



# Call the Hands



Issue No. 62

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## From the President

Welcome to the Society's 62<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Call the Hands* and accompanying occasional papers. The occasional papers are available to members through the members website page. These papers are made available to the community after twelve months. I trust you find them of interest.

The papers this month were provided by well know authors and Society volunteers Angus Britts and Ross Gillett whose latest books on the history of Australia's [Ikara missile](#) and [Australia's Colonial Navies](#) were launched in November 2021. Both gentlemen are currently working on new books which we look forward to publishing in coming months.

Occasional Paper 133 by Angus Britts concerns the little-known Imperial Japanese Navy designated *Operation C* in the Indian Ocean. This operation involved actions between the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet and two Japanese Fleets between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1942. In addition to the strategic lessons learnt by the Royal Navy this operation had significance for Australia in that HMAS *Vampire* was lost on 9 April 1942. She was attacked by Japanese dive-bombers to the south of Ceylon. HMS *Hermes* was also sunk in this action.

Occasional Paper 134 is a fascinating account by Ross Gillett of the 1884 delivery voyage of Victoria's First Torpedo Boat HMVS *Childers* to Australia. The story reminds us of the skills and stamina of the early Australian naval personnel who made extraordinarily long voyages in vessels not designed for the conditions they experienced.

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge Society member, LCDR Marsden Hordern OAM VRD RANVR Rtd who celebrated his 100th birthday on 26 March 2022. Marsden joined the RAN as a Probationary Acting Sub Lieutenant and commenced antisubmarine training at HMAS *Rushcutter* on 5 June 1942. He served in Fairmile Motor Launches (MLs) employed for much of the War in the largely unsurveyed waters of northern Australia and New Guinea. At 22 years-of-age he was selected to Command ML 1347 which supported Australian commandoes in enemy occupied Timor and in searching for escaping Japanese in the then virtually unknown Sepik River.

As readers will appreciate, the Society exists and continues to thrive due to the efforts of an enthusiastic team of forty volunteers across Australia and a core of volunteers who attend the Society's office (*The Boatshed*) on a regular basis. This core team manages a range of issues including, membership, accounts processing and a wide variety of other administrative functions. Unfortunately, several retirements in recent months have left us short-handed and in need of new volunteers to assist with accounts and membership. If you are in Sydney and can assist or know of others who may be interested we would like to hear from you.

Kind regards,

David Michael



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## In this Edition

Page	
1	From the President
2	Did the Hawkesbury's own ship 'modify' the silhouette of Lion Island?
4	HMAS Childers (HMVS)
5	The Sinking of HMAS Vampire (9 April 1942)
6	From the Archive
7	MSA Brolga
8	Auxiliary Minesweepers: Wallaroo and Bandicoot
9	Photo of the Month
10	News in Brief
11	This Month in History
12	1st Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train
12	Occasional Papers

### Did the Hawkesbury Shire's own ship 'modify' the silhouette of Lion Island?

In no way would we want to embarrass anyone - even all these decades onward - but on one memorable night during the Second World War, people living around Broken Bay, north of Sydney, could well have been forgiven if they felt the war had come to them. Nor was the night to be taken lightly.

Close inspection inside the two midget submarines (that raided Sydney Harbour earlier in the war) revealed plans showing the vulnerability of the *Hawkesbury* River railway bridge, which carried the vital link to the north. Engaged in 'working-up' trials off the east coast, the new long-range River class frigate *Hawkesbury*, commissioned at Mort's Dock just a few weeks earlier, had entered Broken Bay for some rather nice formalities before 'going north to join the fray'.

The Shire President, Councillors and other dignitaries, with their wives, came aboard the new frigate and were given an inspection of not just the latest ship to join the wartime fleet, but the first RAN warship ever to carry the name *Hawkesbury*. A plaque was presented to the ship by the Shire President and a decorative life buoy was handed over to the ship's company of 156 men, a gesture from the local ex-Navalmen's Association.



To the delight of the visitors, the frigate's commanding officer took the ship around Broken Bay and then, off Lion Island, the gun crews 'closed-up for action stations' and fired four-inch shells from 'B' and 'X' guns. Few really heard the second firings for the first had all but deafened them.



The Mercury (Hobart, Tasmania)  
Wed 9 Aug 1944

Decades later, during a national reunion of the wartime *Hawkesbury* ship's company, at Gosford, they passed close to Lion Island again, this time on a charter vessel. As old naval gunners, with a twinkle in their eye, they pointed to the scars on Lion Island. To their credit, despite the colourful description they offered of the gunnery demonstration back during the war, none revealed the truth - were the shells they fired from the four-inch guns of *Hawkesbury* genuine - or did they fire blank shells!

For her part, *Hawkesbury* was attached to a Task Force of the US 7th Fleet, based at Manus Island, then at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. The ship steamed countless thousands and thousands of miles on long-range convoy escort and anti-submarine patrols, even deep into the central Pacific. She took part in the beach-head invasions at Tarakan and Labuan in Borneo then, at war's end, took the Australian Government relief liner Duntroon to Singapore. *Hawkesbury* was there the day Japan officially surrendered the island of Singapore, then made two trips providing a naval escort to the transports that brought home the Australian prisoners-of-war who had been incarcerated at Changi and on the dreaded Burma Railway. The frigate spent three months in the vastness of what were then the Dutch East Indies for more than a dozen local Japanese surrender ceremonies, cleaning-up operations and the re-establishment of civil administration.

In the post-war years *Hawkesbury* was official guard-ship for the British Atomic tests at Monte Bello off Australia's north-west coast. Decommissioned, *Hawkesbury* was sold by the Navy in 1961 and later was hauled to Japan by an ocean-going tug and broken-up.

A fascinating array of memorabilia from the frigate *Hawkesbury* is on display in the Hawkesbury Historical Society's Museum at Windsor - donated by the RAN and by the wartime and post-war members of the ship's crew.

You can visit their website at [Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc](http://www.hawkesburyhistoricalsociety.com.au)



## HMAS *Childers* (HMVS)

*Childers* was the first torpedo boat acquired by the colonial navy of Victoria at a cost of £10,500. She was built in England and named in honour of a prominent Victorian Government official, Hugh Culling Eardley Childers, who, after his return to England, later became the first Lord of the Admiralty.

Launched in 1883 the torpedo boat spent her initial years in service conducting regular exercises around Port Phillip Bay then became a unit of the Commonwealth Naval Forces after Federation in 1901. Like many boats of her day *Childers* was frequently laid up and recommissioned through the remainder of its service life.



*Childers* with Countess of Hopetoun and HMVS Lady Loch berthed in Williamstown, Victoria. (Allan C Green State Library of Victoria)

*Childers* occasionally ventured further afield to northern Tasmania normally in company with other vessels such as the *Countess of Hopetoun* due to her poor sea keeping qualities.

Periodic torpedo practice runs held in conjunction with *Lonsdale*, *Nepean* and *Gordon* and occasional one-day exercises were conducted each month until *Childers* became a unit of the Royal Australian Navy in 1911. She commissioned on 29 April 1912 with a full complement.

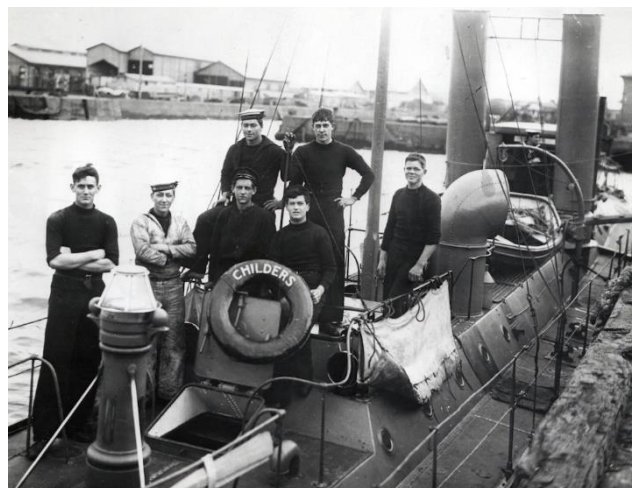
Following the outbreak of World War I *Childers* was again reactivated, proceeding to sea for trials with the cruiser *Pioneer* and later fitted with new guns. During World War I *Childers* undertook patrols of the Port Phillip Bay area and also acted as a tender to Williamstown Naval Depot.

She was paid off for the final time on 15 September 1916 and later towed to Swan Island where she was beached not far from the hulls of *Lonsdale* and *Nepean* and sold for scrap.

### Further Reading

Sea Power Centre-Australia, [HMAS \*Childers\* \(HMVS\) History](#)

Ross Gillett, *A Long Salty Voyage Home*, NHSA Occasional Paper 134 published April 2022



*Childers*' ratings pose for a photo alongside in Williamstown, Victoria

## The Sinking of HMAS *Vampire* (9 April 1942)

Following an eventful start to the war (including as part of the '[Tobruk Ferry Service](#)'), the destroyer [HMAS \*Vampire\* \(I\)](#) operated from Ceylon in March and April 1942 as part of the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet. On 5 April 1942 Japanese bombers began to attack the port of Colombo, and on 9 April *Vampire* and the Royal Navy aircraft carrier it was escorting, [HMS \*Hermes\*](#), were both sunk off Ceylon. HMS *Hermes* lost 307 crew and 9 members of *Vampire*'s crew perished.

The loss of *Vampire* now eighty years ago was detailed in [Occasional Paper 7](#) published by the Society in May 2017.

### Video: Search for the wreck of HMAS *Vampire* I

In 2019 the hydrographic survey ship HMA Ship *Leeuwin* and minehunter HMAS *Diamantina* deployed to waters off Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean. During the deployment they spent time searching for the wreck of HMAS *Vampire*. All HMAS *Leeuwin*'s advanced scanning equipment and data processing systems were used as well as *Diamantina*'s powerful sonar and remotely operated vehicles. Unfortunately, the search conducted in partnership with the Sri Lankan Navy was unsuccessful.

[Click here for the video](#)



HMAS *Diamantina* and Clearance Diving Team Members in the Indian Ocean 2019, RAN Image

## From the Archive

### 1981 Sydney to Noumea Yacht Race

To obtain information about a set of proof images in the Society's archive, Society volunteers sought assistance through well known Navy sailing identities. This yielded the following interesting response from Garth Brice who agreed to share it with members.

The photos are of an all-Navy crew onboard *Different Drummer* a 35-foot Jarkin which competed in the 1981 Sydney to Noumea Yacht Race. The Skipper was LCDR Ken Heynatz and *Different Drummer* was his boat. I was the first mate and watch keeper.

During a storm on our first night of the race, a hundred miles out to sea, in winds gusting over 60 knots, the steering gear failed. We managed to sail back to Sydney in the storm using the mainsheet to steer the boat. After making repairs in Sydney, we went back out to sea and managed to complete the race.

Ken and I sailed together onboard *Anaconda II* in 1979 which competed in the Parmelia Race from Plymouth to Fremantle. I had previously helped deliver the boat from Australia to Plymouth and Ken was part of the race crew. We also sailed together on board *Buccaneer* in the 1981 Sydney to Hobart and the 1982 Sydney to Rio Yacht Race in which we took out line honours.

Sadly, Ken was lost at sea whilst sailing in a storm in the Mozambique channel a few years later.

Ken was my sailing mentor and a great friend.

Using the skills that Ken passed onto me I went on to play a significant role in Navy sailing and ocean racing.



Navy crew onboard *Different Drummer* in Noumea 1981



Ken Heynatz (L) and Garth Brice (R) on *Different Drummer* discussing boat preparations, 1981



## MSA Brolga

Built in 1975 for the Department of Transport and Communications MV *Lumen* was offered up for disposal around the same time that the RAN'S Minesweeping Project was looking to lease vessels to trial various developmental minesweeping and surveillance equipment. An evaluation of MV *Lumen* presented a far more cost effective solution and she was subsequently acquired and renamed Auxiliary Minesweeper (AM) *Brolga* in a ceremony at HMAS Moreton, Brisbane, on 10 February 1988.

*Brolga* was a steel-hulled vessel of 28.45 metres in length with a crew of 17. Throughout her commission in the RAN she performed a variety of tasks in support of minesweeping trials and development and played a key role in the testing of the Defence Science and Technology Organisation's Influence Minesweep in 1989. This magnetic device was designed for towing behind suitable vessels to safely detonate magnetic mines intended for use against large ships.

*Brolga* was based at HMAS Waterhen in Sydney and was consistently used in mine location and recovery work as part of the RAN's mine countermeasures force.

Between August 1999 and March 2001 *Brolga* deployed to Bougainville on two occasions in support of the combined Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) where she provided support to the Australian Army and PMG personnel. During this time, she was frequently involved in patrol insertion and peace monitoring activities throughout the region. As its longest deployment lasted seven months her small crew was rotated several times to provide them with respite. In recognition of her efforts as part of the PMG her crews were awarded the Australian Service Medal with clasp BOUGAINVILLE.

With the completion of the delivery of the six Huon Class Minehunter Coastal vessels in 2002, *Brolga* became redundant for the second time in her life and was subsequently decommissioned and sold for \$255,000. She then returned to her port of origin in Fremantle, WA.



MSA *Brolga*

## Auxiliary Minesweepers: *Wallaroo* and *Bandicoot*

In 1988 the RAN acquired a force of small auxiliary minesweepers, mainly fishing trawlers, to develop the tactics and doctrine to be used in the operation of new Australian designed and developed 'Clip on' Influence and mechanical sweeps. They were based at HMAS *Waterhen* along with the recently commissioned the two Bay class Inshore minehunters, HMA Ships *Rushcutter* and *Shoalwater*.

As the small auxiliary minesweepers were not powerful enough to tow the largest type of sweeps the RAN consequently acquired two auxiliary minesweepers (tug) AM(T) *Wallaroo* and *Bandicoot* in August 1990. Built in Singapore as twin screw tugs in 1982, the 242 tonne vessels were outfitted as auxiliary minesweepers while still retaining their capability for ship handling.

Both vessels could tow a magnetic body and acoustic noise makers for influence sweeping, a wire sweep for moored mines and mount a side scan sonar for underwater surveillance. They had a top speed of 11 knots with a range of 6300 nautical miles.

From 1999 to 2001, *Bandicoot* and *Wallaroo* were involved in Operation Bel Isi, the Australian commitment to the Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group.

On 1 October 2010, both vessels were placed in reserve, able to be reactivated in 30 days and able to deploy in 42. Although no longer used for minesweeping operations, the tugboats were deployed on several occasions to provide berthing support for visiting nuclear-powered warships.

They were disposed of in 2014.

### Further Reading

NHSA, [RAN Minesweepers and Minehunters](#), published in the September 1993 edition of the Naval Historical Review.



The Royal Australian Navy Minesweeper Auxiliary (MSA) *Bandicoot*, berthed at HMAS *Waterhen*



## Photo of the Month



*Photo - HMAS Waterhen at Tobruk – from the Gordon Hill Collection.*

*Gordon Hill was serving in HMAS Vendetta at the time and took many photographs in the Mediterranean during 1940-41.*

HMAS Waterhen served in the Mediterranean from January 1940 until her loss in June 1941.

Detail of her loss are as follows:

On 28 June 1941 *Waterhen* (I) left Alexandria for Tobruk with HMS *Defender* on what was to be her last run to Tobruk. At 7:45pm on 29 June, off Sollum, both ships were attacked by dive bombers and *Waterhen*, though not directly hit, was holed by near misses and immobilized. Her ship's company and embarked troops were taken off by *Defender*. There were no casualties.

As darkness fell, *Defender* took *Waterhen* in tow, but it was soon apparent that she could not be saved and the working party was taken off. At 1:50am on 30 June 1941 the 23-year old 'Chook', as she was affectionately known to her crew, rolled over and sank. She was the first ship of the RAN to be lost by enemy action in World War II

## News in Brief

The Australian government has decided to invest up to \$4.3 billion to deliver Western Australia's first large-vessel dry berth at the Henderson shipyard to boost naval shipbuilding capacity.

The Henderson dry-dock will enable the construction and sustainment of large naval vessels in Australia and support the commercial shipbuilding.

Government-owned Australian Naval Infrastructure will oversee the design and build of the drydock, with work to start in 2023 and initial operations to commence in 2028.



The Commonwealth will work closely with the Western Australian Government and industry to develop a comprehensive plan for the defence precinct at Henderson to ensure this investment fully supports national naval shipbuilding enterprise effectively.

"This project is likely to create at least 500 direct construction jobs at its peak and thousands more through local sub-contracts and the national supply chain. Once completed, this infrastructure will help support at least 2,000 direct shipbuilding jobs at Henderson, particularly as continuous naval shipbuilding in Western Australia comes to fruition as part of the national naval shipbuilding enterprise," according to the officials.

"Henderson, HMAS Stirling and Fleet Base West all form a key part of our maritime capability and our nation's security, particularly given the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, and will continue to do so for decades to come."

Minister for Defence Peter Dutton added the project builds on the Government's previous \$1.5 billion commitment to infrastructure improvements at HMAS Stirling and the Henderson maritime precinct.

The infrastructure will also support Defence's \$90 million Regional Maintenance Centre due to be operational in Henderson in the second half of 2022 to enable a level of maintenance to be conducted on all surface fleet units, Minister for Defence Industry Melissa Price emphasized. Recently, the government revealed its plans to build a new submarine base on the east coast of Australia to support the nation's new nuclear-powered submarines. The Australian Department of Defence has selected three preferred locations, Brisbane, Newcastle, and Port Kembla.

## This Month in History

April 1858	The following ships were on the Australia Station:-Sailing vessels; IRIS, (26 guns), SAPPHO, (12 guns), and BRAMBLE and CORDELIA, (11 guns).
April 1885	HMS DIAMOND was stationed at Port Adelaide to guard against an attack by Russian commerce raiders.
April 1915	The submarine HMAS AE 2, (LCDR H. H. G. D. Stoker, RN), unexpectedly encountered the British submarine HMS E14 (LCDR E. C. Boyle, RN), off Kara Burnu Point, in the Sea of Mamara. The British submarine had penetrated the Dardanelles the day before. Both captains agreed to rendezvous the next day, however, AE2 was sunk before the rendezvous could be made.
April 1918	CMDR W. H. F. Warren, RAN, commander of the Australian Torpedo Boat Destroyer Flotilla, accidentally drowned at Brindisi, Italy, the day before his DSO award was received at the Flotilla base. CMDR A. G. H. Bond, RAN, assumed command of the Australian Torpedo Boat Flotilla at Brindisi, Italy.
April 1924	HMAS AUSTRALIA was ceremoniously scuttled off Sydney Heads as part of the Washington Treaty, which limited fleet sizes
April 1931	HM Submarines OXLEY and OTWAY were transferred to the RAN. The submarines were based in the Far East until 1939.
April 1940	HMAS SWAN intercepted the Norwegian ship SOLHEIM off Fremantle, and escorted the vessel into port. HMAS HOBART intercepted the Danish merchant vessel AFRIKA between Colombo and Aden. A prize crew steamed the ship to Colombo.
April 1946	The total number of gallantry awards made to RAN personnel between 3 September 1939, and 30 April 1946, was 1107. This number included 28 awards bestowed by the USA, four by the Netherlands, and four by Greece. 29 awards were won by RN personnel serving in Australian ships. Battle casualties suffered by the RAN in the period 3 September 1939, to 30 April 1946, totaled 2608. Officers - 183 killed, 75 wounded; Ratings - 1780 killed, 3 missing, 63 died as POWs, 504 wounded.
April 1952	723 Squadron recommissioned at Naval Air Station (NAS) Nowra as a Fleet Requirements Unit. The squadron was equipped with two Hawker Sea Fury Mark IIs, a Douglas C47A Dakota, a Supermarine Type 309 Sea Otter and a Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation CA-16 Wirraway.
April 1964	The former Z Special Force vessel HMAS KRAIT, arrived in Sydney. She had been sold after the war, and was later found in Borneo employed as a timber carrying vessel. A campaign was started to bring her back to Australia, and she was subsequently bought by public subscription. She was operated by the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, (NSW Section), for many years but eventually acquired by the AWM and loaned to the Australian National Maritime Museum in the late 1980's.
April 1969	HMAS AITAPE and LADAVA penetrated 230 miles up the Sepik River, New Guinea. Their record voyage emulated the cruise of HMA Ships PARRAMATTA and WARREGO in 1914.
April 1972	HMAS Stuart departed Sydney for deployment with the ANZUK Forces in the Far East, followed by a visit to Pearl Harbor in August/September 1972 for exercises with US, Canadian and other Australian Ships. She returned to Sydney on 6 October 1972.
April 1983	The Australian Government announced that HMS INVINCIBLE would be renamed HMAS AUSTRALIA when she joined the RAN. As a result of the Falkland's War the British Government decided to retain HMS INVINCIBLE, and offered HMS HERMES as a replacement. However, in 1983 the newly elected Labour Government cancelled the potential purchase of the ship. Among the reasons given were age of ship, high personell maning requirement, cost, and new directions for the RAN.
April 1994	HMAS JERVIS BAY, decommissioned at Garden Island Sydney. Nicknamed at times JB, the Love Boat, (due to being the first RAN vessel to embark female personnel), and even the Gay Bay, she conducted training for thousands of trainee officers over a 17 year career.
April 2002	HMAS Kanimbla II returned to Sydney after service in the Middle East as part of the maritime force assigned to Operation SLIPPER.
April 2011	HMAS Adelaide II was scuttled as a dive wreck off Avoca, New South Wales

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/>



## 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train

The following was provided by the Naval Association of Australia, Queensland Section.

They were a rag tag bunch, very much outside Naval traditions. Bridging Train (1915-1917) was set up to basically perform the work of Army Sappers (Engineers) at the points of landing and to transport food, water, ammunition, and supplies around the Gallipoli Peninsula. They were called a train pertaining to the movement of materials in a train of horse drawn vehicles.

Most of the unit had no prior experience or training in building wharves, railway lines, sunken roads, pontoons or bridges. They were from all walks of life, including accountants, boilermakers, book binders and pearl divers! Using resourcefulness, ingenuity and a 'can do' attitude, the RANBT did all of this and more, including being the last Australians to leave Gallipoli. Their work was crucial to the success of the withdrawal as they built the timber pier and stayed until the last soldier was safely on the final ship to leave.

The RANBT wore a combination of Army and Navy uniforms, worked on horses and served on land. At one stage, they hadn't been paid for 5 weeks, so they refused to muster in protest. They only just escaped a charge of mutiny! The Train were all reservists and their 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant was a 50 year old accountant from Brisbane, Thomas Arthur Bond. Despite his background, Bond won the DSO for single handedly capturing 8 German officers and 20 armed New Guinea police in the Battle of Bitapaka.

### Further Reading

Virtual War Memorial, [Biography, Lieutenant Thomas Arthur Bond](#), DSO MID R.A.N.R of 1st Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train.

Sea Power Centre Australia, [The 1st Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train](#)



Gallipoli 1915, Lieutenant Thomas Arthur Bond, third from left with (L to R) Staff Surgeon Morris, RANR, Lieutenant Commander LS Bracegirdle, RAN, and Captain McRitchie, Major Jellicoe. AWM image P01326.002

## Occasional Papers

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

- Occasional Paper 133 - Operation C: The Indian Ocean showdown between British and Japanese Naval Might, 4 – 9 April 1942
- Occasional Paper 134 - A Long Salty Voyage Home: The Delivery of Victoria's First Torpedo Boat H.M.V.S. Childers