



# Call the Hands

Issue No. 55

August 2021



## From the President

Welcome to this fifty fifth edition of *Call the Hands*. I trust you find it of interest as well as the accompanying occasional papers.

As was the case in the second quarter of 2020 lockdown in Sydney, Society volunteers are once again doing their utmost to maintain services to members and the community by remote means. Although the majority of services continue, response times to people seeking research assistance are experiencing delays due the lack of library and archive access. On the positive side, development work to provide additional tours and cruises post lockdown, is progressing well as is research on and the writing of various papers to publish in the coming months.

As we value fresh ideas and perspectives on all aspects of Australia's rich naval history you are encouraged to bring to our attention matters you feel important and in need of greater exposure. This could take the form of your own work or just identification of an issue. As an example, a keen interest in the early maps of Garden Island showing the tennis court led Society archivist Colin Randall to enquire about the origins of lawn tennis in Australia. He then set out to test a hypothesis that tennis was first played in Australia on Garden Island. His findings were presented via a Zoom presentation on 27 July. This presentation will be uploaded to the website as a podcast in coming weeks along with back copies of other Zoom presentations.

Without the commitment of volunteers across the country, in Sydney and in the Chapters, the Society would not function. We now have 50 active volunteers plus members serving on Chapter committees on our books. Eleven of these live outside Sydney working on such things as e-book production, research and writing, website content and social media. A current need is to grow the number of volunteers assisting in the Sydney office. There is a range of interesting but not demanding administrative functions to be done. We also need additional tour guides to assist with the growing range of history tours to be delivered post lockdown. If you have wish to learn more, follow this link to the flyer listing the [positions available](#). We would like to hear from you or others with an interest.

Finally, a reminder to members who have not yet renewed their [membership](#) for 2021, now is a good time as your access to the members area of the website will cease on 15 August. We appreciate your support.

Kind regards,

David Michael

## Support the Society

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



Naval Historical Society  
of Australia

Naval Historical Society  
Garden Island Defence Precinct  
Building 25  
Locked Bag 7005  
Liverpool NSW 1871

Web [navyhistory.org.au](http://navyhistory.org.au)  
Email [secretary@navyhistory.org.au](mailto:secretary@navyhistory.org.au)  
Phone +61 2 9537 0034  
ABN 71 094 118 434  
Patron Chief of Navy

## In this Edition

Page	
1	From the President
2	New NHSA Podcasts online
3	HMAS Derwent and Combat Survivability
4	Seacat: Surface to Air Missile
5	Biography of Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths
7	A Warship named Bradman
8	HMAS <i>Perth</i> I and her cat 'Red Lead'
9	Video of the Month
10	Photo of the Month
11	News in Brief
12	This Month in History
13	Occasional Papers
13	Society Matters: Osborne House
14	J Class Submarines Based at Geelong
14	Ex HMAS <i>Otama</i> saved from sinking

## New NHSA Podcasts online

The NHSA has recently placed new podcasts on our website. They include a wide range of stories and are worth taking the time to listen to.



### 39 destroyers have served the RAN; their stories

This talk was a preview of a book that Mr Harry Adlam was writing, to be called 'Wallaby Destroyers', about the 39 destroyers that had served up until that time ...



### Before Federation in 1901 the colonies of Australia maintained their own mini-navies

Mr Harry Adlam gives an informed overview of the colonial navies that were supported by the ships of the Empire's Royal Navy's Australian Station, established in 1859. The separate colonies each ...



### HMS Victorious had a proud record of service in World War 2. John Williams served aboard her and this presentation gives his personal recollections of this carrier in action

HMS Victorious was the third Illustrious-class aircraft carrier after Illustrious and Formidable. Her commissioning was delayed until 1941 due to the greater need for escort

Others podcasts include:

- Gallipoli and Sea power
- D-Day commando on Sword Beach by Commander Jim Speed DSC, RAN
- HMAS Wagga, not Wagga Wagga
- Capt. L.M Hinchliffe DSC, RAN, talking about his experiences in the pre-war Navy.
- The four funnel cruisers of the Royal Australian Navy

[Link to Podcasts](#)

## HMAS Derwent and Combat Survivability

HMAS *Derwent*, was the fourth of her class of Type 12 (River class) antisubmarine frigates commissioned on 30 April 1964. After a long and distinguished career *Derwent* decommissioned at HMAS *Stirling* on 8 August 1994. Her hull was later used by scientists from the Defence Science and Technology Organisation to conduct a sequence of research experiments known as the Ship Survivability Enhancement Program (SSEP). The SSEP involved a series of fire, smoke, weapons effects and electronic experiments, culminating in blast and fragmentation tests. The data was then used to enhance the combat survivability of ships and their crews to a range of weapons and associated threat effects.

On completion of the test program which had inflicted greater cumulative damage than originally estimated, *Derwent* had been reduced to a hulk. Given the cost to make the ship safe as a dive site which was deemed to be beyond the then Defence Budget, *Derwent* was towed to a position 12 nautical miles west of Rottnest Island where she was scuttled on 21 December 1995, in deep water.



HMAS Derwent in Cockburn Sound, WA during in a series of DSTO battle damage trials

### Further Reading

J.S. Howe, [Ship Survivability Enhancement Program: Management of the Program](#), DSTO, 1997

Ross Gillett, [River Class Frigates in the RAN – a Brief History](#), Naval Historical Review, December 2007

Sea Power Centre Australia, [HMAS Derwent History](#)



## Seacat: Surface to Air Missile

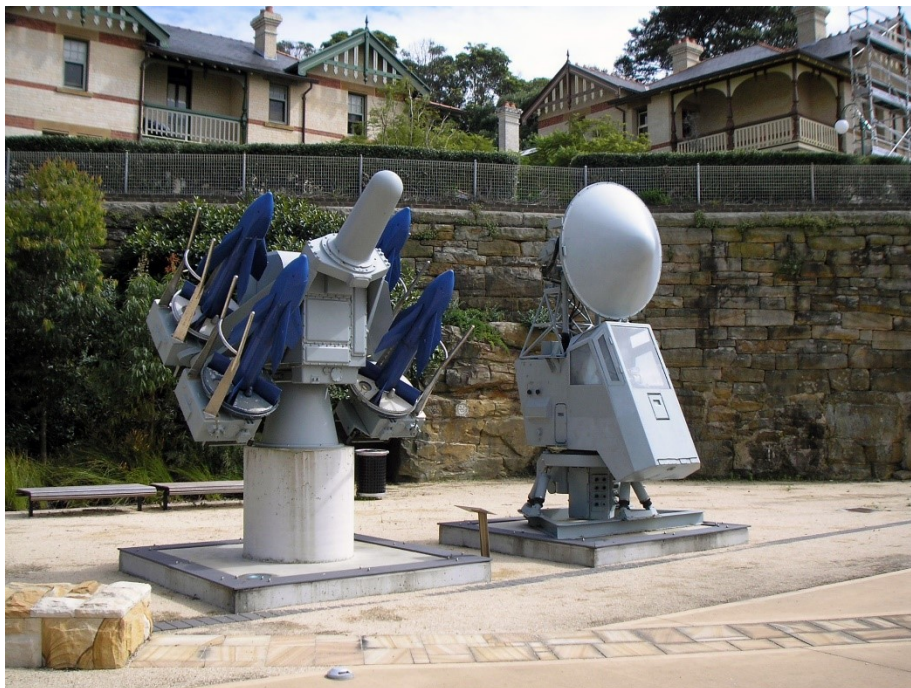
Seacat was a British short-range surface-to-air missile system intended to replace the Bofors 40 mm gun aboard warships of all sizes. It was the world's first operational shipboard point-defence missile system and was designed so that the Bofors guns could be replaced with minimum modification to the recipient vessel. Designed in the late 1950s it first entered Royal Navy service in 1961.



Destroyer Escort RAN Image

Seacat was acquired for the Royal Australian Navy as part of Australia's modernisation programme and fitted in all six River-class destroyer escorts. HMAS *Derwent* had the distinction of being the first RAN vessel to fire the missile on 25 May 1964, less than a month after commissioning. HMAS *Torrens* was the last ship to live fire the system prior to its removal from service. This was also the only time three missiles were on the launcher and fired in sequence, resulting in one miss and two hits on towed targets. HMAS *Torrens* decommissioned in 1998. Seacat anti-aircraft missile firing from RAN

Seacat was a subsonic missile powered by a two-stage solid fuel rocket motor. It was steered in flight by four cruciformly arranged swept wings and stabilised by four small tail fins. It was guided by command line-of-sight (CLOS) via a radio-link from a remote operator in the Director adjacent the launcher. The warhead carried both contact and proximity fuses. The launcher carried four missiles grouped round the transmitting aerial. It could be reloaded with four weapons in less than three minutes.



surface to air missile launcher and director, RAN Heritage Centre. RAN image

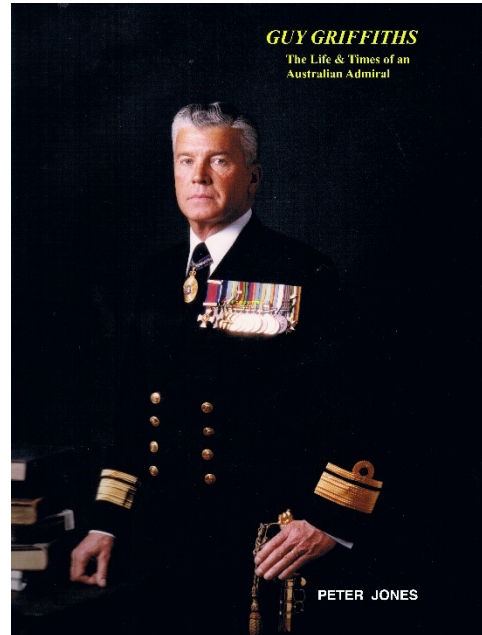
Seacat

## Biography of Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths

Guy Griffiths: The Life & Times of an Australian Admiral  
By Peter Jones  
Australian Scholarly Publishing

On 27 May the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Michael Noonan launched the biography of Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths AO DSO DSC RAN. The guest of honour was the 98 year old Guy Griffiths. Earlier this year Guy had defied his years and taken part unaided in Sydney's Anzac Day March. In attendance at the launch were family, serving and former sailors and especially old shipmates including Lionel Mead from the World War II cruiser HMAS *Shropshire*. Guy Griffiths is one of the RAN's most decorated admirals and fittingly most of the Navy's serving admirals were at the launch.

The biography is written by NHSA member, retired Vice Admiral Peter Jones. While members will be broadly aware of Admiral Griffiths' remarkable career, the biography comprehensively charts Guy's life, growing up on a Hunter Valley vineyard then joining the Navy as a 13 year old cadet midshipman. As a midshipman Guy survived the sinking of the battle cruiser HMS *Repulse* off Singapore in 1941 and went on to earn his DSC as an Air Defence Officer in *Shropshire* which successfully countered the kamikaze threat during the Philippines Campaign. Guy Griffiths served twice in the Korean War in the aircraft carrier *Sydney* and then the destroyer *Anzac*. He later commissioned the guided missile destroyer *Hobart* which was the first RAN destroyer to serve in the Vietnam War. His final sea command was the aircraft carrier *Melbourne* which during his tenure took part in the relief operations in Darwin following Cyclone Tracey.



After his naval retirement Guy Griffiths took on a full and diverse range of activities to employ his talents. Notably he served as NHSA President and the President of the Australian Veterans' and Defence Services' Council to promote improvements to the welfare of veterans.

Guy Griffiths' biography shines a light on the service of the many officers and sailors he served with over his 42 years service. It is clear from his biography that this commandierie was one of the highlights of his distinguished service. Indeed, the day after the book launch he spoke to 1,000 midshipmen at the nearby Australian Defence Force Academy. His talk focussed on and the deeds of his shipmates and for leaders to promote teamwork in all their formations.

*Mike Carlton, author of Flagship & First Victory* has written that Guy's life "is an unmatched record of courage, dedication and achievement. With characteristic modesty, Guy was reluctant for his story to be told but Peter Jones has done him proud. This is the enthralling biography of a remarkable sailor and a genuinely great Australian.

For more details see <https://scholarly.info/book/guy-griffiths-the-life-times-of-an-australian-admiral-paperback/>



## A Warship named Bradman

One would have thought that the Australian Fleet would have been proud to have a warship named *Bradman* to honour our most famous cricketer, Sir Donald Bradman. But no, there has never been an HMAS *Bradman*. However, perhaps surprisingly, there was an HMS *Bradman*. So why did the English name a warship after the nemesis of their cricketers? To find the answer we must visit the fishing town of Grimsby, situated on the North Sea.

Grimsby has an Australian connection being not far from where James Cook grew up and also where he started his sea going career in North Sea colliers. Later Grimsby became one of the busiest fishing ports in England. One of the fishing companies in the 1930s was a family business called Crampins and the family, like many Yorkshire folk, were keen cricket fans. There is an old saying 'When Yorkshire plays well – England plays well' so it is not surprising that a fleet of fishing trawlers, built in Yorkshire, should be named after leading cricketers.

In the late 1930s Crampins began a building program to modernise their fleet of steam trawlers. This became known as 'The Cricketer Fleet' with each ship being named after a cricketer who had played for England or Australia in an Ashes series. Fishermen and cricketers have one thing in common, they are both superstitious. In particular, trawlermen insist that seven is their lucky number and so each of the vessels was named after players with seven letters in their surnames, and this explains the exclusion of such greats as Sir Leonard Hutton. Thus, the new trawlers were: Larwood (England), Hammond (England), Jardine (England), Gregory (Australia), and of course, Bradman (Australia). As a term of cricketing endearment, it has been said that an Englishman's ideal of an Australian is a sunburnt Yorkshireman.



The only known photo of GY358 (GY are ship registration letters for the port of Grimsby) Bradman before commissioning into the RN

The trawler *Bradman* of 452 tons was built by Cochrane & Sons on the River Ouse at Selby in Yorkshire. Selby, while some distance from the sea, was once the home of a large shipbuilding industry. *Bradman* was coal-fired with a triple expansion steam engine and her streamlined hull gave a very respectable top speed of 14 knots. She was launched on 31 October 1936 and less than three years later, on 26 August 1939, requisitioned by the Admiralty and commissioned in

October of that year as HMS *Bradman*.

When war broke out in 1939 the Admiralty requisitioned some 400 trawlers and drifters for what was known as the Royal Navy Patrol Service, their crews being enlisted into the RNR. The trawlers were modified, having guns fitted and limited anti-submarine equipment installed. *Bradman* was strengthened and fitted with a single 4-inch gun forward and down aft 2 x 0.303 Lewis guns. Depth charge throwers were fitted together with ammunition storage and an ASDIC installed. Additional accommodation was provided for the now increased crew of 30 men.

As fishermen were none too keen on naval discipline some RN and RNR officers and rating were transferred to these vessels and communications numbers came from civilian employment. When the 'Cricketers' were requisitioned in August 1939 *Bradman* gained an experienced fisherman, Jack Mawer as Skipper (later LCDR J. Mawer MID RNR) and Lieutenant Arthur Norman Blundell RNR in command (later LCDR A. N. Blundell RD RNR). The new CO had joined the RNR in 1930 so it is assumed he was a professional seafarer. Before joining *Bradman*, LEUT Blundell had commanded a Dutch coaster which had rescued 126 men from Dunkirk. He would later go on to command another three RN ships before retiring from naval service in 1949.

HMS *Bradman*'s first skirmish with the enemy came in November 1939 when she was attacked by aircraft in the North Sea, but without damage. On New Year's Day, 01 January 1940, when off Lowestoft *Bradman* suffered the indignity of being rammed by the sloop HMS *Hastings*, possibly through no fault attributed to the armed trawler as *Hastings* seemed rather fond of collisions at this time in her career. *Bradman* was obliged to enter dock for repairs. Back at sea on 03 February she was again attacked by enemy aircraft but with little damage.

On 20 April 1940, *Bradman* joined with her sisters of the 22nd Anti-Submarine Strike Force in the Shetland Isles and sailed in support of the ill-fated attempt to stop the German invasion of Norway. *Bradman* and *Hammond* were involved in ferrying ashore troops and stores from the larger ships anchored in the fjords. Bombing and strafing continued for three days but on ANZAC Day, 25 April, their luck ran out and both *Bradman* and *Hammond* were sunk, but fortunately with no loss of life. Regrettably, all five of the 'Cricketers' were lost in this campaign. *Bradman*'s 19-year-old ASDIC Operator, Seaman Robert Roberts, swam back through ice-cold water to the abandoned ship, to rescue their canine mascot 'Sailor' and her puppies.

This was not the last of these fine ships as all the 'Cricketers' were raised and put into service with the German Navy. *Bradman* was salvaged on 11 July 1940; renamed *Friese* and based at Molde on the central coast of Norway where she was used as an anti-submarine patrol vessel. On 18 August 1944 while on convoy escort duties off North Cape, close to the Russian port of Murmansk, she was torpedoed and sunk by the Russian submarine *M-201*. All 32 of her complement were lost in this attack.

Further information on this interesting ship can be found in *HMS Bradman: The Story of the Cricketer Trawler Fleet* by Grahame Cumming & Kenneth Newman. This small book was surprisingly published in Sydney in 2003, a copy of which is held in the Society's library. It also contains a useful annex with details of all Australian fishing vessels requisitioned by the RAN in both world wars.

## HMAS Perth (I) and her cat 'Red Lead'

As the last liberty boat was leaving before HMAS *Perth* departed from Sydney on 30 November 1941, two young Able Seamen, Bob Collins and Ray Firminger, were making their farewells. Ray's wife and his young daughter Pat, who was cuddling a tiny grey and white tabby kitten, were saying goodbye. Bob was chatting to the little girl when she reached out to him and told him he should take the kitten. Bob was taken aback but as the liberty boat was about to leave, he accepted the gift and hurriedly stuffed the kitten into his jacket.

King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions forbade pets aboard HM Ships, but in the interest of morale a blind eye was often turned to this restriction. To the larrikin Collins this was a challenge and as he knew pets were forbidden, this could incur the wrath of his disciplinarian Executive Officer, Acting Commander Reid. Where to keep the cat until it found its sea legs was a problem solved by use of the paint locker. In those days when ships were primarily made of steel, there was a need for continuous maintenance of surfaces against the effects of corrosion. Teams were constantly chipping, scraping and wire brushing metal surfaces and then painting them with a primary coat of red lead. Ships had many gallons of this ubiquitous paint which is now known to be injurious to health. What could be more likely to happen in a crowded paint locker than the cat knocking over a pot of red lead, leaving incriminating paw marks. Hence the name Red Lead was acquired.

Bob Collins still had the tricky task of gaining acceptance for his feline friend and a cunning plan was devised. Hec Waller was thought to be favourable to pets as in *Stuart* they had a monkey 'Chico' as mascot. During this period *Perth* was on the 'ferry service' escorting ships between Sydney and Fremantle, sometimes this could be exciting when doing high speed runs with *Queen Mary* and *Aquitania*, but usually it was with ships of lesser importance and with reduced speed. After leaving Fremantle in good weather, when he knew the Captain was on the Bridge and thought to be in a favourable mood, Collins introduced Red Lead to the command by letting her wander around until seen by the Captain. Thankfully, he seemed quite amused to see the kitten and rolled up some signal paper for it to play with. After this Red Lead was allowed to roam free and Collins was assigned her guardian.

When HMAS *Perth* was sunk Bob Collins took the plunge into the sea hanging on to his beloved Red Lead. Bob was to survive but Red Lead was last seen clawing on to a piece of wooden wreckage.

### Red Lead lives on

There was of course another ship of this name. HMAS *Perth* (II) was the lead ship of three American-built guided missile destroyers which provided admirable support to the RAN for more than three decades, especially during the Vietnam War. Within this ship there was however no mention of our feline friend.

HMAS *Perth* (III) is the last of eight Anzac Class frigates and it is in her that the tradition of Red Lead survives. On her bridge there is a picture of Red Lead and on the companion way leading to the bridge are to be found her tell-tale paw marks. To complete the picture the wardroom door has a cat flap, although no cat has been known to pass through it and new pets are not encouraged.





There is one surprising anomaly as Red Lead shown in the picture is a (lucky) black cat while in 'Cruiser' and 'Shipmates' she is mentioned as a grey and white tabby. 'Shipmates' notes a further reference to the memoirs of another *Perth* veteran, Signaller Bill Bee. Bill wrote 'All Men Back – All One Big Mistake' which mentions Red Lead but does not allude to her colour.

Unfortunately, Bob Collins is no longer with us, but two other survivors (SBLT Gavin Campbell and Able Seaman Frank McGovern) stated in 2014 that she was ginger. An Australian National War Memorial tribute also speaks of *Perth*'s black cat. Whatever her colour, and black she was not, she was a remarkable feline who helps us remember the proud deeds of those who have gone before.



Red Lead on HMAS Perth III

## Video of the Month

A reunion was held at HARS, Albion Park, on 20 June 2021 to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rescue of 99 Vietnamese refugees, now known as 'MG99' from their stricken vessel.

The reunion and rescue story were recently featured on Channel 10s 'Sunday Project' show.

[Watch the video](#)



## Photo of the Month



Stripping it down, amphibious biplane A9-6 wrecked on HMAS AUSTRALIA II 1934  
Read the [story](#) behind this incident.

## News in Brief

### Royal Australian Navy trials Camcopter VTOL UAV as part of Exercise Talisman Sabre

During the exercise HMAS Ballarat carried an S-100 Schiebel Camcopter in addition to its MH-60R helicopter. A small detachment from 822x squadron from the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm conducted trials with the 3.1m long rotorcraft as part of the Exercise



The S-100 operates by day and by night, under adverse weather conditions, with a beyond line-of-sight capability out to 200 km over land and sea. Its carbon fibre and titanium fuselage provides capacity for a wide range of payload/endurance combinations up to a service ceiling of 5,500 m/18,000 ft. In a typical configuration it carries a 34-kg payload up to 10 hours.



### Last HMAS Armidale I survivor passes away

Victor 'Ray' Leonard, the last survivor of the corvette HMAS *Armidale I*, sunk in action in 1942, has died in Victoria.

*Armidale* was lost in a fight for survival against Japanese aircraft on December 1 in the Timor Sea. Her demise was distinguished not only by the resolve of her ship's company, who fought their ship to the end, but also by the bravery of 18-year-old Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean, who returned to his 20mm Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun after the 'abandon ship' order had been given.

He went down with the ship, and 78 years later, on December 1, 2021, a long fight to have Sheean's bravery recognised with a Victoria Cross succeeded.

Dr Leonard was a part of that fight.

Most of *Armidale*'s sailors, and those Dutch soldiers she had taken off Timor, died with the ship. But 49 of the 149 on board survived.

They took to the shattered boats and Carley floats in the tropical seas, and for several days, battled for survival, seeing many of those on board die. Dr Leonard was among those who made it back to Darwin. At the time, Dr Leonard had only been in the Navy for a year and a month. It had been a fierce and bloody fight, but it did not deter him. He continued to serve in the RAN until December 5, 1945, by which time he was a 24-year-old able seaman.





## This Month in History

August 1875	CDRE James Goodenough, RN, commander of the Australia Squadron 1873-75, died from wounds sustained from poisoned arrows, fired by Santa Cruz Islanders.
August 1909	British Admiralty's hard-nosed opposition to the idea of Dominion navies suddenly changed. Admiralty now expressed the opinion that each Dominion should have 'a distinct fleet unit' comprising a battle-cruiser, three light cruisers, six destroyers, and three submarines, plus auxiliaries to be manned by Australians. This gave support for Australian moves to create an Australian Navy blue-water force.
August 1915	The Dutch schooner <i>Lillian</i> , collided with HMAS <i>Melbourne</i> during a storm at St Lucia. <i>Melbourne's</i> whaler was stove in, and her davits and gun mounts damaged.
August 1917	'When a submarine is sighted, I am going for her,' signaled CMDR Warren, RAN, commanding HMAS <i>Parramatta</i> , in the Red Sea. Obviously impressed by Lord Nelson's fighting spirit.
August 1928	HMAS <i>Australia</i> sailed from Portsmouth on her maiden voyage to Australia.
August 1935	The decommissioned <i>Marguerite</i> and <i>Mallow</i> were sunk by gunfire and explosives off Sydney
August 1940	HMAS <i>Hobart's</i> , amphibian aircraft, made a solo bombing raid on the Italian airfield at Zeila, Somaliland. Italian bombers retaliated by straddling <i>Hobart</i> with bombs.
August 1942	Engaged in the Battle of Savo Island, the cruiser HMAS <i>Canberra</i> , (CAPT F. E. Getting, RAN), was mortally damaged in a surprise night sortie by ADML Mikawa's Cruiser Squadron. <i>Canberra</i> was hit by torpedoes and point-blank gunfire. 10 officers and 74 ratings, including her commanding officer, were killed. CANBERRA was sunk by American destroyers when the extent of her damage was realized. The US Ships <i>Astoria</i> , <i>Quincy</i> , and <i>Vincennes</i> , (cruisers), were also lost in the battle.
August 1945	The RAN destroyed RAAF Vulture Vengeance A27-627 by explosives after it crash landed on 30/07/45. The aircraft had suffered an explosion in flight, followed by engine failure causing the pilot to force land on the mud bank near the western passage opposite of Fairhaven, Western Port Bay.
August 1951	HMAS <i>Sydney</i> with HMAS <i>Tobruk</i> in company as her escort departed Sydney for Korea and arrived in Japan on 19 September 1951. Squadrons embarked were 805 (Sea Furies), 808 (Sea Furies) and 817 (Fireflies).
August 1962	HMAS <i>Tide Austral</i> commissioned at Southampton. She was built for the RAN but loaned to the UK and served as RFA <i>Tide Austral</i> from completion in 1955 to 1962 when the RAN decided that it did not need an oiler in service. In 1962 the RAN decided to commission her into the RAN. She was renamed HMAS <i>Supply</i> in Sept 1962.
August 1967	HMAS <i>Platypus</i> , the new RAN submarine base, was commissioned at Neutral Bay, Sydney, conjointly with the Australian Fourth Submarine Squadron.
August 1972	HMAS <i>Parramatta</i> gained the distinction of being the 1000th vessel to enter the Captain Cook graving dock in Sydney since it commissioned in 1945.
August 1980	HMAS <i>Fremantle</i> , the first of 14 Fremantle class patrol boats ordered for the RAN, arrived in Sydney at the end of her 14,509 mile maiden voyage.
August 1984	The first male nursing officer, (SBLT G. Villiani, RAN), joined the Navy. He was unable to join the RANNS as it was a 'womens' service,' so he joined the RAN as a special entry officer for nursing duties.
August 1991	The ships' companies of RAN vessels which participated in Operation Damask, in the Red Sea, were honoured by a 'Welcome Home' march through the streets of Sydney.
August 2001	HMAS <i>Canberra</i> and HMAS <i>Warramunga</i> , (guided missile frigates), with HMAS <i>Manoora</i> (landing platform amphibious), arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam for a good will visit.
August 2004	The mine-hunter HMAS <i>Gascoyne</i> , (LCDR Dean Schopen, RAN), returned to Sydney after seven weeks service in the Solomon Islands, as part of Operation <i>Anode</i> . During the deployment, her crew helped to destroy several pieces of WWII ordnance, including a Japanese 250 pound bomb, and several US 5 inch shells. Many of these items were close to local villages.
August 2014	At 11:52am a fire, thought to be caused by a 'blow through' during welding activities, broke out in HMAS <i>Bundaberg</i> while she was on the hardstand at Aluminium Boats Australia Pty Ltd in Brisbane for refit. The fire quickly took hold spreading throughout the boat. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services brought the blaze under control at around 15:44pm but by that time, the damage to the boat was extensive

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/>

## Occasional Papers

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

- Occasional Paper 117 - A History of Australian Navy Health Sailor Uniforms and Ranks (Part 2)
- Occasional Paper 118 - In his own words: AE2's Skipper, H.G. Stoker

## Society Matters

### Osborne House, Geelong

Osborne House, Geelong the home of the first RAN Naval College from 1913 to 1914 has been unused and in a state of disrepair since 2017. Fortunately, the Council of Greater Geelong (CoGG) which owns the historic property appreciates its historic significance and has committed \$10 million over three to four years for its restoration. As the cost of fully restoring the house is in excess of \$21 million the Council is seeking partners to assist.

Conscious of the need to preserve the naval heritage aspects of Osborne House and the maritime museum Collection on site, the Victorian Naval community formally represented this point to Council in June 2021. The Victorian Chapter of the Naval Historical Society engaged the CoGG along with the Naval Association of Australia, Victoria Section, Navy League of Australia – VIC/TAS Chapter and the Naval Commemoration Committee of Victoria to ensure the important Collection housed in the stables is preserved. Previously known as the Geelong Maritime Museum, the Collection was open to the public from 1989 until 2017. Now in a state of neglect the Collection includes a number of important items which must be protected.



Above. Former Geelong Maritime Museum, in the stables of Osborne House.

Left. Part of Collection including a Folboat (canoe). Folding boats are fifteen feet in length and were used by army commandos during WWII. They were operated by two men and launched from submarines. The purpose was to enter enemy waters, inflict damage and return to safety.

Images by Andrew Mackinnon

Below. A pair of brass shoulder titles "NBT" from the [Naval Bridging Train](#).



### The RAN and Osborne House

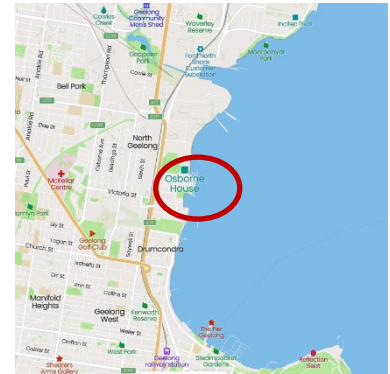
In 1912 the RAN accepted an offer from the Geelong Harbour Trust to occupy Osborne House as a Royal Australian Naval College and spent £10,000 on improvements and equipment. It was officially opened by Governor-General Lord Denman, in March 1913 accompanied by Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Andrew Fisher. 200 guests travelled from Melbourne, by special train, motor cars and boats. Lord Denman arrived in a Naval torpedo boat, with a naval escort, in mid-afternoon.

In 1915 the Navy shifted the Naval College to Federal Territory at Jervis Bay and the property was used for a time as a convalescing hospital in the 1914-1918 war years and in 1919-1922 served as the Commonwealth's first Submarine Base for "J" Class submarines, with the old colonial turret ship 'Cerberus' as a tender. Osborne House was renamed HMAS Platypus II.

**Further Reading:** NNSA, Two Osborne Houses, published in Naval Historical Review June 2018, available at: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/two-osborne-houses/>

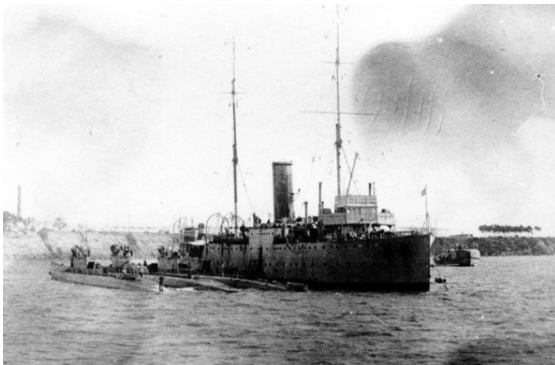
### J Class Submarines Based at Geelong

Shortly after World War 1 the British Government offered six "J" Class submarines ("J" 1-5 and 7) from the Royal Navy as a gift to the Australian Government. After their arrival in April 1919 and refit in Sydney, these vessels were moved to Corio Bay, Geelong in 1920.



Until 1924 Osborne House was used as a base for the RAN Submarine Service. In 1921, Cerberus was moved from Williamstown to Geelong where, for the next two years, she acted as a submarine depot ship for the flotilla of submarines. On 1 April 1921, her name was changed to HMAS Platypus (II). Their berths were at St Helens which is adjacent to and south of Osborne House.

During their service with the RAN the submarines spent little time at sea taking part in local exercises, from time to time, with a visit to Tasmania in January 1921 being a highlight.



HMAS *Platypus* (I) with J Class Submarines in Corio Bay, Geelong. RAN image

Ex

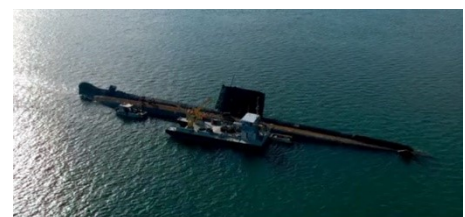


Ships Companies quarters, RAN College, 1913 to 1914. RAN Image

### HMAS *Otama* Saved from Capsizing

Oberon Class submarine, HMAS *Otama*, served in the Royal Australian Navy from 1978 to 2000. She was then sold to the Western Port Oberon Association, Victoria in 2001 which intended preserving her as a museum vessel as a centrepiece of the proposed Victorian Maritime Centre. Unfortunately, submissions to build the maritime museum at various locations on the Mornington Peninsula were repeatedly rebuffed and in 2008, the submarine was listed for sale.

Still unsold, *Otama* remains moored 800mtrs off-shore in Crib Point. Due to recent storms, *Otama* was put at risk of sinking and listed 42 degrees to starboard. Volunteers have subsequently worked to recover the situation before further damage is suffered. By rigging additional buoyancy under the starboard side, the list was reduced to 28 degrees and hatches resealed.



This video shows salvage and engineering teams working on *Otama*.

