



# CALL THE HANDS



NHSA DIGITAL NEWSLETTER  
Issue No. 9 June 2017

## From the President

Welcome to the 9th edition of *Call the Hands*, a newsletter for Society members and the broader Navy Family. Accompanying this edition is Occasional Paper 8, 'The Gustavo Stefanini Story'. Commander Stephen Youll, OAM, RAN Retd was inspired to provide his intriguing story of Gustavo Stefanini after reading about HMAS Stuart being the first RAN ship to sink a submarine during World War 2 in the April edition of *Call the Hands*.

Thanks to the efforts of *Call the Hands* Editor, David Stratton the Society now has a Facebook page, which is already proving popular. <https://www.facebook.com/navalhsa/>. Facebook will be used to complement the existing Society publications to members and subscribers.



During June the Society will mail to members the second 2017 edition of our flagship magazine, *The Naval Historical Review* and *The Buzz* newsletter. Published quarterly, the Review includes previously unpublished stories from a variety of sources. The lead story in this edition is a story by Walter Burroughs on HMAS Patricia Cam. Included amongst other stories are articles on; Antarctica, HMAS Leeuwin and Secret Devices used to defeat Napoleon. Members agree, four add free editions of the Review for an annual membership fee of \$40 is value for money.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge members and subscribers who continue to provide stories and heritage items to Navy through the Society. During May we received the last three breadth white ensign flown from the main mast of HMAS Supply in 1967 courtesy of Commander David Quick, RANR, QC in South Australia. The ensign was the last flown before the introduction of the Australian White Ensign (AWE) the next day. Margaret Saunders from WA provided a collection of documents from her late father Commander Robert Geoffrey Harris, RANR who served in New Guinea during WW2 and later as the senior Naval Controller of Shipping in WA. All these items were subsequently transferred to Navy for retention in perpetuity. Vic Geoffrey provided images taken on HMAS Sydney II just four months before her loss in 1941.

If you feel others will enjoy *Call the Hands* please pass it on. Our objective is to increase understanding of Australia's naval history in the community through publication of *Call the Hands* and through the Society's website.

David Michael  
President

## From the Editor

Welcome to the June edition of *Call the Hands*. The Society is working to improve our offerings including this newsletter so all feedback and thoughts are welcome. 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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## Coral Sea Veterans Mark 75 years

During the days and nights of 4-08 May 1942; a coalition Task Group of United States Navy and Royal Australian Navy ships battled against the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) for sea control of the Coral Sea to set conditions for the Imperial Japanese Army to seize Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea.

Through denying the IJN control, the Allied fleet checked the advance of Japanese forces in the Pacific. This battle marked the high water in the Japanese advance through the Pacific Theatre before the tide was turned at the Battle of Midway.

75 years later on the evening of 04 May 2017, shipmates of USS Yorktown, John Hancock, Roger Spooner and Wendell E. Thresher joined HMAS Hobart's Gordon Johnson, Bill White and Derek Holyoake as well as HMAS Australia's Norm Tame and Andrew Robertson aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid in New York City to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea.



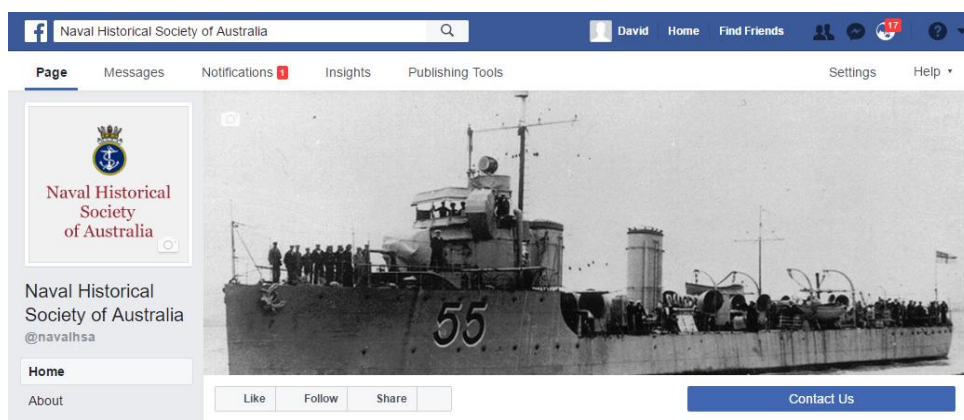
**RAN and USN Veterans of the Battle of the Coral Sea with Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister of Australia, on USS Intrepid, New York.**

**Rear Row Left to Right: John Hancock, Roger Spooner, Derek Holyoake, Malcolm Turnbull, Andrew Robertson, Bill White**

**Front Row Left to Right: Gordon Johnson, Norm Tame, Wendell E. Thrasher**

## NHSA Facebook Page

The Society has launched our Facebook page and it is available at <https://www.facebook.com/navalhsa/>. Like the page to receive updates as we post photos and other information.



## John Bastock RAN 1908-1996: Naval Artist

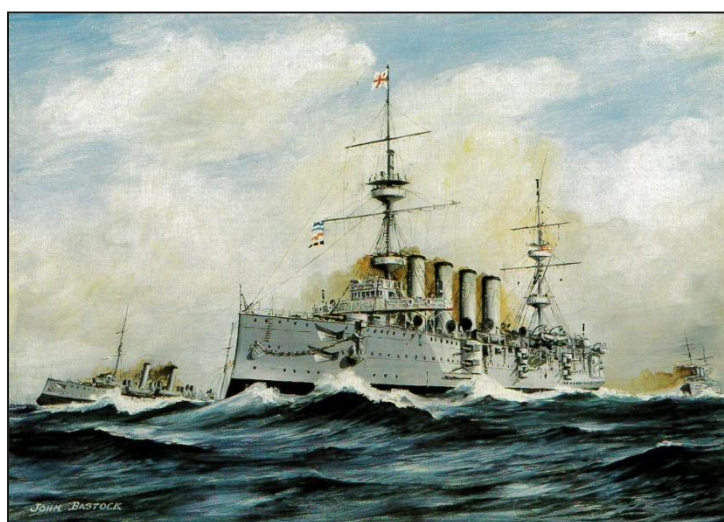
'Born in Sydney in 1908, Bastock was already drawing and painting ships and marine subjects in his schooldays. But his first years at sea were too crowded with activity to devote any time to his hobby. He served in HMAS Brisbane I on the China Station and in HMAS Melbourne I in the Mediterranean. Having served the final commission in HMAS Sydney I, John, with most of the old ship's company, sailed in S. S. Beltana to commission HMAS Canberra I at Clydebank, Scotland. On the ship's voyage to Australia, via the Cape of Good Hope, John found time in the dog-watches to take up painting.

He completed many pictures of the Canberra, some on art board, others on black velvet, depicting the vessel at night on a moonlit sea, with all lights ablaze. The art board paintings were sold to his shipmates for about 2/6d (25c) and those on velvet for about 5/- (50c).

In the years after leaving the RAN he painted many subjects and executed hundreds of drawings, diagrams and paintings of ships and wrote many articles on both ships and maritime subjects. His book, Australia's Ships of War, is well known as a work of naval reference.

Bastock was a recognised authority on the Sail/Steam era. His second book, Ships on the Australia Station, packed with photographs, drawings, diagrams and a series of his paintings of the flagships involved, has become a valuable reference work on a period of Australia's naval history of which little authentic information has ever been published.

See the full story on John at <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/obituary-john-bastock-ran-1908-1996-naval-artist/>



HMS Powerful, flagship of the Australia Station, painting by John Bastock



## HMQS “Gayundah” – Conduct Unbecoming – 1888

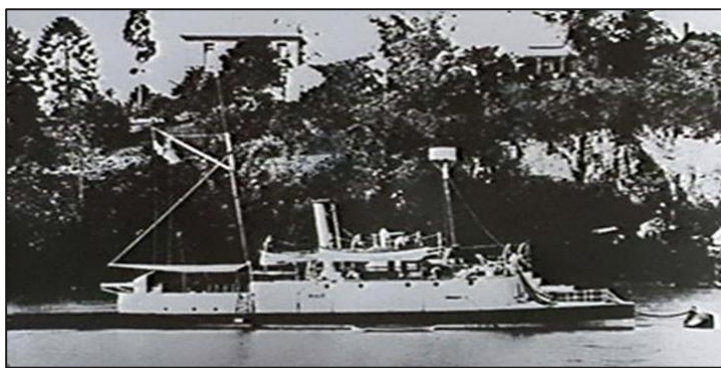
On a spring afternoon in Brisbane in October 1888, twenty armed policemen, under the command of the Commissioner of Police, marched down Edward Street and deployed to take up positions in Queens Park. This police activity, which quickly drew a large crowd, was not an exercise but was in deadly earnest. But the target of their actions was not a criminal gang nor riotous crowd, rather it was the gunboat *Gayundah*, flagship and pride of the Queensland Marine Defence Force. The police were under orders from the Colonial Secretary to take the ship, by force if necessary, and to remove its captain from command.

Commander Wright RN was in command of *Gayundah* and after a number of issues between himself and the State Government was due to leave the service at the end of his contract in late 1888. As Wright was intending to proceed on long leave, the State Government anxious to be rid of him, ordered him to hand over *Gayundah* to Lieutenant Taylor, former Captain of *Mosquito* who had been promoted to First Lieutenant of the flagship. Taylor, who held a State commission, was ordered to take command and he penned a short but polite note to Wright to this effect.

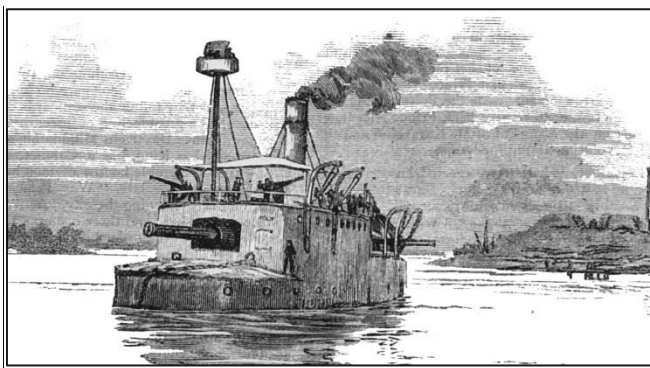
Commander Wright was not having any of it, however, and immediately placed Taylor under arrest for technical mutiny. His reasoning was that the government’s actions were tantamount to dismissal and that as he held an Imperial commission and his ship flew the White Ensign, the only person who could dismiss him was the admiral commanding the Australian Station.

The Colonial Secretary immediately contacted the Commissioner of Police and requested him to “*proceed on board the Gayundah and remove Captain Wright from the ship*”. With his men deployed, the Commissioner boarded ship accompanied by a police Inspector, the Colonial Under Secretary and a magistrate and informed the cool and collected Commander Wright that he intended to take the ship, by force if necessary. In reply, Wright read his Imperial Commission aloud. A great deal of argument ensued. Wright never lost his temper and very astutely ensured that the government party admitted that his removal was by force. Having achieved his aim he went to his cabin and wrote a letter of protest, making sure that a copy was available for the press. He then piped all hands and read to the crew the government letters and his protest and formally released Lieutenant Taylor from arrest. This done, he took leave of all hands and departed the ship

Read the full story with all the interesting details at <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/hmqs-gayundah-conduct-unbecoming-incident-1888/>



HMQS Gayundah, AWM Image



HMQS Gayundah, Sketch,  
Image from <http://www.gayundah.info/wp/>

## History in the Making

- Ex-HMAS Sydney, a former Royal Australian Navy Adelaide-class frigate, left Sydney Harbour on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017 to be towed to Western Australia for recycling. Minister for Defence Personnel Dan Tehan said the frigate will be recycled by Australian company Birdon Pty Ltd. Sydney’s journey from the Australian east coast to Henderson, Western Australia, will take up to 22 days.

- The gritty persistence of a Melbourne historian to have a forgotten group of Second World War sailors recognised finally paid off when a plaque was dedicated to them at the Australian War Memorial on 4 May. [http://news.navy.gov.au/en/May2017/Events/3718/Yachtsmen-plaque-dedicated-at-Memorial.htm#.WRJZs4F\\_XYV](http://news.navy.gov.au/en/May2017/Events/3718/Yachtsmen-plaque-dedicated-at-Memorial.htm#.WRJZs4F_XYV)
- Indonesian authorities believe that they have caught one of the ships scavenging WWII wrecks in South east Asia. They allege that the 8,000 gt Chinese grab dredger *Chuan Hong 68* was responsible for illegally scavenging the wrecks of the pre-WWII Japanese destroyer *Sagiri*, plus the passenger vessels *Hiyoshi Maru* and *Katori Maru* the steamship *Igara* and the tanker *Seven Skies*. It is the second time that maritime authorities have caught the *Chuan Hong 68* in as many months. On April 20, the Indonesian Navy detained her in the waters off Natuna in the Riau Islands on the suspicion that she was engaged in illegal dredging. She escaped on April 22 and fled to Malaysia, where she was detained once again by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency.

The full story is available at <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/indonesia-captures-maritime-grave-robbers>

- A museum in China has put the country's first ever nuclear-powered submarine on display in celebration of the 68th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Navy. There are only four other countries that have retained a nuclear powered submarine after it has been decommissioned. As of April 25, tourists have been able to explore the submarine and get first hand experience on what it's like onboard. Qingdao Naval Museum was built in 1989 and is the only museum in the country that shows visitors how the Chinese Navy has developed over time.



- Almost 4,000 thousand servicemen aboard twelve ships took part in the 2017 Fleet Week New York Parade of Ships in New York Harbor. Five U.S. Navy ships, four U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) Yard Patrol boats (YPs), two U.S. Coast Guard cutters (USCGC), and one Royal Canadian Navy ship were present for the opening ceremony on May 24. Also included were USS Kearsarge (LHD 3), Legend-class cutter USCGC Hamilton; Kingston-class coastal defence vessel HMCS Glace Bay; four USNA YPs, from Annapolis, Maryland; oceanographic research ship RV Neil Armstrong; Ticonderoga-class cruisers USS San Jacinto and USS Monterey (CG 61); Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Lassen; Keeper-class cutter USCGC Katherine Walker; Cyclone-class patrol coastal ship USS Zephyr and Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport USNS Yuma

## Readers Forum

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Dear Editor,  
Please find attached an image from my father's collection.  
He was a PO Stoker in the commissioning crew of HMAS Sydney (3)  
Kerry Kerr

The image features Mrs J.A. Beasley, wife of the Australian High Commissioner to the UK, unveiling Sydney's official badge during its commissioning and naming ceremony on 16 December 1948.

Looking on is Captain R.R. Dowling, DSO, RAN, commanding officer.





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## HMAS Sydney II

In April 2017 LCDR Vic Geoffrey OAM RANR Rtd provided the Society with images from a family album which came into his possession. These were of HMAS Sydney 2 underway to the New Hebrides on 17 July 1941 to land Australian troops. Their objective was to ensure this French colony remained under Vichy French control. Prior to this Sydney had conducted escort duties to New Zealand and a re-supply run to Noumea. She returned to Sydney on 25 July 1941. Sadly the ship was lost just four months later.

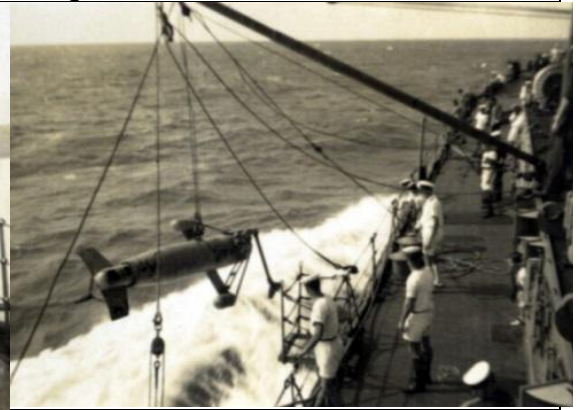
### HMAS Sydney II Images: 17 July 1942: Approaching New Hebrides



Forecastle Party



Soldiers on Deck



Paravane (mine protection) operations

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Dear Sir,

Enclosed is some information about HDML1321 Russell Smith is a sub-branch member of Woolgoolga RSL.25km north of Coffs Harbour. Also retired Captain Errol Stevens is a sub-branch member, he was in HMAS Melbourne when it collided with the Frank E Evans off Manilla in 1969.I haven't seen them for some years as I have moved away but I presume they are still with us. Russell Smith had a story in the Woolgoolga "The Advertiser" and I enhanced the story with some pictures.

Alan Walker  
11 April 2017



Courage: Crew members of HDML 1321 with Dennis (right)

#### Ian McPhedran Defence Writer

JUST before midnight on April 11, 1945, a heavily armed navy patrol boat launched four folding kayaks near an island called Muschu off the north coast of New Guinea.

The "fold boats" contained eight members of the mostly Australian top-secret "Z" Special Unit whose 24-hour mission, codenamed Operation Copper, was to chart the extent of Japanese defences and capture a prisoner for interrogation.

Sapper Edgar "Mick" Dennis, from Maroubra, was the only survivor of the ill-fated operation. Yesterday, Mr Dennis, 92, was reunited with two crew members of the boat known as Harbour Defence Motor Launch (HDML) 1321.

Russell Smith, 87, from Mulway near Coffs Harbour, was



Reynolds

HDML 1321's second-in-command and South Australian Ron Reynolds, also 87, was her radio operator. Those who died were Lieutenants Alan Gubbay, 22, and Tom Barnes, 27, Sergeant Malcolm Franou, 26, Lance-Corporal Spencer Walklate, 27, Signallers Michael Hagger, 23 and John Chandler, 23 and Private Roy Eagleton, 20.

Four of the men drowned after trying to paddle for help — and three were captured, tortured and then beheaded by Japanese troops.

"They were hunting me. Every time they got close I would knock the first few over and go bush," Mr Dennis said. He mounted a one-man guer-

rilla campaign, killing dozens of Japanese troops before he decided to paddle back to the mainland on a gangway plank he had stolen.

The plank became water-logged and after 10 hours of swimming alongside it, menaced by the unmistakable shape of sharks beneath him, he washed ashore on the New Guinea coast and resumed his one-man war.

"I am still a bit windy of the salt water," he said.

Mr Reynolds described Mick Dennis as a "soldier superb".

"If he was not the soldier he was, he could not have survived," he said.

When Mr Dennis emerged from his ordeal he still had three full magazines of ammunition and had fired just 80 rounds. "Everything I aimed at I hit and I killed about 20 and wounded a lot more."

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Dear Editor,

Apropos your Trivia Corner question regarding the first RAN ship to sink a submarine in WW2, I offer the attachment as additional context.

Steve Youll

Commander Youll's attachment has been published as Occasional Paper 9 and circulated with this edition of *Call the Hands*.

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Dear Editor,

I enjoy *Call the Hands* and think it is both a great initiative and a valuable source of information. Accordingly, I am somewhat tentative in offering a correction to one of the photo captions in Issue 8. The caption to a photo of an aircraft being launched from a turret in WW1 is captioned as a Sopwith 2F1 Camel. In fact, this fairly well-known photo is of Sopwith (11/2) Ship Strutter N5644 piloted by Flt Sub Lt Simonson RNAS being launched from Q turret ramp of HMAS Australia on 8 March 1918. Hopefully this will enable you to correct the NNSA records and collection.

Joe Barr



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## This Month in History

21 Jun 1913	The battle-cruiser HMAS AUSTRALIA commissioned at Portsmouth, UK.
19 Jun 1919	A HMAS SYDNEY (I) landing party put down a civil disturbance in Penang
02 Jun 1924	HMAS GERANIUM, (survey vessel), embarked a Fairey HID seaplane. GERANIUM was the first Australian ship to use aircraft for surveying.
20 Jun 1925	The, surveying vessel, HMAS MORESBY a former 24 class convoy sloop HMS SILVIO, was commissioned at Sydney.
09 Jun 1928	Captain Charles Kingsford Smith, in his aircraft Southern Cross, completed the first trans-Pacific flight. The aircraft was guided in the last leg by the RAN's wireless station at Garden Island, Sydney, which relayed messages through Australian destroyers stationed in the Tasman and Coral Seas.
01 Jun 1942	HMAS Kuttabul lost with 21 lives during Japanese midget submarines attack on Sydney Harbour
17 Jun 1942	HMAS NESTOR sunk following enemy action with the loss of 4 lives.
17 Jun 1943	HMA Ships GAWLER and LISMORE and two motor minesweepers, rescued 1353 survivors from troop ship YOMA, sunk by a German submarine off Libya.
06 Jun 1944	The D-Day landings took place on the beaches of Normandy.
11 Jun 1944	HMAS MATAFELE, (stores carrier), vanished without trace on a voyage from Townsville to Milne Bay, QLD. The vessel carried a crew of 37.
10 Jun 1945	HMA ships; SHROPSHIRE, HOBART, ARUNTA, LACHLAN, HAWKESBURY, WESTRALIA, MANOORA, and KANIMBLA, engaged in the invasion of Brunei.
17 Jun 1968	HMAS HOBART accidentally attacked by a US Air Force F-4 fighter, off Cap Lay, Vietnam with the loss of 2 lives.
07 Jun 1970	Two RAN Skyhawk aircraft, (LCDR J. P. Park, USN, & LEUT E. Kavanaugh, RAN) set Australian distance record flying 3379 kms in four and a half hours.
07 Jun 1985	The Naval Forces, (Women's Services), Regulations were repealed and all members of the RANNS and WRANS were amalgamated with the RAN.



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/>

## Photo of the Month



**HMAS Vampire - NHSA Collection**

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

## HMAS Vampire II

HMAS Vampire, the third Daring Class destroyer for the Royal Australian Navy, was ordered from Cockatoo Island Dockyard on 3 December 1946. Fabrication commenced in September 1948, and the keel was laid on 1 July 1952. On 27 October 1956, HMAS Vampire was launched by Lady Slim, wife of the Governor-General, Sir William Slim, KG, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, GBE, DSO, MC, KStJ. Vampire underwent three years of fitting out following her launching. HMAS Vampire commissioned at Sydney on 23 June 1959 under the command of Captain Eric J. Peel, DSC, RAN.



In early 1970 Vampire paid off on 29 June 1970 to undergo an extended refit. This half-life modernisation, which took until November 1971, saw Vampire receive updated gun turrets and fire control systems, new aircraft warning and navigation radar, plus replacement of a major portion of her superstructure. In early 1980 *Vampire* assumed her new role as a training ship. The Royal Australian Navy's 75th Anniversary was a fitting year to mark the end of Vampire's career. In April 1986 a decision was made to decommission her, and after a final cruise to Cairns, Townsville, Suva, Apia and Auckland, Vampire made a ceremonial entry into Sydney on 24 June 1986. The last of the Australian Daring Class destroyers paid off on 13 August 1986 after a 27 year career during which she steamed 808,026 nautical miles. On decommissioning Vampire was gifted to the Australian National Maritime Museum where she continues to be a popular tourist attraction for overseas visitors and former members of her ship's company.



## HMAS Perth comes to life online

The online game 'World of Warships' allows people to battle with fully rendered 3D models of famous warships from WWI to WWII. They have included HMAS Perth as their only RAN vessel to date. The rendered ship is impressive and a beautiful tribute to HMAS Perth.



## Trivia Corner

1. Which RAN Ships crest is shown?



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

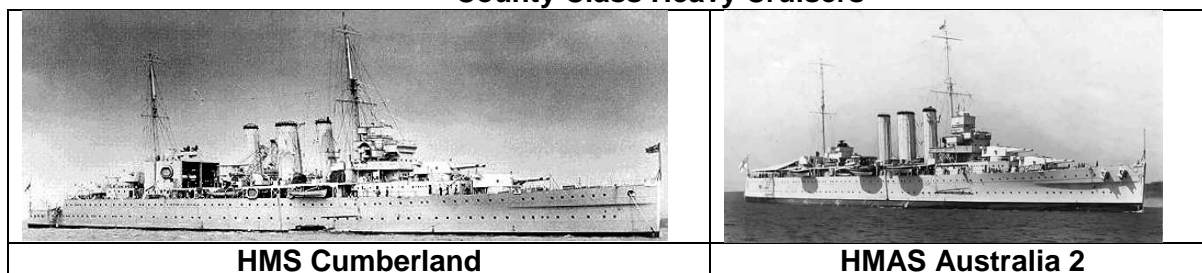
The answer to these questions will be provided in next month's newsletter.

## Answer to last month's question:

*Q. Major modifications to HMAS Ships Australia (2) and HMAS Canberra (1) dramatically changed their appearance. What was this change?*

A. During acceptance trials of earlier build County Class cruisers of the Kent Class (HM Ships Kent, Berwick, Cornwall, Cumberland and Suffolk) serious problems were caused by funnels being too low. Smoke interfered with the operation of equipment and the ship's company. Later modifications resulted in the Royal Navy ship funnels being increased in height by 15 feet. Sister ships, HMAS Australia 2 and HMAS Canberra were subsequently increased by 18 feet before completion.

### County Class Heavy Cruisers



## Society Matters

### Naval Historical Review

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

### Tours of Garden Island, Sydney

Tours of Garden Island provided by Society volunteers on Thursdays are very popular with organized groups. The cost is \$20 per person. Should you be interested, call or e-mail the Tour Coordinators, [tours@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:tours@navyhistory.org.au)

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/>

### Upcoming Member Events

Date	Event	Details
15 Jun 2017	NHSA Presentation  Sail Training in the Navy and Civilian Sectors	Thursday, 15 June 2017 at 2:00 pm Meeting Room. 57 Lisle St.; Mount Claremont W.A
20 Jun 2017	NHSA Presentation  False Flags : Disguised German Raiders of World War II – A talk by Stephen Robinson, author	Tuesday, 20 June 2017 at 6:00 pm Combined Services Club Level 3, 5/7 Barrack St, Sydney
26 Jun 17	NHSA Presentation  Massive Storm Event Encountered off New Zealand on April 29th-May 2nd, 1952 whilst aboard HMAS Culgoa	Monday, 26 June 2017 at 7:00 pm  Waverley RSL 161 Coleman Parade Glen Waverley (Melways 71C3)

## Subscription

For those wishing to unsubscribe, simply e-mail the editor at [callthehands@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:callthehands@navyhistory.org.au)