



# CALL THE HANDS



NHSA DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

Issue No.10

July 2017

## From the President

Welcome to the 10th edition of Call the Hands, a newsletter for Society members and the broader Navy Family. In this edition we continue to acknowledge significant 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary events, both ceremonial and tragic. These include the commissioning of HMAS Quiberon on 6 July 1942 and the loss of HMAS Ships Kuttabul and Nestor. We also recognize the contribution of a wonderful lady, Mrs Mae Clark who in her own quiet unobtrusive way contributed significantly to the wellbeing and morale of young apprentices at HMAS Nirimba for the entire commission of the base.

Accompanying this edition is Occasional Paper 9, 'The Loss of HMAS Armidale'. This paper is the transcript of a presentation recently given by Dr Kevin Smith, OAM to members in Sydney. Occasional Papers 10 and 11 have also been published on the Society's website at <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/reading/occasional-papers/>. These papers were prepared by the Society and delivered as keynote addresses in support of Navy ceremonies to commemorate the loss of HMA Ships Kuttabul and Nestor in June 1942.

A subscriber who is also a keen follower of 'This day in History' on both the Society's website and in Call the Hands reminded us recently that 6 July is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commissioning of HMAS Quiberon. Quiberon was one of eight Q class destroyers built in the UK during World War II. Quiberon and Quickmatch were transferred to the RAN immediately upon completion. Another three were transferred later and commissioned as HMA Ships Quadrant, Quality and Queenborough.

As indicated in our June edition of *Call the Hands* members will soon receive in the mail the second edition of *The Naval Historical Review* and *The Buzz*. Annual membership renewal notices will also be distributed. New members are welcome. Application form are available on the website, <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/membership/>.

David Michael  
President

## From the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of 'Call the hands'. We also enjoy hearing your stories and news so if wish to contribute send through to the Society your contributions via [callthehands@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:callthehands@navyhistory.org.au).

David Stratton  
Editor



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## In this Edition

Page	
2	75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorations HMAS Kuttabul and HMAS Nestor
4	77 years since HMT Lancastria sank
4	HMAS Rockhampton
5	Commodore Rodney Rhoades RAN
5	Upcoming Exhibition: Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne
6	This Month in History
7	Q Class Destroyers Remembered
8	HMAS PLATYPUS Former Dedicated Submarine Base in the 21st Century
9	News in Brief
10	Photo of the Month
10	Mrs Mae Clarke
11	Trivia Corner
11	Society Matters
11	Subscription

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorations

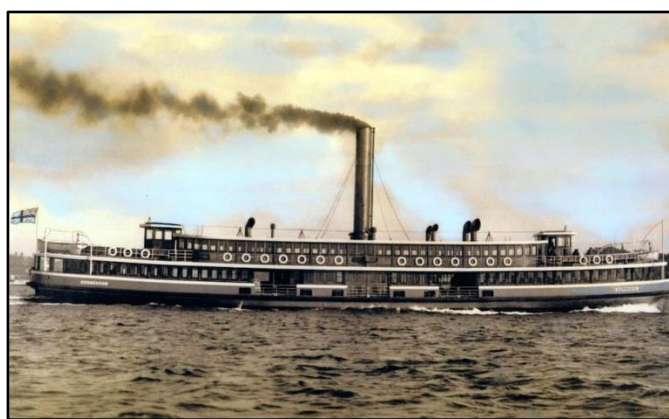
Two 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration ceremonies for the loss of ships in World War 2 were conducted by Navy on Garden Island, Sydney in June. As with an earlier ceremony to commemorate the loss of HMAS Vampire, the Society supported Navy with the delivery of key note addresses. These addresses, published as Occasional papers 10 and 11 can be downloaded from the Society's website at <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/reading/occasional-papers/>.

### HMAS Kuttabul: 1 June

This memorial service at HMAS Kuttabul commemorated the lives of 19 Australians, two British and 6 Japanese personnel, who died when HMAS Kuttabul was sunk during the Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour during the night of 31 May – 1 June 1942. The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Consul Generals of Japan, the United States, Britain. Representatives from local Government agencies and students from the Sydney Japanese School and St Vincent's College also attended. Captain Chris Skinner RAN Rtd delivered the keynote address.



Captain Christopher Skinner RAN Rtd delivering keynote address.



Kuttabul on Sydney Harbour

### Further Reading:

- Japanese Midget Submarine Attack on Sydney Harbour, John Perryman, <http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/japanese-midget-submarine-attack-sydney-harbour>
- Anti-Submarine Defences of Sydney Harbour: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/anti-submarine-defences-of-sydney-harbour-1942/>
- HMAS Kuttabul Ships History, <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kuttabul>

## HMAS Nestor: 16 June

Three Australian and one British sailor were lost when HMAS Nestor came under air attack in the Mediterranean on 15 June 1942. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial service at Garden Island, Sydney was attended by two survivors of the attack, Captain John Stephenson and Lieutenant Commander Ken Brown. Commander Walter Burroughs RAN, Rtd and editor of the Society's flagship magazine, the *Naval Historical Review* delivered the keynote address.



(R-L) Survivor of the HMAS Nestor attack, Lieutenant Commander Ken Brown, RAN Rtd, sits next to Captain Gavin Irwin, RAN, and fellow survivor Captain John Stephenson, RAN Rtd.

RAN image by LSIS Tom Gibson



Commander Walter Burroughs, RAN (Rtd) and Captain John Stephenson, RAN (Rtd) with a copy of a painting of Nestor salvaged by John Stevenson when he abandoned ship.

Image by David Michael

On 15 June, Nestor was part of a covering force for a large convoy when she came under air attack about 100 miles north of Tobruk. Heavy bombs straddled the ship, resulting in the No 1 boiler room being flooded and the death of four sailors. The destroyer was taken in tow by HMAS Javelin, while under the threat of further attack, a decision was made to scuttle the ship on 16 June 1942, after her surviving crew had been transferred to safety.



HMAS Nestor Ships Bell on display at the ceremony.



Survivors from HMAS Nestor onboard HMS Javelin with their salvaged ship's bell.

Nestor's bell was never replaced with one inscribed HMAS as she never reached Australia during her eventful sixteen month commission in the dark years of World War Two.

### Further Reading:

- A. Nestor Died Slowly, Lind, L.J. and Payne, Alan, <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/nestor-died-slowly/>
- B. Sea Power Centre, Ship History, <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-nestor>

## 77 years since HMT Lancastria sank

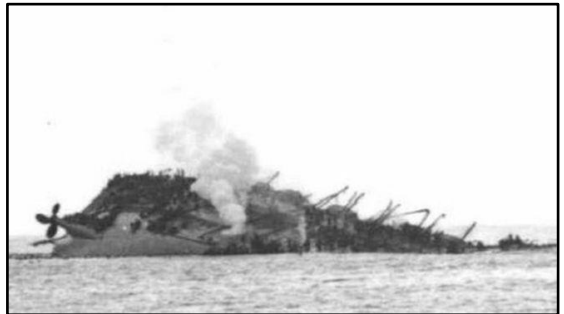
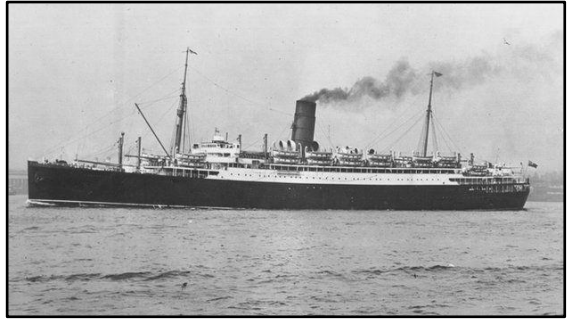
The Lancastria was ordered to France to evacuate soldiers in the wake of the collapse in France. She anchored some 10 miles off St Nazaire at about 06.00 hrs on Monday 17 June. Almost immediately, exhausted troops and some civilians began to arrive.

At about 13.00 hrs the red alert sounded and a dive bomber was seen to attack the Oronsay which was some distance off. The bomber scored a direct hit on the bridge area, but it did not render the ship unseaworthy. At about 15.50 hrs the enemy returned. Bombs were seen to straddle the ship, one bomb exploding close to the port side, rupturing her almost full fuel tanks. Immediately, the ship began a perilous roll from port to starboard and back again, further bombs struck home, one penetrating the holds that were crammed with troops. The ship rolled onto her port side, down by the bow. The ship's siren wailed and by 16.10 hrs, in just 20 minutes, the Lancastria slipped beneath the waves.

No one will ever know the exact number who died that day - some say there were as many as 9,000 on board by the time the Lancastria was bombed, others estimate 7,000. All we do know is that around 6,000 were on board by 13.00 hrs, and that many more arrived after that. Only 2,447 arrived home.

The rescue began with all kinds of vessels - from small fishing boats to destroyers of the Royal Navy - picking up survivors, more like oily flotsam than people. The bodies of those who died that day were washed up along the French coast during the coming months and were given Christian burials by the French people, who bravely ignored the German presence and cared for the victims as their own.

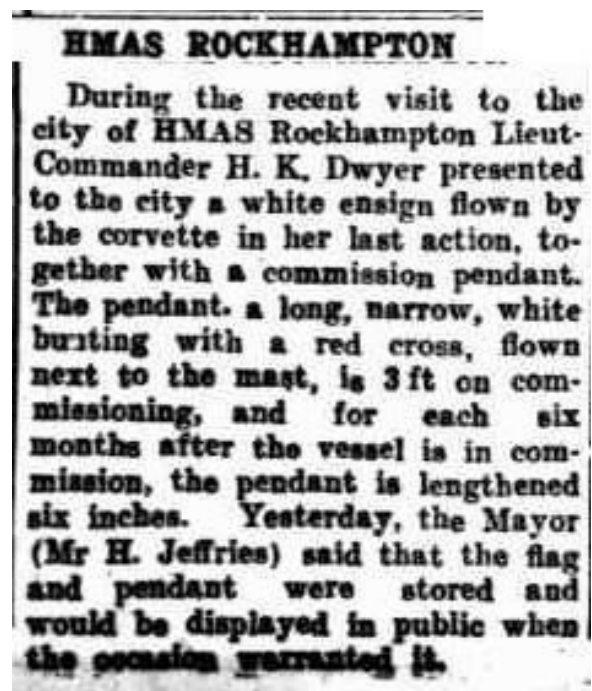
Churchill immediately hid the news from the public. In 1940, after Dunkirk, to reveal the truth would have been too damaging for civilian morale. He said, 'The newspapers have got quite enough disaster for today, at least.' Since that time the disaster has never been recognised for what it was - the greatest maritime disaster in Britain's history. More people were killed on the Lancastria than on the Titanic and Lusitania put together.



## HMAS Rockhampton

This article appeared in the Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. 1878 - 1954), Friday 21 September 1945, page 4

Courtesy Trove Online Digital Library



## Commodore Rodney Rhoades RAN

Commodore “Dusty” Rhoades had a distinguished wartime career in destroyers, seeing action in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Far East. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and was mentioned in dispatches. He was heavily engaged in the evacuations of Greece and Crete, but it was his exploits on the Tobruk “spud run” that earned him fame. In seven weeks, operating from Alexandria and Mersa Matruh, under his command HMAS Vendetta delivered 4,000 men and hundreds of tonnes of ammunition and supplies to the embattled garrison.

Rodney Rhoades was born on April 8, 1909 at Double Bay, joined the RAN as a 13 year old cadet and graduated from the Royal Australian Naval College in 1926. He was serving in the destroyer Vampire when the war began. In March 1940, the then Lieutenant Rhoades was appointed to command Vendetta, at 30 the youngest Australian officer to command a fleet destroyer. He escorted Malta convoys, bombarded Italian positions on the Libyan coast and in 1942 saw action during the allied North African landings.



On leaving Vendetta, he commissioned HMAS Quickmatch which served in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Indian Oceans. After the war, Commodore Rhoades joined the RAN air station at Nowra before leaving for Britain on exchange duty with the Royal Navy. As commanding officer of HMS Opportune, on escort duty during a State visit to England by King Fredrick and Queen Ingrid of Denmark, Commodore Rhoades was made a Chevalier of the Order of the Dannebrog by the king.

Originally published in the April 1992 edition of the Naval Historical Review (all rights reserved)  
Visit the NHTA website for more stories <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/reading/>

## Upcoming Exhibition: Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne

Nerves and Steel, The RAN in the Pacific, 1941–45

The war in the Pacific was essentially a naval struggle. Allied war aims hinged on the destruction of Japan’s powerful navy and the severing of sea communications between Japan and its far-flung Asian and Pacific conquests. Nerves and Steel explores the role played by the RAN in ultimate Allied victory and features items from the Shrine’s own collection as well as loans from the Australian War Memorial, the RAN Heritage Collection, veterans and their families.

This exhibition will be on display in the Shrine of Remembrance Melbourne Southern Gallery from 22 July 2017 until July 2018.



Able Seaman John Conway keeps watch aboard motor launch HMAS ML 802 during amphibious operations off New Britain. Reproduced courtesy of the Australian War Memorial 078677

<http://www.shrine.org.au/Exhibitions/Temporary-Exhibitions/Nerves-and-Steel>

## This Month in History

25 Jul 1795	A new form of signalling called semaphore was introduced into the RN. The system was devised by the Reverend Lord George Murray.
31 Jul 1900	The Victorian Naval Brigade Contingent, for the Boxer Rebellion, sailed from Melbourne.
28 Jul 1914	LEUT A. M. Longmore, an Australian serving with the RNAS, made the first successful aerial torpedo drop by a naval pilot from a Short Folder seaplane.
20 Jul 1916	The RAN Bridging Train maintained bridges across the Suez Canal for the army fighting in the Sinai. Heavy air raids were experienced at El Shatt and Port Tewfik during this period.
07 Jul 1917	All 6 ships of the Australian Torpedo Boat Destroyer Flotilla operated together for the first time.
14 Jul 1936	HMA Ships AUSTRALIA and SYDNEY, were attached to the Mediterranean Fleet during the Abyssinian crisis.
19 Jul 1940	The cruiser, HMAS SYDNEY, sank the Italian cruiser BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI.
10 Jul 1943	The invasion of Sicily, began. Among the troop convoy escort ships were HMA Ships CAIRNS, CESSNOCK, GAWLER, GERALDTON, IPSWICH, LISMORE, MARYBOROUGH, and WOLLONGONG, (corvettes).
01 Jul 1945	HMA Ships ARUNTA, HOBART, SHROPSHIRE, KANIMBLA, MANOORA, and WESTRALIA, participated in the assault on Balikpapan, Borneo.
02 Jul 1950	UN operations in Korea commenced. HMA Ships ANZAC, ARUNTA, BATAAN, CONDAMINE, CULGOA, MURCHISON, SHOALHAVEN, SYDNEY, TOBRUK, and WARRAMUNGA, operated with the Commonwealth Task Force.
18 Jul 1960	The first Junior Recruits, commenced training at HMAS LEEUWIN, at Fremantle WA.
11 Jul 1968	The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service Reserve, (WRANSR), was formed.
19 Jul 1968	A section from CDT3, ambushed a Viet Cong platoon travelling in sampans up a canal. Twenty-five of the enemy were killed.
28 Jul 1978	HMAS STIRLING, commissioned. Located at Garden Island WA, near the town of Rockingham, the base is often referred to as Fleet Base West.
05 Jul 1984	HMAS COOK, (survey ship), located the wreck of the Japanese submarine I-24, some 37 miles off Darwin. I-24 was the first Japanese vessel sunk by the RAN. She was sunk by HMA Ships DELORAIN, KATOOMBA, and LITHGOW, (corvettes), on 20 January, 1942.
30 Jul 1990	A decision reached to strengthen the RAN's mine warfare capability. The first three commercial vessels acquired as 'Craft of Opportunity', (COOP), were SALVATORE, KORAAGA, & WAVERIDER. They were classified MSA(S), (minesweeper auxiliary small).
06 Aug 1992	HMAS OTWAY became the first RAN submarine to fire a Mk48 torpedoes against a manned submarine. She fired on the US NEW YORK CITY, during RIMPAC exercises.

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/>

## Q Class Destroyers Remembered

Thanks to Bryan Burdett for reminding us that 2017 is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commissioning of three Q Class destroyers and that 6 July is HMAS Quiberon's anniversary. The Q Class played a very important role in Australian Naval history.

Name / Pennant / Type	Commissioned	Decommissioned	
<b>HMAS <i>Quadrant</i></b>  Pennant/s: G11/F01  Destroyer/Anti-submarine Frigate	18 October 1945	16 August 1957	
<b>HMAS <i>Quality</i></b>  Pennant/s: G62  Destroyer	7 September 1942	25 January 1946	
<b>HMAS <i>Queenborough</i></b>  Pennant/s: G70  Destroyer/Anti-submarine Frigate	20 October 1945	7 April 1972	
<b>HMAS <i>Quiberon</i></b>  Pennant/s: G81/F03  Destroyer/Anti-submarine Frigate	6 July 1942	26 June 1964	
<b>HMAS <i>Quickmatch</i></b>  Pennant/s: G92  Destroyer/Anti-submarine Frigate	14 September 1942	26 April 1963	

## Further Reading

1. Q Class Destroyers and Frigates of the Royal Australian Navy: Destroyers 1942-1956 Frigates 1953-1972 by Trevor Weaver - published by the Naval Historical Society of Australia, Garden Island 1994.
2. HMAS Quiberon, by Allan Payne, published December 1976 edition of the Naval Historical Review, available at; <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/hmas-quiberon/>





## HMAS PLATYPUS Former Dedicated Submarine Base in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By Captain Christopher Skinner RAN Rtd, Submarine Institute of Australia

This article describes the current status and near future planning for the former HMAS PLATYPUS submarine base in Neutral Bay, Sydney NSW. The site is controlled by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust who have managed the decontamination from the first use of the site as a gasworks and then as the Royal Australian Navy Torpedo Establishment from 1942. The current phase leads to the site being opened to the general public from 2018.

During World War 2 in response to the sudden threat from Japan and the perceived vulnerability of supply of armaments from Europe or North America, a number of munitions and other military logistics facilities were built in Australia. One of these was the RAN Torpedo Establishment (RANTE) on the former gasworks site at High Street, North Sydney, supported by the Torpedo Firing facility at Clareville on Pittwater where torpedoes were test fired and calibrated.

Australia had no RAN submarines during WW2 and post-war based a squadron of Royal Navy (RN) submarines at HMAS PENGUIN in Balmoral, Middle Harbour. However, the prevailing swell sometimes required submarines berthed there to be moved to the wharf at RANTE as a more sheltered berth.

When the RN withdrew from east of Suez the RAN committed to form the Australian Submarine Squadron and on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1967, HMAS PLATYPUS was commissioned as a dedicated submarine base on the RANTE site.

The Australian Submarine Squadron relocated to HMAS STIRLING in WA and HMAS PLATYPUS was decommissioned in 1999. RANTE had become the RAN Torpedo Maintenance Establishment and it too had closed after the last of the Mk 8 torpedoes had been serviced and placed into storage. The site was later transferred to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) that had been set up to manage several federal government controlled sites around Sydney Harbour.

Over several years contamination at the PLATYPUS site was removed and site readied for its ultimate uses as described in a very detailed management plan available for download from the SHFT website. The decontamination had required the removal of the former Submarine Squadron Administration Building, but the other squadron buildings – Naval Stores, Fleet Intermediate Maintenance Authority workshops building and the Submarine School buildings have all been retained, albeit with some remodelling planned.

The northern part of the site has been terraced and is the site for the Submariners' Memorial being erected by the Submarines Association Australia with generous contributions from several state RSL sub-branches. The memorial will be dedicated at a ceremony on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PLATYPUS commissioning and also the arrival in Sydney of HMAS OXLEY, first of six Oberon-class boats to form the squadron. The first commanding officer CAPT Bill OWEN RAN Rtd will be attendance at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony, as will the Minister for Defence and the Chief of Navy.

The site works to prepare all of the RANTME and squadron buildings for public access and commercial and public uses are due to complete in 2018.



HMAS PLATYPUS, 1984  
Sea Power Centre Australia Image

## News in Brief

- In a speech before the Naval War College the US Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson said that the Navy is looking at "every trick" to grow the fleet more quickly toward the Navy's goal of 355 ships, including extending the lives of ships already in the fleet and "bringing ships back." And one of the candidates for a comeback, Richardson said, is the Oliver Hazard Perry class frigate.  
<https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2017/06/navy-looking-at-bringing-back-old-ships-to-grow-fleet-but-not-battleships/>
- The Australian Ministry of Defence accepted delivery of its first Aegis-equipped air warfare destroyer, HMAS Hobart on June 16. Hobart is the first of three destroyers being built and integrated by the AWD Alliance which comprises the Department of Defence, Raytheon Australia and ASC with support from Navantia. In the coming months, Hobart will transit from Adelaide to Sydney where she will be commissioned into service by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) later this year.
- Royal New Zealand Navy's fleet oiler returned to her homeport of Devonport Naval Base on June 13 completing her last operational deployment. The 30-year-old HMNZS Endeavour wrapped up a four-month South-east Asia deployment and is set to be decommissioned later this year
- On June 6th Austal joined the Royal Australian Navy in celebrating the official naming of the tenth Cape-class patrol boat at a ceremony held at the HMAS Stirling naval base in Western Australia. Australian Defence Vessel (ADV) Cape Inscription is the second Cape-class patrol boat designed and constructed by Austal for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as part of a A\$63 million contract. This delivery marks the tenth successful delivery by Austal of a Cape-class patrol boat for the Commonwealth's use. <https://www.austal.com/news/austal%E2%80%99s-tenth-cape-class-patrol-boat-officially-named-cape-inscription>
- In the United Kingdom 13 wartime vessels have been added to the lists of protected military vessels during May 2017, including HMHS Anglia, HMS Aboukir, HMS Cressy and HMS Hogue. This brings the grand total of ships and submarines protected as war graves to 79. The majority of these are ships dating from the First World War, though there are five German submarines and Second World War-era Allied cargo vessels on the list as well.
- HDML 1321 has been recently approved for addition to the Australian Register of Historic. The nomination to the ARHV does not provide protection such as with heritage listed buildings, but it is recognition of the vessel's significance and provides a statement to that effect that can be used to



support efforts to restore the vessel HDML 1321 represents an important chapter in Australia's military history, is a rare example of its type, and one of the craft built in Tasmania in WW2 for the war effort

## Photo of the Month



Gannett landing on HMAS Melbourne II - NHSA Collection

If you have a photo to share please send it to [callthehands@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:callthehands@navyhistory.org.au)

## Mrs Mae Clarke

Many who served at HMAS NIRIMBA will fondly remember Mae Clark who passed away on Monday June 12<sup>th</sup>. Mae, formerly known to early MOBI as Mrs Ogle, the post mistress at RANATE, was the longest serving staff member ('56 to '91) at NIRIMBA when it closed.

Mae was referenced in "The flight of the pelican: a history of the Schofields Aerodrome and HMAS Nirimba at Quakers Hill" which was published in 1993.

"One of the quiet but extremely effective, steadying influences on many a young boy's life (and later, girls too) was the postmistress, Mae Clarke. She saw several generations of young people begin their careers, giving wise management advice on personal banking and family communications to many youngsters away from home for the first time – often bewildered and unsure of what to do. In that capacity she was an unofficial but valuable part of the Navy's Divisional System and thus had an important role in the support and development of a constant stream of young people who have gone on to serve Australia with confidence and effectiveness. Until the general advent of women in the Navy, Mae Clark was one of the few motherly influences that many young men experienced in their developmental years."

## Trivia Corner

1. Where was AE1 when she was lost?
2. What type of aircraft were destroyed in the hanger fire at HMAS Albatross in 1976?

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

Answer to last month's trivia question:

1. Which RAN Ships crest is shown?  
Answer HMAS Wollongong



2. Initially HMAS Melbourne II operated with two squadrons embarked. Which were they and what did they fly?

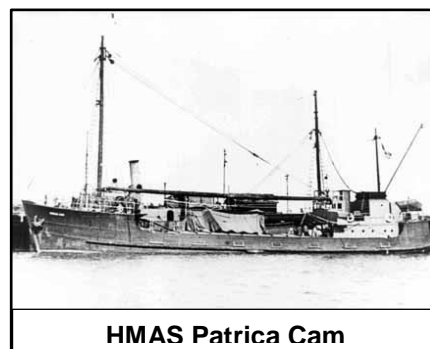
Answer: Actually three squadrons and two types were embarked when Melbourne sailed for Australia. She sailed from Glasgow for Australia on 11 March 1956 with 808 Squadron (Sea Venom all-weather fighters) and 816 & 817 Squadrons (Gannet anti-submarine aircraft) embarked.

## 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/>

The June 2017 edition focuses on those smaller and sometimes forgotten naval craft including a detailed story of the wooden motor vessel HMAS Patricia Cam lost of Arnhem Land in 1942.



### Tours of Garden Island, Sydney

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

Phone: (02) 9359 2243) Thursdays only

E-Mail: [tours@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:tours@navyhistory.org.au)

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

### Subscription

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

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