



Call the Hands



Issue No. 70

December 2022

From the President

Welcome to the 70th edition *Call the Hands* and our final three occasional papers for the year.

Occasional paper 151 by Geoff Barnes looks at the extraordinary success of the Australian War Memorial's (AWM) series of Christmas books published from 1941. With input from servicemen about their service these books were designed as gifts which servicemen scattered around the world could send home. The phenomenal success of this initiative is attributed to [John Treloar](#) who served as Director of the AWM from 1920 to 1952.

Occasional paper 152 by Lorraine Fildes on the history of naval activity in Rushcutters Bay provides an excellent overview of the important training and other functions performed in HMAS *Rushcutter* and forerunner organisations on the site. This site is now known as the Sir David Martin Reserve. Lorraine's work will be used as the basis for an addition to the Societies website page on [Naval Heritage Sites](#).

Occasional paper 153 looks at the County class cruisers built as a direct result of the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty which ended the construction of new capital ships after the Great War. The Royal Australian Navy ordered two of these 10,000-ton vessels, HMAS *Australia* (II) and HMAS *Canberra* as part of the five-year naval development program between 1924 and 1929. A third County Class, HMAS *Shropshire* was transferred to Australia by the British Government as a replacement for HMAS *Canberra* (I) lost on 9 August 1942 in the Battle of Savo Island.

An excellent presentation on [HMAS Australia \(II\)](#) is available on the Society's Youtube channel. More than eight thousand viewers have already watched this June 2021 presentation by Kez Hasanic. You will find many other excellent presentations on the our [Youtube channel](#).

As an indication of the amount of research and number of stories published by Society volunteers and other authors, the following statistics for 2022 will be of interest. Published works in 2022 have included; 35 stories and 9 book reviews published in four editions of the Societies magazine, the *Naval Historical Review*, 24 occasional papers and 11 editions of this monthly newsletter, *Call the Hands* and 4 editions of the members quarterly newsletter, *The Buzz*. To the more than fifty authors who have contributed papers I am most grateful.

With the Annual General Meeting and last of the year's publications behind us the regular Boatshed volunteers look forward to some down time over the coming holiday period it is also timely to reflect on the services of the hundreds of volunteers who have served the Society for 52 years. They have a positive impact on our community and find the work both meaningful and enjoyable. If you wish to join our ranks, please get in touch.

Best wishes for a happy and safe festive season.

David Michael



Naval Historical Society
of Australia

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

Web	navyhistory.org.au
Email	secretary@navyhistory.org.au
Phone	+61 2 9537 0034
ABN	71 094 118 434
Patron	Chief of Navy

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Would this happen today?

FATHER'S DAY GIFT TO VIET. SERVICEMEN



The Father's Day Council of NSW on August 7 presented \$14,000 of cigarettes, tobacco and cigars to representatives of the Armed Services at HMAS Kuttabul, Garden Island. The gift comprised 600,000 cigarettes, 390 lbs. of tobacco and 3000 cigars. The cigarettes, cigars and tobacco will be made up into gift packs and flown to Vietnam to be distributed to servicemen fathers on Father's Day, September 6. In all, 2780 fathers in the Army, Navy and Air Force will receive gift packs. Cigarettes were generously made available by Rothmans of Pall Mall (Aust.) Ltd. and W. D. and H. O. Wills (Australia) Ltd. Tobacco and cigars were given by Stuart Alexander and Co. Pty. Ltd. The presentation was made by Mr. J. Crawford, Senior vice-president of the Father's Day Council of NSW. Senior officers of the Services, Commander R. E. Bourke, RAN, Captain of Kuttabul, Colonel R. M. Cubis and Wing Commander P. Slater accepted the gift. Commander Bourke in thanking the companies said that gifts such as this boosted morale among the troops and were greatly appreciated.

● The picture shows Lt. Cdr. J. Consadine, and P.O. Shaw watching sailors taking the cigarettes to store where they will be prepared for despatch to Vietnam.

From today's perspective this Vietnam War era initiative by the Fathers' Day Council of NSW, reported in the Navy News in August 1970, seems quite incredible. However, given the incidence of cigarette smoking in the 1970's it is not surprising. At the time more than 45 percent of Australian men smoked. Today only 10.7% of people aged 18 years and over are current daily smokers¹.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics data for 2020-21 financial year

HMAS Castlemaine — 80 Years

By John Jeremy

As the prospect of war loomed in the late 1930s, a need was identified for small warships for the Royal Australian Navy to provide for local defence which would be capable of construction easily in non-naval shipyards from material and equipment which could be sourced in Australia.

By early 1939 the preliminary design of an Australian Local Defence Vessel (LDV) was largely complete. The design was wholly developed in Australia under the supervision of RADM P. E. McNeil, the Director of Engineering (Navy). The LDV was quite a small ship of about 690 t, a length of 56.4 m and a speed of 15.5 kn. The range was about 2850 n miles and the complement 85 men. Approval to build the first seven ships was given in September 1939 and the order for the lead ship was given to Cockatoo Dockyard in Sydney in December 1939 at a contract price of £139 500 (equivalent to about \$13.7 million today). Orders were also placed with the Melbourne Harbor Trust in Williamstown, Victoria, Mort's Dock in Sydney and Walkers in Maryborough, Queensland.

Ultimately sixty of these small but useful ships were built — including 20 to British Admiralty account (although commissioned as RAN ships) and four for the Royal Indian Navy. The LDV classification apparently caused misunderstanding in Britain and they were redesignated Australian Minesweepers (AMS) — Bathurst Class. Despite this official description they became commonly known as corvettes.

Two of these small ships survive today. HMAS *Whyalla*, the first ship built by BHP at the new Whyalla shipyard in South Australia, is now ashore some 2 km from the water as the centrepiece of the Whyalla Maritime Museum. The other is HMAS *Castlemaine*, well preserved by the Maritime Trust of Australia, Victoria, alongside the Gem Pier in Williamstown. *Castlemaine* was built at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard, being laid down on 17 February 1941 and launched on 7 August that year. She was commissioned on 17 June 1942, just over 80 years ago. After busy war service, *Castlemaine* was decommissioned on 14 December 1945. After a long period in reserve, she was refitted in 1958 and transferred to HMAS *Cerberus*, Westernport, Victoria, for use as a stationary training ship. That service ended in 1971 and she was presented to the Maritime Trust of Australia for preservation as a museum ship. Today, at 80 years old, she is a fine example of a small warship built in a hurry to meet the urgent imperatives of war. One might say that she represents the 1940s equivalent of today's offshore patrol vessels.

Source: Australian Naval Architect, Volume 26 Number 4, November 2022



Celebrating 80 years — HMAS *Castlemaine* dressed overall for Navy Day, Victoria in 2022. RAN image

The Tower Building at Garden Island

Author: Churchill, J., Lieutenant Commander

Publication December 1971 edition of the Naval Historical Review (all rights reserved)

The Royal Australian Navy is fortunate in possessing many buildings of both historical and architectural interest. The list is considerable and includes Bomerah, Tirana, Jenner, Tresco, and various barrack and industrial buildings at Garden Island, Pyrmont and Williamstown. Building 27 of the Main Office Building at Garden Island must rank high on this list for the reason it is individual.

The original building of 1892 extended from the right wall of the tower to the hip, left of the large chimney. The ivy foliage has since been removed.

Prior to 1894, the site of this building was occupied by a single storey dining room, store and cookhouse. The architect's first proposal was to leave these buildings in this situation and erect the Main Office Building on the site now occupied by the Naval Store Office at the northern end of the square.



The Tower Building as it appeared in 1961.

Fortunately, this latter proposal was not proceeded with and work commenced on the building in 1894. The building was of two storeys, the main section extending from the clock tower in the north to the southern wall of the technical services office on the south. A single storey annexe abutted the northern wall and contained toilet and ablution facilities. On the southern end a two storey annexe, approximately 12 ft x 14 ft, was added, almost as an afterthought. This latter annexe was completed with a false bell tower ventilation shaft surmounted by an ornate weathercock.

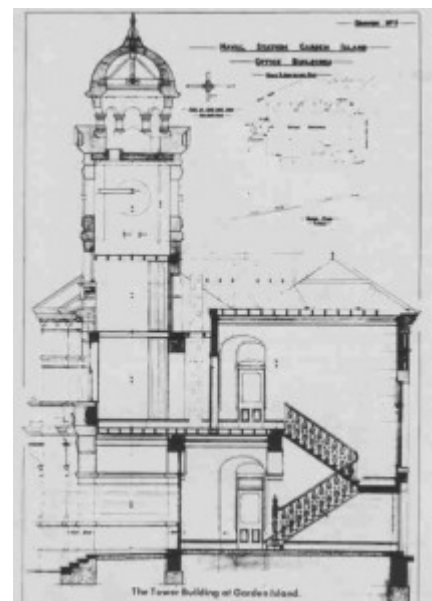
The original west wall of the building may still be seen on the staircase, its dormer window designed to bring natural light onto the staircase. A 14ft. wide verandah sheltered both storeys on the west, still the most uncomfortable position in the building when the afternoon sun strikes it. The verandah was supported on both levels by fine ornamental pillars. On the ground floor the verandah was continued around the three sides of the northern annexe. The verandah on the first floor had a beautiful wrought iron balustrade along its entire length.

This original building may be clearly detected from the eastern or lawn side by the detail of the brickwork and sandstone trimming. Doors, windows and ceilings remain unchanged. The ceiling heights were, and still are, 14ft. on the ground floor and 13ft. on the first floor.

The annexes described on the northern and southern ends have since been incorporated in later additions.

Original exterior walls are 2 ft. thick and are of brick construction. The bricks appear to have been manufactured at the Gore Hill Brickworks. This company supplied bricks to many government buildings of this period.

The etched glass panes in entrance doors, windows and dormers were specially designed for the building. No less than eight Australian wild flowers including Waratah, Flannel Flower, Christmas Bell, Cabbage Tree Palm and the Gum Tip are depicted. The Royal Arms of Queen Victoria are the



centrepiece of the main door and the royal initials are carved on the banister post. The design on the General Managers's rest room door is a stylised flower theme.

The building was completed in 1894, but the clock, which was manufactured by William Auld of Sydney, was not installed until 1895. The clock is interesting mechanically and is one of the last of its kind in Sydney. Its motive power is obtained from a pulley and weight system. The pulleys are wound up by manpower twice a week. An ingenious differential gear turns all four sets of hands simultaneously.

A recent proposal to instal an electric motor to wind the clock mechanism was abandoned on the grounds of cost. Access to the clock tower is from an office on the first floor. An old style stirrup ladder leads to a landing which opens onto a storage room. This room is not in use at present. A further ladder leads up to the machinery room which houses the clock machinery. A third ladder gives access to the gallery under the cupola which crowns the tower.

The Garden Island clock has the reputation of being one of the most accurate mechanical clocks in Sydney.

Specifications for the materials used in the building are not available but superficial inspection indicates that they were of the highest quality.

No reference is made to the lighting of the building, but it is reasonable to suggest that it was gas. The gas tanks for the island were situated in the nearby Boatshed.

The sewerage systems emptied directly into the harbour and the nine inch pipes may be detected entering the water near the Office Steps jetty.

Heating was by coal fires and fireplaces were located in all offices.

The cost of the original building, including furniture was £3,424.18.9.

Nine officers occupied the building. The ground floor was occupied by the Captain Superintendent and two storekeepers, the first floor by Staff Commanders 1 and 2 and three Inspectors Machinery.

Transport was by steam launch which berthed at the jetty at the foot of the lawn.



The Tower Building, western perspective, circa 1900



Editor's Note: The Tower Building as it appears today

Palm Island: ABC Television Video and Story

Published last month, Occasional Paper 150 on Palm Island and its connection with the first and second World Wars was written in response to a research request from ABC Television. Although only a minimal amount of content provided by the Society was used by the journalist, the published feature and video will be of interest to readers. Content was also drawn from a story by Walter Burroughs entitled '[Palm Islands – a Naval Connection](#)' published in the June 2020 edition of the Naval Historical Review.

The ABC story and video can be accessed via this [link](#).



PNG Defence Force: New Aircraft

As part of OPERATION KIMBA, the support operation for the PNG elections conducted in recent months the Australian government supplied the PNGDF with two new [PAC P750 XSTOL](#) aircraft. These joined four of this type already in PNGDF service. The aircraft are built in New Zealand by Pacific Aerospace Limited. Being a short take-off and landing aircraft, they are ideal for the difficult conditions in PNG. Many of the strips in PNG are short, high and with poor access. The aircraft is a basic transport plane but would be useful for basic EEZ surveillance duties.

The PNGDF purchased four aircraft in 2018 but due to various issues, compliance with local regulations, spares and funding they never entered service. These problems have now been solved with ADF support and all six aircraft are now available for use.



Photo of the Month



Armidale Class Patrol Boat HMAS *Wollongong* in formation with Indonesian Naval vessels, KRI *Samapri* and KRI *Layang*, before entering Darwin Harbour on conclusion of Exercise Cassowary in March 2016

News

ADV Reliant Update

ADV Reliant has delivered a load of relief supplies to the island nation of Kiribati. Unloading at the Port of Betio on South Tarawa. Defence released details and [video](#) on 1 November 2022.



This support is necessary due to Kiribati continuing in the grip of a severe drought. What water is available is often contaminated. On 11 June 2022 the government

declared a drought in the country. This has affected the whole country and all 120,000 inhabitants. Food security and livelihoods and are both causing concern. This drought which has been apparent since November 2021 is caused by a La Nina event which is also causing problems in Tuvalu, Tokelau and Nauru. Conditions are not expected to change until the end of 2022, at the earliest. UN assistance sought by the Government of Kiribati is underway.

Reliant delivered 5 containers of relief supplies consisting of water purification equipment. Two Landing Craft Light (LCVP) were also seen on her cargo deck and her large crane was used to unload the supplies. This is the third country that Reliant has visited, since her service began as Australian Pacific Support Ship. Previous visits have been to PNG and Timor Leste.

HMAS Wollongong

The crew of naval patrol boat HMAS *Wollongong* have visited their vessel's namesake city for a final time and participated in a Freedom of Entry Ceremony.

It was the first time since 2017 that HMAS *Wollongong*'s crew have conducted a Freedom of Entry in Wollongong.

Her crew were greeted with applause and cheers from the public as they made their way down Crown Street Mall, where they presented the scroll that afforded them Freedom of Entry. It is tradition that the youngest crew member on board carry the vessel's life ring at the front of the march, and that honour fell to Able Seaman Alannah Hutchinson. HMAS *Wollongong* will be decommissioned on December 8, after 15 years of service.



Video of the Month

HMAS Hobart's Final Voyage, Speed Trial 36 knots!

On the final day of her final voyage the engines were asked for a final burst of speed and this greyhound of the sea took off at 36 knots!



[HMAS Hobart's Final Voyage, Speed Trial 36 knots - YouTube](#)

Occasional Papers

- Occasional Paper 151 - The Christmas Books
- Occasional Paper 152 - HMAS Rushcutter
- Occasional Paper 153 - County Class ships of the Royal Navy

This Month in History

December 1860	HMCS <i>Victoria</i> , (CMDR Norman, RN), landed a detachment of seamen, and captured Matarikoriko Pa, New Zealand.
December 1907	The Prime Minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin, announced that Australia would purchase 9 C-class submarines, and 6 torpedo boat destroyers, over three years, to be built, manned and maintained by Australia.
December 1911	SBLT A. M. Longmore, RN, an Australian serving in the RN, successfully landed a Short S27 aircraft fitted with airbags on the Medway River, England.
December 1916	HMA Ships <i>Sydney</i> and <i>Melbourne</i> were damaged when the destroyers <i>Hoste</i> and <i>Negro</i> collided and sank off Norway. Both ships lost a man and seven were injured when the destroyers' depth charges exploded.
December 1919	HMAS <i>Sydney</i> patrolled the Timor Sea as beacon ship for Ross and Keith Smith's flight from England to Australia. The aviators recorded the cruiser was sighted exactly on station.
December 1934	The Royal Standard was hoisted by HMAS <i>Australia</i> at Brisbane, at the commencement of a Royal Tour of New Zealand and the Pacific Islands by the Duke of Gloucester.
December 1940	HMAS <i>Orara</i> signaled HMAS <i>Swan</i> on observing her coloured minesweeping lights burning too brightly on her stern:- 'May I hang my stocking on your Christmas tree?' <i>Swan</i> replied:- 'Yes, and I will shortly be hanging a sprig of mistletoe over my stern'.
December 1944	LEUT W. F. Cook, RAN, was appointed to command HMAS <i>Nizam</i> . Cook, aged 28, was the youngest officer appointed to command an Australian fleet destroyer.
December 1957	The Official RAN Badge was amended by changing the Tudor Crown in the design to a St Edwards Crown, (Queen's Crown).
December 1965	The Perth class guided missile destroyer HMAS <i>Hobart</i> , (CAPT G. R. Griffiths, DSO, RAN), was commissioned.
December 1970	The following gallantry awards were announced for RAN personnel who served in the Helicopter Flight in Vietnam. DSC LCDR D. A. Farthing DFC LEUT P. L. Clark DFC LEUT R. K. Marum MID LEUT D. B. Gibson MID LEUT R. J. Cooper MID SBLT G. Mayo MID SBLT E. K. Wile MID SBLT A. C. Perry.
December 1985	HMAS <i>Stalwart</i> made an emergency voyage to Macquarie Island for ANARE to land Christmas stores for the staff, when the Antarctic supply ship NELLA DAN developed defects.
December 1992	HMAS <i>Jervis Bay</i> departed Sydney for Mogadishu, Somalia, to provide strategic sea-lift for Operation SOLACE, the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the US-led operation to bring peace and humanitarian relief to the war-torn African nation
December 1998	At 0320 a RAN Sea King helicopter winched onboard three injured crewmen from the badly damaged yacht SWORD OF ORION, during the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. At the same time a second Sea King was searching for the yacht WINSTON CHURCHILL, using her night vision capability, (the yacht had actually sunk, but at 2130 that evening a life raft with two of her crew in it was spotted by another Sea King helicopter, and the men were winched to safety). In both cases the aircrewman of the Sea King helicopters were required to enter the water to affect the rescue. At 0400 HMAS <i>Newcastle</i> sailed from Sydney to join the search for <i>missing</i> and damaged yachts. Subsequently the aircrewmen of both helicopters, (PO B.J. Lee and PO B.S. Pashley), were awarded the Bravery Medal. Group Citations for Bravery were also awarded to three RAN Sea King Helicopter crews.
December 2003	Sea King aircraft from 805 Squadron were involved in water bombing to fight several fires burning near HMAS <i>Creswell</i> , Jervis Bay, NSW. Over 100 campers, from nearby Green Patch, also took refuge at Creswell during the height of the fires.
December 2013	End of operation RENDER SAFE, an annual, Australian-led operation to help remove the explosive remnants of World War II (WWII) from the South West Pacific during which HMAS <i>Labuan</i> was deployed and during which some 10,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance were located and either destroyed or made safe.

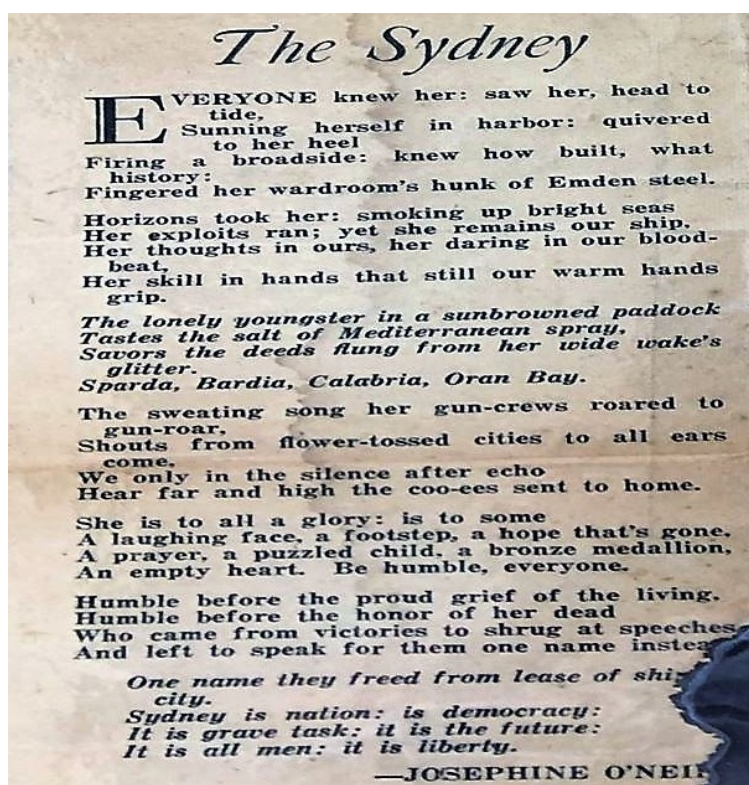
The entries selected for publication this month are randomly generated from an extensive database of historic naval events. The absence of a significant event is in no way intended to cause offence. The objective is to provide a cross section of events across time. The Society's website enables you to 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/>

Readers Forum

Loss of HMAS Sydney

Received from Bob Jarvis in November 2021 on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the loss of HMAS Sydney.

To whom it may concern,
My middle name is Sidney and I was named after the HMAS Sydney "Robert Sidney Jarvis". My uncle Sid was a sailor on the Sydney. He was on shore leave when she went down. I was named after him because they said it would make me as lucky as he was not to have been on board when she sank in action. Unfortunately, the attached newspaper is not in great shape.



Notes:

1. The loss of HMAS Sydney on 19 November 1941 was the most grievous loss ever suffered by the Royal Australian Navy. The cruiser HMAS Sydney was lost in action with the German auxiliary cruiser *Kormoran* off the Western Australian coast. None of the Sydney's complement of 645 men survived. The *Kormoran* was also sunk in the action.
2. The poet, [Josephine O'Neill](#) (1905-1968) was journalist and film critic working for Consolidated Press Ltd at the time.



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