragging hoses from their own ship after them.

They learned that the Dutch steamer had been struck by an aerial torpedo abreast of No. 1 hatch which was filled with general cargo and jeeps, and was burning furiously. The double bottoms of the hold were filled with diesel fuel. The port side of the watertight bulkhead between No. 1 and No. 2 holds had become white hot and had conducted the fire into No. 2 hold which was now well alight. Seven men had been killed and 82 others wounded, most of them by covers and beams from No. 1 hatch which had been blown into the air by the explosion of the torpedo and had fallen back on them.

Among the first rescued from the fiercely burning ship were more than 1200 members of the U.S. Naval Construction Battalion who were to work on the aerodrome they had built. They were taken aboard *Gascoyne* and guided below, but, even so, the upper deck of the small vessel soon became acutely overcrowded. A signal was sent to the American ship *Buttonwood*, also attached to the hydrographic group, which was standing by under orders, and she came alongside on the starboard side, cleared the upper deck congestion, and landed the troops she had taken off.

Meanwhile, *Gascoyne's* ratings were pouring thousands of gallons of water into the burning holds, part of which had collapsed and added to the flames. *Buttonwood* returned and played her hoses on the port side of the *Sommelsdijk*, which was glowing fiercely, changing alternately from white to cherry red, and buckling badly.

Small craft were summoned alongside to evacuate all but the fire fighters and the seriously wounded. Four American doctors who had come aboard, and the sick berth attendant from *Gascoyne*, who had been doing a magnificent job, made every effort possible to ease the suffering of the wounded men.

It was not until 2.00 am on Boxing Day that the fires were got under control and two more hours elapsed before *Buttonwood* was informed that her services were no longer required. By 6.00 am all the fires had been put out but two hoses were kept running to reduce the temperature of the heated metal and cargo and prevent any further outbreak of combustion. Just as dawn was breaking, a 'Red Alert' was given but no raid developed and presently 'Condition White' was signalled.

At 6.55 am, *Gascoyne* slipped from *Sommelsdijk* and proceeded at full speed to San Pedro Bay to transfer the seriously wounded men to the U.S. Navy Hospital Ship, *Refuge*. So ended a night that had been filled with drama, excitement and high courage – a night in which a small Australian warship and her company had played a gallant part. It is unlikely that any member of that company, while he was fighting against such heavy odds, ever thought that he would be rewarded for what he was doing, but not long afterwards, a list of awards showed that the bravery, skills and determination of some of them, at least, had not been forgotten.

Those to whom awards were given were Engineer Lieutenant Maurice Corrigan, RANR (S), who was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire; Chief Stoker Alfred Wrench, who was given the British Empire Medal; and Sick Berth Attendant Alan Cole upon whom the Distinguished Service Medal was conferred. Petty Officer Herbert John Rigg was mentioned in despatches.

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the West Australian newspaper late in 1949 and was republished in the [Naval Historical Review](#) in June 2007

The RAN Bridging Train at Gallipoli, in Miniature

When the Australian National Maritime Museum prepared the 'War at Sea' exhibition in 2014, it contained a diorama of the RAN Bridging Train at Suvla Bay. The Bridging Train may not have been 'first in' but it was certainly 'last out' during the campaign. It had been originally commissioned by the Navy curator Lindsay Shaw, but on her retirement, Dr Stephen Gapps replaced her, and noted the following:

'One of the most popular parts of the War at Sea – The Navy in WWI exhibition at the museum is a wonderfully old-school diorama. It has no bells or whistles. You can't swipe, touch or play with it — apart from a series of buttons that light up various sections. But everyone — even the 'walk through' visitor — stops and checks it out. Perhaps it is something to do with a sense of scale — things replicated in miniature have always held a fascination for people.'



Scene from RAN Bridging Train at Gallipoli diorama. Image by Geoff Barnes.

The exhibition toured a number of Australian museums for a year, then the diorama went into storage for a decade. In the current rethink of the ANMM Naval galleries, it did not have a home so its creator Geoff Barnes, both volunteer at the ANMM and NHSA, asked around to see if any other museum would like it. Our Chapter President in Victoria, Andrew Mackinnon approached Glenn Jones, CEO of the [Seaworks Museum](#) at Williamstown, Victoria, who gave an enthusiastic 'yes', but then came the problem of getting it from Sydney to Melbourne, a cost that the ANMM was unable to meet. It is quite a large exhibit and needed specialist removalists to do the job. The Seaworks Museum appealed for help to offset the transport cost. The NHSA then approached Cumberland RSL on their behalf so that this diorama could once again become available to the public who are generally unaware of the sacrifice and significant contribution made by the Bridging Train. Cumberland RSL agreed, approved the grant, and it is appropriate that it is now on permanent display in the city where the RANBT was first recruited.



*RAN Bridging Train at Gallipoli diorama located in the [Sea Works Maritime Museum](#), Melbourne.
Image by Glenn Jones.*

By Editor

Readers may recall that the Society published [Occasional Paper 192](#) with the April/May 2025 edition of Call the Hands. That paper describes the actions of the Bridging Train, the diorama itself and is well illustrated with close up images of scenes in the diorama.

Visiting Williamstown, Melbourne

Maritime history enthusiasts visiting Williamstown, Melbourne have two wonderful opportunities to absorb more history. In addition to the SeaWorks Museum, not more than four blocks away is the former Bathurst class Minesweeper (Corvette) [HMAS Castlemaine](#) and onboard museum. Immaculately restored and maintained, visitors appreciate just how crews lived and worked in these small but versatile ships during World War II.



Early Chinese Navy Exploration

Until recently, very little if any credit has been attributed to early non-European exploration of Australia's immediate geographic region & possibly even Australia itself.

Over 630 years ago a Muslim Chinese sailor, Zheng He, dedicated 28 years of his life sailing to 37 countries covering 50,000 km to the Persian Gulf, East Africa, Sri Lanka, East Indies and Arabia. He commanded Junk ships that were about 134m long (Christopher Coumbus' ship *Nina* was 23m long & Cook's *Endeavour* 30m). The massive Chinese ships carried cargo for trading such as silk, cotton, copper, iron porcelain & silverware. They also had watertight holds to store fish and otters that were released to round up fish into large nets. Communications were very advanced including the use of flags, lanterns, bells, carrier pigeons, gongs and banners. Zheng He's first fleet carried nearly 28,000 men from many backgrounds including clerks, interpreters, artisans, medical staff and meteorologists.



Painting of Admiral Zheng He. Image courtesy of Ancient Origins [website](#).

The voyages were undertaken between 1405-1433.

The most interesting voyages & those closest to Australia were undertaken in 1416-19 and 1431-33. The former voyage undertaken by Zheng He's *Pacific Squadron* sailed to Java, Ryukyu (now part of Japan) & Brunei in our region and also East Africa. The latter & final voyage visited Java & then crossed the Indian Ocean to travel south down the east coast of Africa possibly rounding the Cape of Good Hope.

By the end of Zheng He's seven voyages, China was unrivalled in naval technology & power. The voyages enabled China to make contact with productive trading partners particularly for spices. It wasn't until over 200 years later that the Dutch traded for spices in the East Indies.

It is interesting to note that the voyages were not aimed at territorial control or expansion but more about scientific discovery; the search for gems, minerals, plants, animals, drugs & medicine. Furthermore, the Chinese sought diplomatic initiated "overlordship" (a subtle influence) of countries visited which enabled these countries to send envoys to visit the emperor.

Zheng died on his way home in 1433. Following his death and the revival of Confucian philosophy, China became very inward-looking. Sea-going trading was banned and in less than 100 years, the Chinese emperor had ordered the destruction of all of China's 3,500 ocean-going ships. By comparison, China's Navy today has about 400 ships and is one of the world's largest Navies.

So, nothing is really new; China today is using its Navy to exert influence, possibly more assertively, in our region though trade & exchange of ideas, diplomacy & technology are no longer part of Naval activities but are now very overtly political & commercial.



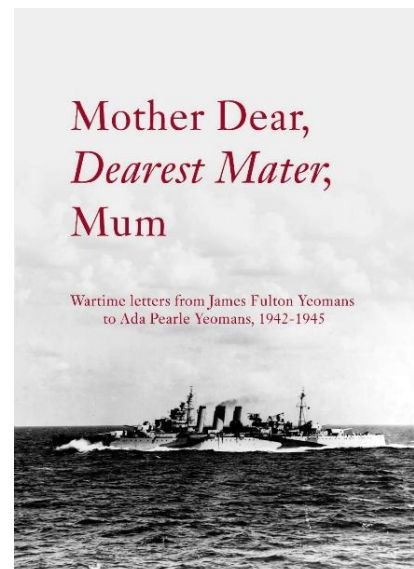
PLA Navy Task Group, July 2021. Image courtesy of [Poder Naval 28](#).

Good Reads

Mother Dear, Dear Mother, Mum

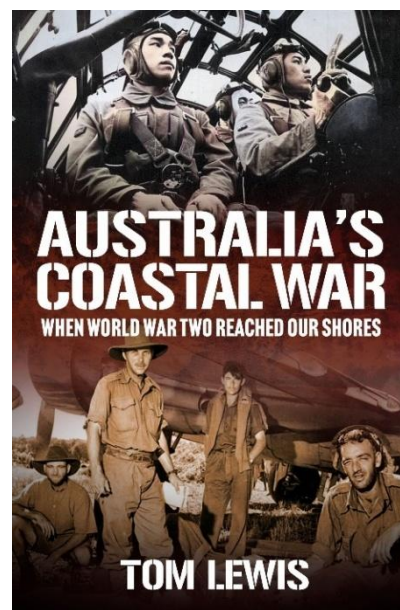
This is the title of a collection of 130 letters written by Leading Writer James Fulton Yeomans to his mother between 1942 and 1945. This interesting collection, plus photographs, has recently been put together as a book of over 500 pages by his grandson Jonathan Sheahan and is available as an eBook, Kindle or free copy on the National Library of Australia [website](#).

It covers his service at Flinders Naval Base, subsequent posting to England to join HMAS *Shropshire* and his wartime service in her. We also discover how to defeat the censor in providing details of locations in the Pacific. Plenty to browse here and gain some insight from the perspective of an alert young man.



Australia's Coastal War, When World War Two Reached Our Shores

Australia's Coastal War brings together hundreds of WWII stories which gives many a thoughtful pause. A total of 1,992 individual attacks on the country, many from hundreds of enemy aircraft. Eighty different submarine attacks include midget submarine attacks; to depth charge versus torpedo fights, and a rampaging lone German U-boat as late as 1944. Some of the ship actions saw hundreds lost: 268 fatalities on board the hospital ship Centaur off Brisbane, and 645 in the final action of HMAS Sydney off Western Australia. Many of the 4,712 fatalities the author records around our coasts though were American – the Battle of the Coral Sea alone records 543 deaths in their naval force, which saved Australia from possible invasion.

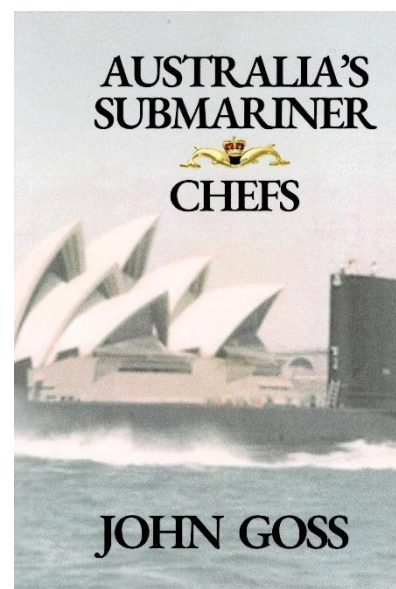


Australia's Coastal War is the first book to draw together all of the surface, air, and submarine actions around Australia in WWII. It is the 25th book from author Dr Tom Lewis, who was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to naval history. The book is available from [Big Sky Publishing](#) and all bookstores.

Australia's Submariner Chefs: Scrان

The Oberon Class Submariner Chef must endure the hardship and demands of satisfying a crew of some seventy tired and hungry sailors three times a day, from a space no larger than small garden shed. The unrelenting tossing of a submarine on the surface, the angles of a submarine underwater, make it a significant challenge. Added to this, the submarine environment limits the holding of fresh produce, therefore the skills and creativity of the Chefs is essential to provide the expectations of the crew and usually morale. This book serves to keep alive the legacy of the many submariner Chefs who have served our country. Those who follow them will carry on the traditions, pride, and values of the Royal Australian Navy.

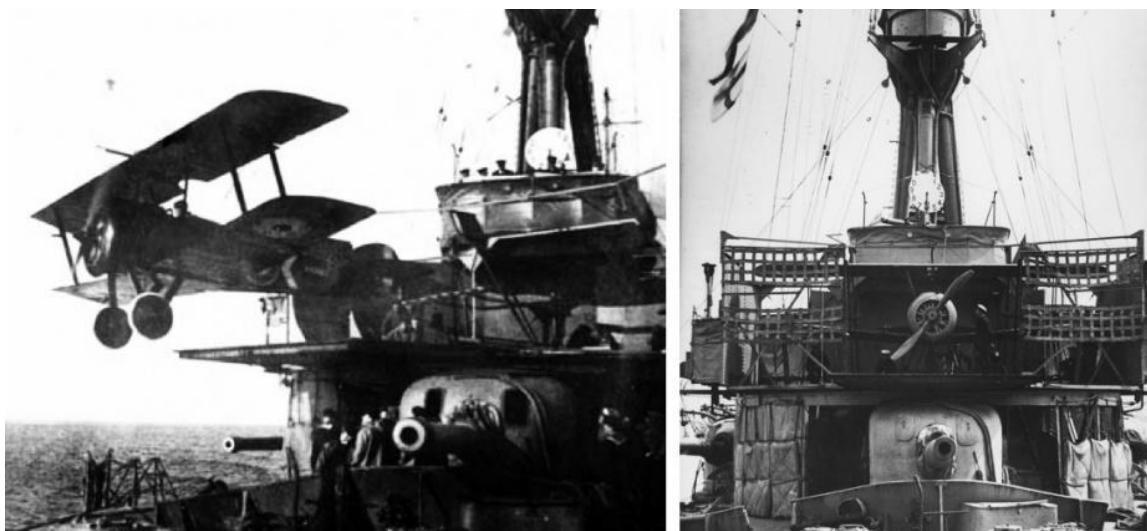
This entertaining book is intended to highlight the often-forgotten aspects of life at sea on a submarine during the Oberon era. It also reflects the continued dedication and skill of the modern Collins class submariner chefs. All proceeds (royalties) go to friends of Holbrook Museum.



The book is available both in [Kindle](#) and [print](#) formats from various online retailers.

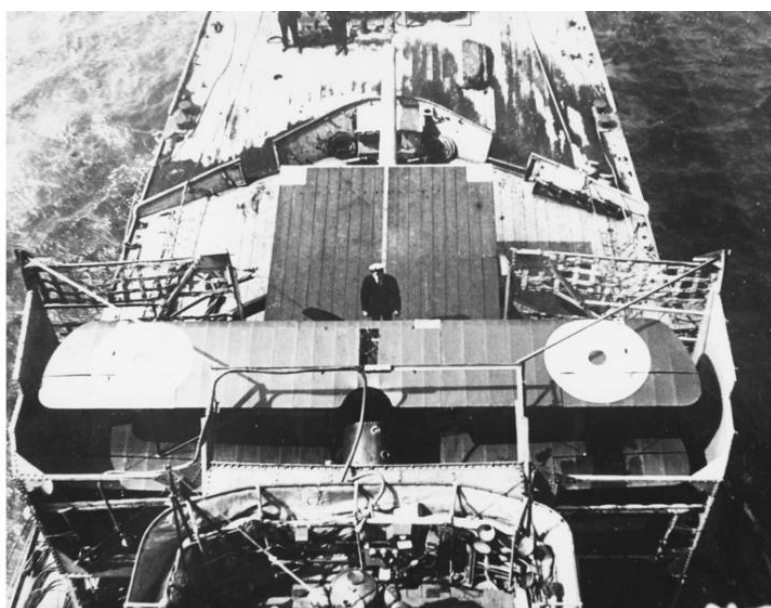
Sopwith Camel 2F1

The Sopwith F.1 Camel was a single seater bi-plane fighter developed to replace the Sopwith Pup. The 2F.1 (known as the Ship's Camel) was a version produced for the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) with a more powerful rotary engine, modified armament and a fuselage that could be easily separated into two portions for shipboard use. The Camel also had a faster rate of climb and higher ceiling height than the previously operated Sopwith Pup. The Camel's the first flight took place on 22 December 1916.



Left: A Sopwith Camel being launched from HMAS Sydney during 1918. Right: HMAS Sydney's Ship's Camel stored in its makeshift hangar over the forward six inch gun mount.

In mid-1917 Camels were supplied to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and were mainly used in the United Kingdom for home defence, on the Western Front and in Italy. The Camels used for home defence had the cockpit positioned further back and the guns placed on the upper wing. The name 'Camel' was derived from the hump-shaped cover over the machine guns. In order to combat German Zeppelins, 2F.1 Camels were flown from barges towed behind destroyers, from platforms erected on the gun turrets of larger ships as well as from early aircraft carriers.



A view of the Ship's Camel from the bridge of HMAS Sydney 1918.

In order to combat German Zeppelins, 2F.1 Camels were flown from barges towed behind destroyers, from platforms erected on the gun turrets of larger ships as well as from early aircraft carriers. A 2F.1 also successfully flew after being detached from an airship; an experiment testing an airship's ability to carry its own defensive aircraft.

Ships Camels were operated from HMA Ships *Australia*, *Melbourne* and *Sydney* during 1918. *Sydney* first flew a Sopwith Pup from its recently installed rotating gun mount launching platform on 8 December 1917. The cruiser was at sea steaming at 20 knots and with the platform facing right ahead to provide enough wind over the deck to enable the aircraft to be launched safely. A second flight on 17 December, with the launching platform trained 40 degrees to port, was also successful. *Melbourne* had its launching platform installed in March 1918.

In May 1918 *Melbourne* and *Sydney* embarked a single Camel 2.F1 each which could be flown off from the wooden launching platform constructed over the forward six-inch gun located in front of the bridge. A pilot and three RNAS maintenance personnel were embarked in each Australian cruiser. On 1 June 1918 both ships sailed as part of a force of 70 warships sent to sweep through the Heligoland Bight (Operation F3) in an attempt to draw German forces out to fight. Two German Hansa-Brandenburg W 19 twin-seat seaplane fighters attacked one of the escorting British destroyers and both Australian cruisers launched their aircraft in retaliation. *Melbourne's* aircraft (piloted by Flight Lieutenant Lawrence Gibson) lost sight of the German seaplane in cloud and returned to ditch near the British destroyer HMS *Osiris*. While both pilot and aircraft were recovered the aircraft was badly damaged and written off.

Sydney's aircraft, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Albert Sharwood, had more luck and followed the German aircraft for over 60 miles and eventually opened fire. The German aircraft escaped in cloud without damage, and Sharwood returned to the British ships and ditched his aircraft near the destroyer HMS *Sharpshooter*. He and his aircraft were recovered but the Camel was later written off. While the results were inconclusive, the action was the first use of ship launched aircraft against an enemy fixed wing aircraft (i.e. not a Zeppelin). Australian cruisers continued to operate Ships Camels for the remainder of the war and they also had wireless fitted to assist with gunnery spotting during training exercises. The aircraft were put ashore in late 1918 following the Armistice.

Specifications



Type	Shipboard Fighting Scout
Manufacturer	William Beardmore & Co Ltd, UK
Length	18 feet 8 inches
Height	9 feet 1 inch
Weights	1036
Dimensions	Wing span: 26 feet 11 inches
Speed	124 mph at 6500 feet
Range	300 miles
Crew	1
Engines	One 150 hp BRL Bentley
Performance	Climb: 15,000 ft/25 mins
Armament	Guns: 1 x Vickers MG, 1 x Lewis MG, Bombs: 2 x 50 lb
Ships embarked in	• HMAS Australia (I) • HMAS Sydney (I) • HMAS Melbourne (I)

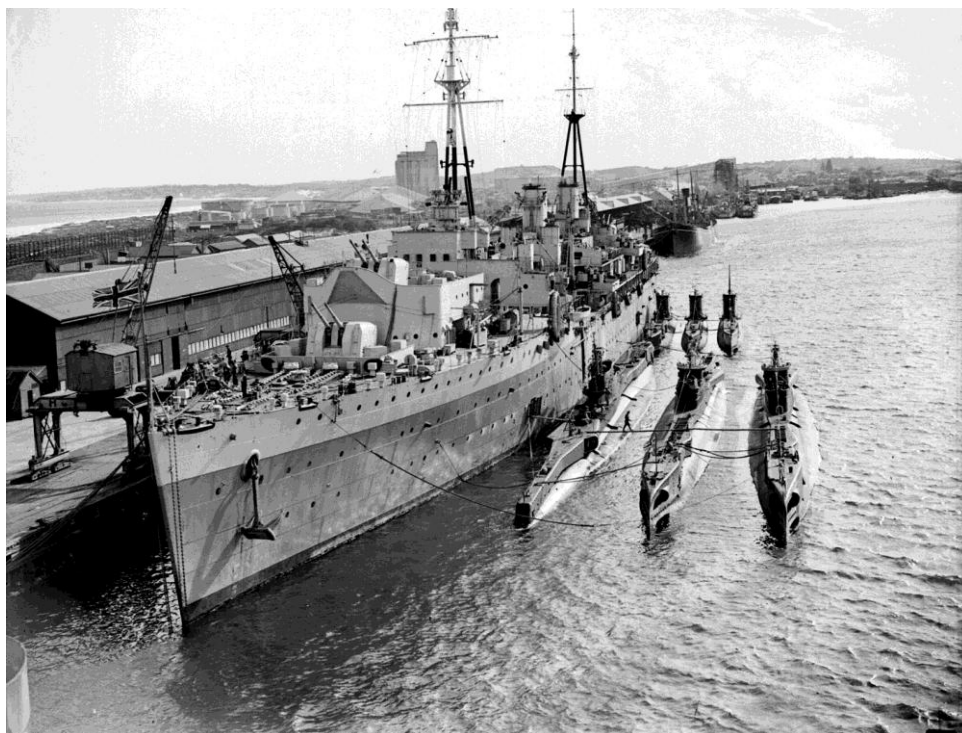
WRAN Olwyn Banks (née Crouch)

While working as a hairdresser, Olwyn enlisted in the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) in July 1944. WRAN Olwyn Banks was the only WRAN posted to a warship in World War 2, when she was billeted on HMS *Adamant*, as their official driver and she did sea-time up and down Gage Roads, an outer area of Fremantle Harbour in WA.

Olwyn also served at HMAS Leeuwin and was a transport driver. She drove cars, jeeps, blitz buggies and one and three tonne trucks. On one occasion, Olwyn drove Prince Phillip from Fremantle to Perth.

In March 1946, Olwyn discharged from the WRANS. After the war, Olwyn married Ronald Banks, who had been an able seaman in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). The couple went on to have 4 sons, 10 grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren.

Olwyn banks turned 100 on 16 January 2025 and sadly passed away just a few days later on 19 January 2025.



*HMS Adamant
along with
submarines of the
4th flotilla at
Fremantle,
Australia, c. 1946.*

HMAS Onslow

The Society has a number of volunteers who also share their time volunteering at the Australian National Maritime Museum. One of these volunteers, Fairlie Clifton who guides visitors in the former HMAS *Onslow* provided the following.

The Museum had been waiting a long time to get its boat into the graving dock but of course the Navy has priority. Finally, one filthy cold and wet morning in August, her lines were cast off, and three tugs eased her backwards out of her berth. On board was a party of Museum fleet staff, and volunteers who were former submariners.

Getting her out was a slow and tricky manoeuvre as there is not a great deal of space between the Museum's north wharf and King Street Wharf. She continued to be dragged backwards past Barangaroo until at White Bay she could be rotated and then moved in more dignified fashion to Garden Island.



*Former HMAS Onslow being moved past Barangaroo, Sydney to Garden Island September 2025.
Images: Fairlie Clifton / ANMM.*

Her departure has left a long empty wharf, which we at the Museum are not used to, and volunteers who work on her feel almost as though they have lost a limb. Her absence is greatly missed by visitors too, as *Onslow* is the most popular and thrilling of the Museum's floating exhibits. We do not expect to have her home until sometime in November. In the meantime, she is 'trapped' in the south end of the dock, awaiting completion of work on HMAS *Sydney*.

Video of Interest

[How to Clean a Submarine](#)

Australian National Maritime Museum

Join Lochie Daddo, Fleet Manager Phil McKendrick and Fleet Hull Surveyor Warwick Thomson as they take former Royal Australian Navy submarine HMAS *Onslow* away from its home at the Australian National Maritime Museum and out into a Sydney Harbour dry-dock for a spit and polish.



Onslow in Captain Cook Dock, Garden Island in 2018. Image: Jude Timms/ANMM.

News

Young Endeavour completes final cruise

Royal Australian Navy Sail Training Ship (STS) *Young Endeavour (I)* has arrived in Sydney, completing its final circumnavigation of Australia and marking a significant milestone in the ship's 37-year history.



This circumnavigation marks the last time STS *Young Endeavour (I)* will sail around the country, ahead of the program's transition to a new, purpose-built sail training vessel, currently under construction. Since its arrival in 1988, STS *Young Endeavour* has been a home for more than 15,000 young Australians to develop resilience, confidence, and teamwork through life at sea.

Throughout its 37-year history, the ship has sailed thousands of nautical miles, visited many ports across the nation, and represented Australia abroad on voyages across the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans.

NUSHIP Eyre arrives at her home port

Navy's newest offshore patrol vessel (OPV) NUSHIP *Eyre* has arrived at her home port of Fleet Base West for the first time.

Eyre's arrival on October 3 marked a significant milestone in her transition from construction – through an arduous acceptance process – to soon be in operational service.



The ship is the second of six Arafura-class OPVs being introduced to Navy.

Built at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia under Luerssen Australia, *Eyre* is part of Australia's growing sovereign shipbuilding capability.

The remaining four OPVs will be constructed at the Henderson Shipyard, Western Australia, through partnership with CIVMEC.

Eyre will soon go through audits, technical assessments and sea release activities, as she progresses towards full operational capability over the coming months.

Photo of the Month



HMAS *Albatross* and Seagull Mk III aircraft

No. 101 Fleet Co-operation Flight (101 FC FLT) RAAF was formed at Point Cook, Victoria, on 01 July 1925 to operate three of the 6 Seagull Mk. III seaplanes ordered by the Government. Following arrival by ship in April 1926, the six Seagull Mk III amphibians (A9-1 to A9-6) were assembled and test flown at RAAF Point Cook and allotted to 101 FC FLT.

HMAS *Albatross* which commissioned in Sydney on 23 January 1929 101 embarked FC Flight (stores and aircrew) on Port Phillip Bay on 21 February 1929. At Geelong, on 25 February 1929, the six Seagull Mk. III amphibian aircraft were hoisted aboard HMAS *Albatross*.

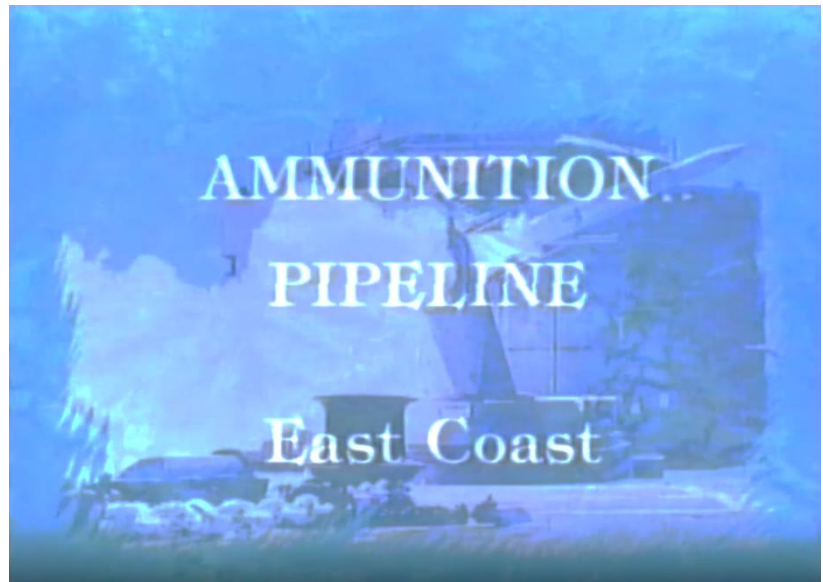
The Flight then operated from HMAS *Albatross* over some four years (1929 – 1933) with some time at RAAF Base Richmond, NSW until 23 April 1933, when the ship was paid off into reserve as the RAN cruisers had developed a seaplane operating capability. After five years in Reserves she was then transferred to the Royal Navy and served until 1946.

Video of Interest

The Sydney Ammunition Pipeline in the 1990s

[Sydney Ammunition Pipeline - Video](#)

This video was produced by Defence in the 1990s as consideration was being given by Government to an alternative site for ammunitioning ships on the east coast of Australia. The risk of ammunition handling activities in densely populated areas was of increasing concern. In addition to describing the ammunition pipeline as it operated at the time this video shows a safe alternative example, the RAN Armament and Weapons Equipment Depot in Western Australia.



Length: 13 Minutes 8 seconds.

Note:

The video narration refers to Newington as originally operated by the Royal Marines. This is incorrect. When the [first buildings were constructed on the site](#) in 1897-98 they were for the New South Wales Military Forces.

Occasional Papers

- Occasional Paper 199 - Brace Yourself
- Occasional Paper 200 - Captain Ralph Frank Marston Lowe DSC, ADC, RAN (RTD)
- Occasional Paper 201 - The RAN in Yugoslavia
- Occasional Paper 202 - Mardsen Hordern - last of the Fairmile Motor Launch commanders
- Occasional Paper 203 - Battle of Bitia Paka – the captured German flag

This Month in History - October

October 1817	The RN adopted the 9,000 item flag signalling system compiled by CAPT Frederick Marryat, RN. The system was adapted from the French Navy manual. It was first demonstrated in Australia by HMS WARSPITE, in 1826. CAPT Marryat achieved lasting fame as the author of Mr. Midshipman Easy.
October 1911	The existence of the new Australian Navy was formally advised when the Naval Board issued an historic order promulgating the designation 'Royal Australian Navy'.
October 1916	The sloop HMAS UNA, (CAPT H. R. Jackson, RN), and the French gunboat KERSAINT, arrived at Malekula to mount a punitive expedition against rebellious natives. Forty per cent of UNA's crew went down with malaria, including CAPT Jackson. CMDR W. Burrows, RN, was sent from Sydney to bring the vessel back to port.
October 1917	The trawlers KORAAGA and GUNUNDAL, manned by the Royal Australian Naval Brigade under LCDR F. J. Ranken, RNR, swept a German minefield off Gabo Island. Thirteen mines were destroyed. Minesweepers were not commissioned in the RAN in WWI
October 1923	HMAS PARRAMATTA was dispatched to Wilsons Promontory, VIC, to fight bushfires.
October 1935	Secret orders were received by HMAS AUSTRALIA in the Mediterranean. In the event of war with Italy, AUSTRALIA was to join HMS BERWICK, and proceed to a position off Taranto to cover HMS GLORIOUS which was to launch its torpedo-carrying Swordfish aircraft against the Italian Fleet. The orders were reactivated with great success in 1940.
October 1941	HMAS LITHGOW swept a German mine off Tasman Island.
October 1944	HDML 1074 was rammed at night by an unidentified vessel while under tow by USS PEBBLE. The craft was severely damaged, but reached Leyte safely.
October 1951	A Sea Fury piloted by LEUT C. M. Wheatley, RAN, (from HMAS SYDNEY, aircraft carrier), was hit by flak, and crashed into the sea of Chinnampo, South Korea. Wheatley was picked up by a patrolling helicopter and taken to the main Allied airbase at Kimpo.
October 1955	The aircraft carrier HMAS MELBOURNE, (ex-HMS MAJESTIC,,), was commissioned. MAJESTIC was laid down in Vickers Armstrong Yard, Barrow in Furness, England, on 15 April 1943, and launched on 28 February 1945.
October 1960	HMAS WAGGA paid off. She was the last of the Bathurst class in seagoing commission in the Royal Australian Navy. WAGGA was declared for disposal on 31 May 1961 and sold out of service in March 1962, when she was purchased by the South Australian Carrying Co
October 1969	The following gallantry awards were made to personnel of the RAN's Helicopter Flight for service in Vietnam: DSC LCDR G. R. Rohrsheim, RAN; DSC LEUT I. M. Speedy, RAN; DSC LEUT T. F. Supple, RAN; DSC SBLT W. E. Symons, RAN; DFC LCDR R. A. Waddell, RAN; MID LEUT M. A. Perrott, RAN; MID SBLT C. R. R. Rox, RAN; MID SBLT R. J. Kyle, RAN; MID LEUT. A. Hill, RAN; MID LEUTM. J. Ward, RAN; MID SBLT G. E. Vidal, RAN; MID POAM R. C. Cole, RAN.
October 1971	HMAS BRISBANE arrived back in Sydney after having left the Vietnam gunline for the last time on 5 September marking the end of the RAN's combat role in the Vietnam War. Over the course of her two deployments to Vietnam, BRISBANE had steamed nearly 70,000nm and fired over 15,000 rounds of 5-inch ammunition.
October 1985	HMAS PERTH, (CAPT G. Sloper, RAN), rescued the crew of the Singaporean ship HOE LIEN, in mountainous seas off Newcastle, NSW. PERTH took the ship in tow and proceeded towards Sydney. The tow was passed to the tug WONGA the next morning, however HOE LIEN later sunk 30 miles north of Sydney.
October 1988	The International Bicentennial Fleet, with over 50 warships from 16 nations moored in Sydney Harbour, was reviewed by the Duke and Duchess of York, embarked in HMAS COOK. An estimated 2 million people witnessed the historic review.
October 1991	HMAS STUART departed Sydney under tow by the tug WOREE, for breaking up in Pakistan.
October 2001	HMAS KANIMBLA II departed for the Middle East as part of the maritime force assigned to Operation SLIPPER.
October 2019	HMAS MELBOURNE III decommissioned at Fleet Base East. Since commissioning in 1992, MELBOURNE had steamed more than 900,000 nautical miles, deployed on operations to the Middle East eight times and earning battle honours for service in East Timor, the Persian Gulf and Middle East.,

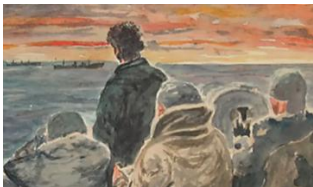
This Month in History - November

November 1884	HMQS GAYUNDAH sailed from Newcastle upon Tyne, England, for Brisbane, QLD. The ship was under the command of CAPT Henry Townley Wright, RN, for the voyage.
November 1914	HMAS PIONEER lost her fore-topmast and suffered other damage in heavy seas, while escorting the first troop convoy in the Indian Ocean. PIONEER returned to Fremantle for repairs.
November 1916	HMAS SYDNEY joined the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron at Rosyth, Scotland.
November 1918	HMAS PARRAMATTA stood off the Sultan's Palace at Constantinople, as a unit of the British and French Fleet occupying the Turkish capital.
November 1927	RAFA BILOELA paid off. She was sold to John Hven of Norway in 1931. In 1932, she was renamed Wollert, in 1937 renamed Ivanhoe, and the Yoh Hsing and finally Cree. She was sunk by enemy submarine action on 21-11- 1940.
November 1936	HMAS VENDETTA was dispatched from Sydney to search for the 32 foot launch VIKING, missing between Sydney and Lord Howe Island. Although five steamers and numerous smaller craft joined in the search, no trace of the missing vessel was ever found.
November 1940	HMAS GOORANGAI, (auxiliary minesweeper), was sunk in a collision with the liner DUNTROON, in Port Phillip Bay, VIC. The full complement of 24 from GOORANGAI were lost. This was the first RAN loss of WWII.
November 1942	RAAF Beaufighters of No. 31 Squadron, drove off 14 Japanese fighters and bombers which were attacking HMA Ships CASTLEMAINE and ARMIDALE in the Arafura Sea.
November 1947	HMAS QUIBERON returned to Sydney after a cruise to Tasmania, and moored at No.2 buoy in Sydney Harbour. That night the merchant ship KING STEPHEN lost steerage way while entering harbour, and rammed QUIBERON in the vicinity of the engine room causing significant damage. Next day the ship was docked in the captain Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island for repairs. It was not fit for sea again until early February 1948.
November 1951	LEUT K. E. Clarkson, DFM, RAN, was killed in action when his aircraft failed to pull out of dive during an attack on North Korean transports. His death was the first operational casualty during the deployment to Korean waters by HMAS SYDNEY.
November 1955	HMS NIZAM, (destroyer, ex-HMAS NIZAM), was paid off for breaking up.
November 1962	725 Squadron recommissioned flying the first two Westland Wessex 31A helicopters delivered to the RAN for ASW training and support to 817 Squadron, the Fleet Air Arm's (FAA) front line Wessex Squadron.
November 1967	RAN divers from CDT 3 removed a length of heavy steel cable which had wrapped around the starboard propeller of the Australian Army ship HARRY CHAUVEL, at Vung Tau, Vietnam.
November 1974	HMAS SALAMAUA was decommissioned and recommissioned into the Papua New Guinea Defence Force as HMPNGS SALAMAUA.
November 1985	HMAS YARRA was decommissioned into reserve. YARRA was sold in 1991 and broken up in 1992.
November 1994	The landing platform amphibious HMAS MANOORA, was commissioned. MANOORA was the former USS FAIRFAX COUNTY which had been commissioned into the USN in 1971.
November 2006	Loss of an Australian Army Blackhawk helicopter which crashed while attempting to land on aft flight deck of HMAS KANIMBLA II. It was lost over the side of the ship, resulting in the deaths of two of the ten crew members. At the time KANIMBLA was deployed as a part of Operation QUICKSTEP, the ADF contingency operation to evacuate Australians from Fiji in the face of an emerging coup.
November 2016	After an earthquake on Nov 14 HMAS DARWIN arrived at Kaikoura, New Zealand on 16 November in company with HMNZ Ships TE KAHA, ENDEAVOUR and CANTERBURY, USS SAMPSON, and HMCS VANCOUVER. Working parties were sent ashore to assist in restoring essential services such as electricity and water; welfare checks were carried out as well as basic reconstruction tasks and clean-up duties.
November 2021	HMAS STALWART III was commissioned at Fleet Base West

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/>

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