

CALL THE HANDS

NHSA DIGITAL NEWSLETTER
Issue No.12 September 2017



From the President

Call the Hands is now a year old. During the year it has evolved in terms of size and content. The most pleasing feature of which is the 'readers forum' which continues to grow. The comments, information and stories provided by you, our readers are highly valued and makes CTH a people focused newsletter. Naval history is multi-faceted in that it is not possible to write about ships, submarines and aircraft without including the people who operate them, maintain them and provide essential support services. We really appreciate receiving historical information and stories on non-mainstream issues. A classic example was the role played by Navy bandsmen posted to RAN Cruisers.

At sea Bandsmen were part of the Gunnery Department. Having undertaken a special fire control course, they were employed manning the Transmitting Station (TS) day and night. Here they assembled all the details needed for the guns to fire accurately. They were a vital part of the Gunnery Department. The story of a Bandsman's World War 2 experiences is the subject of a Society monograph. Our collection of 95 monographs are available for sale. Interested readers can e-mail the Society for a copy. With the launch of our new website in the coming months, the monographs and other products will be available for sale through our on-line shop.

With our new website, move to e-commerce and a new format Call the Hands (HTML) in the coming months, 'privacy' has been a key consideration. We are conscious that in changing the format of Call the Hands to HTML and using a third-party product for its distribution (MailChimp) subscribers e-mail address will be provided to that third party. Our plan is to make the switch when our website is expected to launch in December 2017. Should this be a concern, please advise us if you wish to 'unsubscribe'. Advantages for the Society and readers of using MailChimp as the tool for publishing CTH include, information useful to us on issues important to readers and it provides readers with better links to resources on the NHSA website.

In addition to generous financial donations made by members with their annual membership renewal the Society's research library has benefitted greatly from the donation of books from several sources. In some cases, such as that of a 1915 entry to the RAN College, heritage items, journals and diaries are passed to the Naval Heritage Collection.

We hope you enjoy this, our first birthday edition

David Michael President



The Naval Historical Society of Australia

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Patron: Chief of Navy

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From the Editor

Thanks for being a subscriber to our email newsletter and celebrating our first anniversary. In the last twelve months we have enjoyed bringing interesting news and stories to you via our newsletter. We look forward to finding and sharing more with you over the next year.

If you have photos or stories that you would like to contribute you can either post them onto the Facebook page or email them to callthehands@navyhistory.org.au and we will post your contribution for you.

David Stratton Editor

Coming Launch of the Australian Naval History Video and Podcast Series

On 3 October 2017 the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Tim Barrett will launch the *Australian Naval History* video and podcast series at the Seapower Conference in Sydney. This series is produced by the Naval Studies Group at University of NSW Canberra in partnership with the Australian Naval Institute, the Naval Historical Society, the RAN Seapower Centre and the Submarine Institute of Australia.

In each 50 minute episode an expert panel explores a different incident, battle or event in Australian Naval history. The panels vary in composition and include Australia's best selling naval historian Mike Carlton, world famous ship wreck hunter David Mearns, Professor Tom Frame, Dr Kathryn Spurling and the members of the Naval Studies Group - Rear Admiral James Goldrick, Vice Admiral Peter Jones, Commodore Jack McCaffrie and Dr David Stevens.

The video version includes photographs and maps to further illuminate the topic. Series One includes episodes ranging from the Oberon class submarines in RAN Service, the Battle of the Coral Sea, the formation of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, the HMAS *Australia* Court Martial, the RAN in World War I and HMAS Sydney in the Mediterranean during World War II and her subsequent loss.

After the 3 October launch, a new episode of *Australian Naval History* will be released simultaneously on YouTube and iTunes each week. Viewers and listeners will be able to subscribe to automatically receive their next episode.

Docking the ex-HMAS Sydney

On 12th June 2017, Ex-HMAS Sydney was docked at the Western Australian Government owned Australian Marine Complex Common User Facility in Henderson Western Australia by AMC Management, the Facility Manager and Floating Dock Operator.

The defence contractor Birdon was awarded the disposal contract by the Department of Defence and in conjunction with Defence chose the Common User Facility to undertake the final dismantling of the ship.

You can watch a video of this on youtube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eadJBJE0qMl



RAN 75th Anniversary of Diver Training at HMAS Penguin

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the RAN diver training transferring to HMAS Penguin, Mosman, from Garden Island. In that year, 1942, HMAS Penguin was completed, commissioned and started service as a naval hospital.

It was war-time, General Macarthur had been appointed as Supreme Commander of all allied forces in the South West Pacific and Australia ramped up its contribution to the war effort. Trained divers were being turned out faster than ever before. Divers were needed for many different jobs as records show. These included more mundane tasks such as recovering items dropped overboard, clearing fouled props and making minor repairs underwater. At the other end of the scale there was some extremely hazardous work for the Render Mines Safe (RMS) men, some of whom undertook diver training. There was also the one-off event of recovering the midget submarines from Sydney Harbour. In between there was a wide range of work carried out by the divers, including salvaging ships and aircraft and laying and maintaining boom defence nets.

Typically, four men were trained at a time. The officer in charge of diver training was Lt Lowrie. At the same time, he was appointed the Port Diving Officer for Sydney Harbour. Training took place on boats, including the private ferry Lady Denman and at Chowder Bay, adjacent to Clifton Gardens. An unfortunate incident occurred here in late 1943. There was an army man, a native of Thursday Island in the water transport group at Clifton Gardens. At Thursday Island he had dived for pearls. In Thursday Island, they typically used a helmet with no suit or a half suit cut-off at the waist. On this basis, he was allowed to dive in a helmet without full gear and without close supervision. Unfortunately, he became entangled in the ropes and drowned before the staff realised.



Lt. Fred Lowrie, Port Diving Officer and Standard Diver during salvage operation for crashed aircraft near Sydney Mid 1943. (P. Scascighini)

On Sunday 17th September from 9:30 am, a group of enthusiasts will recreate old fashioned navy diving using "hard hats" and all the associated equipment. The public is invited to come and watch. There will be an opportunity to look at the equipment used, take pictures and learn about the history of this type of diving. Visitors are requested to stay back from the actual diving area. The divers would be keen to meet any old navy, commercial or recreational divers or their families.

The day is being co-ordinated by Allan Kessler, 0487 388 975 or <u>allan@kessler.net.au</u>. Allan's grandfather trained as a navy diver at HMAS Penguin in 1943.

For further information on the history of diving and the equipment used visit the web site of the Historical Diving Society Australia-Pacific at www.historicaldivingsociety.com.au.

Pictured is Lt Lowrie with a RAN diver recovering an aircraft in 1943. Picture from *United and Undaunted* by R.S. Blue, published by The Naval Historical Society of Australia, 1976.

Book Donations: A Wonderful Response

The Society is most grateful for the donation of a significant number of books following last month's request. Three treasured collections of books were donated to the Society in August, by Graeme Andrews OAM (who donated almost 200 books), Russel Vasey, and the widow of the CMDR R (Ray) F Williams DSC MID VRD* ADC RANR. (Ray died about 18 months ago.)

Graeme Andrews joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1955 at the age of seventeen. He qualified in gunnery as a fire control man and had been promoted to petty officer fire control when he was discharged in 1968. On discharge, Graeme was awarded a seaman's trade certificate which enabled him to gain employment first as a deckhand on harbour tugs and then as a master of Sydney and Manly ferries. This encouraged him to take an interest in maritime history and to collect an enormous quantity of related books and photographs. These covered ferries, work boats, shipyards and boatyards throughout New South Wales. He subsequently donated approximately 10,000 photographs to the City of Sydney. Graeme has edited various maritime publications and is a regular contributor to Sydney's Afloat magazine. In 2005 he was made an Honorary Life Member of the Naval Historical Society for his splendid efforts in recording Naval and Maritime history over many years.

Russel Vasey joined the Navy in 1942 and was first employed as a coder concerned with the organisation of coastal convoys. Following officer selection and training Russel was appointed to a variety of small vessels, including Fairmiles He had two command postings. Following demobilisation Russel continued his naval career with the RAN Volunteer Reserves and Royal Navy Reserves. By his retirement from the Reserves in 1984 he had achieved commander rank. Russell has sailed in five Sydney to Hobart yacht races and is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Navigation.

Ray Williams joined the RAN Volunteer Reserve in 1940 and a year later passed the officers' selection board. During his first posting after training, to HMS Meteor, Ray was credited with the sinking of a German U-boat in the Arctic and a torpedo boat in the Ligurian Sea. Post war Ray maintained his interest in the naval reserve: in the 1960s and he commanded the Sydney Port Division, and in 1969 he was appointed ADC to the Queen. After retirement in 1971 Ray remained active as an executive member of the Submariners Association until his resignation as the vice-president in 2014. He attended every Anzac Day march after the war until his last, shortly before his death, in October 2015.

Additions to the Society's library collection are valued. No less valued is the work necessary to ensure the collection is managed and available for use. Our valued librarian responsible for this work is Elizabeth Colthorpe.



Liz Colthorpe

News in Brief

- The Government of Australia has granted first pass approval for the service life extension of the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) Huon-class minehunter coastal vessels. Navy Capability head rear admiral Jonathan Mead said that the project will ensure that the RAN is capable of providing an effective maritime mine countermeasure capability by 2030. Mead said: "Minehunters play a vital role in protecting Australia's ships, harbours and infrastructure from the threat of sea mines. "First Pass approval is a major milestone for this project that will see the life of the minehunters extended to ensure there is no gap in mine warfare capability as we determine the replacement vessels.
- The British Royal Navy's future flagship Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, has arrived at its homeport of Portsmouth harbour for the first time. The 280m-long HMS Queen Elizabeth underwent sea trials prior to its arrival in Portsmouth, after setting sail from Scotland's Rosyth dockyard in June.
- The US Navy has picked a Texas-based shipping company to transport the damaged US Navy destroyer USS Fitzgerald back to the US for repairs. USS Fitzgerald, which was heavily damaged in a June 17 collision with a merchant vessel, will be brought from Japan to Mississippi where it is to be repaired by Huntington Ingalls Industries.
- Since HMS Victory first docked in Portsmouth Naval Base, HMS Victory has been supported on 22 steel cradles and a concrete plinth. In order to preserve HMS Victory's wooden hull, the existing cradles, which were installed in 1925, are being replaced with 134 precisely placed props. The props will evenly distribute the ship's load to recreate the natural stresses experienced on the hull when the ship was supported by water. The new support system design and the installation process has been painstakingly developed over the past five years. The work to restore HMS Victory began in 2011, which included removing the masts and booms before work could begin to prevent water damage and reduce rot. The project has also seen the ship's hull repainted and refurbishment of Admiral Lord Nelson's Cabin and the Great Cabin. A new walkway onto the ship provides visitors with easier access to parts of the ship that were previously unseen. The project has also seen the instalment of a new fire detection and suppression system.
- A team financed by Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, has discovered USS Indianapolis 18,000 feet deep in the North Pacific Ocean. The ship was on a super-secret mission to Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands in late July, 1945, to deliver the components for the "Little Boy" atomic bomb dropped a week later on Hiroshima, Japan. After delivering her payload, the ship was sailing in the Philippine Sea on its way to rendezvous with other ships in preparation for an attack on Japan. Around midnight on July 30, however, Japanese submarine I-58 intercepted the ship and launched torpedoes, fatally wounding the 610-foot vessel. It only took 12 minutes for the Indianapolis to go completely under. About 800 of the crew of 1,197 were able to get off the ship alive, crammed into a handful of lifeboats and floating around the ocean in life jackets. Reports of the sinking did not reach the Navy because of the ship's secret mission and no one knew there were hundreds of men scattered in the ocean. Without much food or fresh water, men slowly perished. But the worst of it was the sharks. The sharks were drawn to the area by the explosion of the sinking ship as well as men thrashing in the water and the blood of the wounded. By the time a spotter plane found the men at sea and ships were deployed to rescue them, only 317 of the roughly 800 men who went into the water remained.





This Month in History

September 1914	A joint Australian army-navy expedition sailed for German New Guinea from Port Moresby embarked on board the auxilliary cruiser HMAS BERRIMA, escorted by HMAS AUSTRALIA, HMAS SYDNEY, HMAS ENCOUNTER, HMAS WAREGO, and HMAS YARRA, together with submarines HMAS AE1 and AE2.
September 1914	HMAS MELBOURNE, landed a party of 4 officers and 21 petty officers, under LCDR M. A. Blanfield, on Nauru, to dismantle the German wireless station on the island. They did not occupy the island, and the formal surrender did not take place until two months later when Australian officers, embarked in the merchant ship SS MESSINA, accepted the German surrender.
September 1914	The RAN Brigade, supported by men from Australian warships, landed at Kabakaul, German New Guinea, (New Britain), to seize the German wireless station there.
September 1915	HMAS BRISBANE, the first cruiser to be built in Australia, was launched at Cockatoo Island, Sydney.
September 1935	The modified Leander class cruiser HMAS SYDNEY, (CAPT J. U. C. Fitzgerald, RN), was commissioned. SYDNEY was laid down in Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson Yard, Wallsend-on-Tyne, England, on 8 July 1933, as HMS PHAETON, and launched 22 September 1934, having been purchased for the RAN, as HMAS SYDNEY. Mrs S. M. Bruce, (Wife of the Australian High Commissioner), performed the launching ceremony.
September 1939	The 'Declaration of war on Germany' was issued. The Imperial war telegram was received in Canberra at 2150. It read; 'Total Germany, repeat, total Germany'.
September 1940	ADML A.B. Cunningham, C-in-C, Mediterranean, signalled the Battle Fleet: "STUART is dying on us. I am sending her back to Alex". The 'dying' HMAS STUART, (destroyer), shared in the sinking of the Italian submarine GONDAR, before she reached port.
September 1951	The frigate HMAS MURCHISON, (LCDR A. N. Dollard, RAN), penetrated the Han River, Korea, and came under heavy Communist gunfire. MURCHISON withdrew after suffering light damage.
September 1962	HMA Ships HAWKESBURY and MURCHISON, (frigates), left Sydney under tow for breaking up in Japan.
September 1968	HMAS HOBART, (guided missile destroyer), was awarded the US Presidential Commendation for service in Vietnam between 10 March and 20 September, 1968.
September 1984	HMAS ONSLOW became the world's first conventionally powered submarine to be upgraded to guided missile capacity, on completion of a \$39 million conversion at Cockatoo Dockyard, Sydney, when Harpoon sub-surface to surface UGM48 missile capacity was installed
September 1990	Third Officer Ruby O. Boye-Jones, BEM, WRANS, the only woman to serve as a coastwatcher in a battle zone in the Pacific in WWII, died at the age of 99

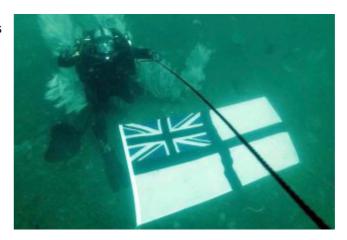
The Society's website enables you to look up any event in RAN history. Searches can be made by era, date look up or today. The latter appears on the home page. The others are accessed via the Research page. https://www.navyhistory.org.au/research/on-this-day/

Royal Navy flag placed on sunken HMS Hermes for first time in 75 years

Royal Navy divers have placed a Royal Navy flag on the UK's first purpose-built aircraft carrier HMS Hermes for the first time since she sank 75 years ago.

Three quarters of a century after she was sunk by Japanese bombers on April 9, 1942, a ten-strong team of Royal Navy divers paid their respects on the battered hull of the Hermes.

Joint training with the Sri Lankan Navy finally gave the experts from Portsmouth-based Fleet Diving Unit 2, whose specialist teams normally provide protection for Royal Navy ships in the ports of the world, the chance to pay their respects on Hermes' wreck rather than on the surface above.



After practicing diving on a downed WW2 fighter in the harbor entrance, the two dive teams headed down the coast to the site of Hermes' wreck.

Although there were aircraft carriers before Hermes, they started life as other types of ship. Hermes was designed and built from the outset as a carrier, spending most of her career in the Mediterranean and Far East between the world wars. Even though she was reduced to a training ship in 1938, the onset of war forced a return to front-line duties.

In 1942, she was sent to the Indian Ocean to support the Allied invasion of Madagascar. When Japanese bombers threatened the port of Trincomalee in the north of the island, Hermes sailed to escape them. Salvation was short lived. The carrier and her Australian escort, destroyer HMAS Vampire, barely got 65 miles before they were pounced upon about 20 miles off the port of Batticaloa.

More than 80 Japanese dive bombers escorted by nine Zero fighters attacked, opposed by just half a dozen sluggish RAF Fairey Fulmar fighters and the anti-aircraft gunners on both

ships. Hermes succumbed in just 20 minutes. Hit 40 times she sank taking 307 men down with her. The bombers then turned their attention to Vampire, breaking the ship in two; amazingly, just eight crew of the Vampire were killed.

Hermes' wreck lies 60 metres down, which meant only one section – the bilge keel – was accessible for the diving teams. "This is the first time that Royal Navy personnel have been able to pay their respects in such a way in the 75 years since Hermes was tragically sunk," said Chief Petty Officer Ward Peers, second-in-command of Fleet Diving Unit 2. "Laying the ensign was a great honour for everyone involved. Being able to dive on such a huge piece of British military history is a huge achievement and we are extremely grateful for the opportunity given to us by the Sri Lankan Navy."



HMS Hermes

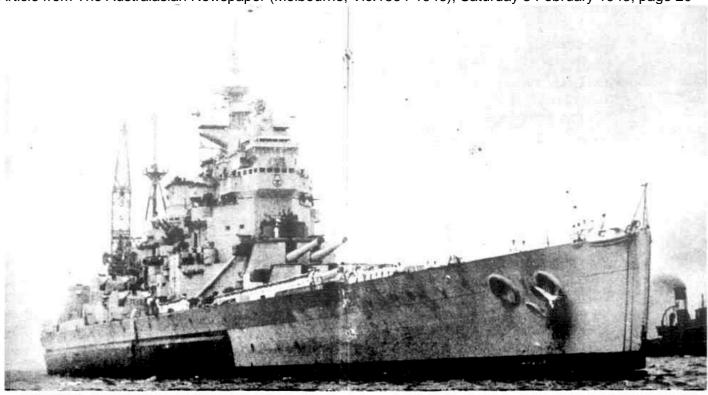


HMAS Vampire

https://navaltoday.com/2017/08/24/royal-navy-flag-placed-on-sunken-hms-hermes-for-first-time-in-75-years/

Visit of British Pacific Fleet Flagship HMS Howe to Sydney Feb 1945

Article from The Australasian Newspaper (Melbourne, Vic.1864-1946), Saturday 3 February 1945, page 20



H M S HOWE, ADMIRAL SIR BRUCE FRASER'S FLAGSHIP in Britain's newly created Pacific Fleet, entering Sydney Harbour recently on her visit to Australia. Nominally a 35,000-ton ship, her additional arm y and armoment to deal with air attack and to sustain the heaviest blows which could be expected in any main fleet action, makes her much vivier. In addition to subsidiary close-range armament, Howe carries longrange 14in guns in 4-gun revolving turrets mechanically controlled and loaded

ONCRETE EVIDENCE of Britain's intention to play an important and ever-increasing part in defeating the Japanese immediately ber commitments in the European

zone made such action possible, was provided recently by the arrival in Sydney Harbour of units of the newly formed British Pacific Fleet led by the flagship, HMS Howe

Despite the secrecy which had been maintained concerning the fleet's arrival and the fact that when the ships approached Sydney the city was enveloped in one of the worst duststorms in its history, hundreds of people flocked to South Head and other vantage points within a very short period of the vessels being first sighted

HMS Howe, which carries the flag of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Com-mander of the British Pacific Fleet, is claimed by her Commander, Cap-tain H W U. McCall, to be the most modern battleship afloat. She is nominally a 35,000-ton vessel, but extra armaments and armour has increased this figure considerably. First commissioned in 1942. Howe went to the Mediterranean and took part in the defeat and capture of the Italian fleet. More recently, she operated with the Eastern Fleet under the command of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten.

To make the vessel more suitable under tropical conditions in the Pacific for her complement of nearly 2,000. Howe has been completely remost modern battleship affoat

2,000. Howe has been completely reequipped.

RAN at the start of WWII - September 1939

The strength of the RAN at the commencement of hostilities in WWII was:

- 2 heavy cruisers HMA Ships AUSTRALIA and CANBERRA 4 light cruisers - HMA Ships SYDNEY, HOBART, PERTH and ADELAIDE
- 5 destroyers HMA Ships STUART, VAMPIRE, VOYAGER, VENDETTA, and WATERHEN
- 2 sloops HMA Ships SWAN and YARRA
- 1 survey vessel HMAS MORESBY
- 2 armed merchant cruisers HMA Ships MANOORA and WESTRALIA.

Three liners, MORETON BAY, ARAWA, and KANIMBLA, were converted into armed merchant cruisers and manned by Australians, but as units of the RN.

Eight smaller vessels were requisitioned and equipped as minesweepers.

The permanent naval forces totaled 5440 and the reserve naval forces totaled 4819 personnel.

Tales from the Dockyard:

Lest it be thought that there was no humour in HM Naval Yard, Garden Island, during G.H. Bromwich's long term in office, the following account by an apprentice boilermaker of that period may serve to show otherwise. On the strength of the Establishment was a horse named Dolly whose duties involved carting coal to the residences, Main Office, Enginesmiths, Coppersmiths, and Boiler Shops. Horse-shoeing was, in those days, a common but specialised trade. A local farrier had a standing order to keep Dolly well shod and would duly appear, being rowed across to the island at regular intervals, to do just that.

Shortly after the commencement of World War I, it was realised that the farrier had not paid his usual visit, and Dolly's shoes were in need of replacement. Inquiries revealed that the regular farrier had joined the Army, as apparently had most of his colleagues, being in high demand for keeping the horse-drawn transport and guns in good service. Therefore, no farrier could be located locally.

As has happened so often before and since, the Dockyard had to rely on its own resources, and a foremen boilermaker was told to 'do something' about the problem. The foreman detailed a young boilermaker to shoe Dolly and despite the latter's protests of ignorance of the skills involved in such a task, the foreman left the young tradesman to his own devices.

After a discreet interval the foreman returned to find Dolly standing atop the marking-off table and the boilermaker scribing around Dolly's hooves, tracing the pattern onto a sheet of boiler plate.

Dolly apparently survived the experience, for preserved for posterity in the Dockyard Museum are a set of her shoes – albeit undoubtedly the work of a professional.

Originally published in June 2009 edition of the Naval Historical Review (all rights reserved) https://www.navyhistory.org.au/reading/

Melbourne Cup

ONE CANNOT HELP remembering that in days long past our Fleet always managed to be in Melbourne for the Cup and our ships and men were definitely a part of the scene.

The Selection Board for the Naval College also sat in Melbourne and youths who had passed the Entrance Exam were interviewed. The Headmaster, Commanding Officer and others involved quizzed the candidates, asking questions such as: 'What was the number of the tram in which you came?'

This could be answered in several ways – a clever lad not knowing the number could make one up and win a rating of, say, 7 out of 10. Another might say 'I came in our car' and get 10 out of 10. A lad who did not know and said so would be rated 0 out of 10.

A popular question was 'What was the name of the horse that won the Cup yesterday?' This was followed customarily by: 'We have asked you many questions – it is now your turn to ask the Board a question.' The winner for this one was the lad who asked: 'Could the Board please tell me the name of the horse that came second?' – and no one on the Board knew!

Originally published in the December 2003 edition of the Naval Historical Review (all rights reserved) https://www.navyhistory.org.au/reading/

Photo of the Month:



4.7 INCH MK X11-SPC-0001 – NHSA Photo Collection

Society Matters

Society Library

The Society maintains an extensive research library of naval books and other publications which are available to members and volunteers conducting research and writing for the Society. It also facilitates responses to numerous requests for information from the public. Additions to the collection are always welcomed from people downsizing or who simply no longer require their books.

If you are in this situation and would like to assist by donating books on Australian naval history please contact our librarian. We would be particularly grateful for copies of books from the series published by the Naval Historical Society in its early years entitled "Ships of the Royal Australian Navy". This series included books on HMA Ships; Sydney, Hobart, Parramatta, Adelaide, Yarra, Canberra, Perth and Australia. It also included volumes on the WW2 Fremantle submarine base, WRANs, Clearance Diving Branch, N Class destroyers and the scrap iron destroyers.

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Naval Historical Review

Become a member to receive quarterly copies of the Naval Historical Review the Society's flagship magazine. https://www.navyhistory.org.au/membership/

Tours of Garden Island, Sydney

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

Phone: (02) 9359 2243) Thursdays only E-Mail: tours@navyhistory.org.au

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

Subscription

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Further Reading

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