

Call the Hands

Issue No. 74

May 2023

From the President

Welcome to Issue 74 of Call the Hands and accompanying Occasional Papers, 161 and 162. Members can access the occasional papers through the members area of the Society's website. Occasional papers are made public after twelve months.

The year 2023 marks two significant anniversary for the Royal Australian Navy. It is thirty years since the return of HMAS *Tobruk* from a deployment to Somalia as part of Operation Solace, the mission of which was to protect the delivery of humanitarian aid and restore peace in that drought stricken and war-ravaged country. Occasional Paper 161 relates to that Operation and the recent Government decision to award a Meritorious Unit Citation to participating ADF units.

The second anniversary commemorates 50 years since the conclusion of Australian Defence Force (ADF) involvement in the Vietnam War. ADF participation commenced in July and August 1962 with the arrival of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) in South Vietnam. It officially concluded on 11 January 1973 with a proclamation by the Governor General, Sir Paul Hasluck. However, the platoon of soldiers guarding the Australian embassy in Saigon remained until June 1973.

Occasional Paper 162 describes the RAN Fleet Review conducted in Port Phillip on 27 May 1920. The reviewing officer was HRH Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII). The reason for his visit was to extend official thanks for Australia's support during World War I and to strengthen links to the Empire. The Prince, who arrived in Australia in HMS *Renown* which had been refitted as a royal yacht at the end of the First World War toured extensively over seven weeks. Himself a veteran of the War, he made a point of meeting ex-servicemen and women during the visit.

The Society recently received from a member in Queensland several copies of the qualifying educational exam papers for the Royal Australian Naval College in the 1940s and early 50s. A page from the 1951 paper has been included in this edition and the full paper for those with an interest is available on the Society's website via the link on page 5.

Finally, congratulations to John Jeremy, Society Vice President on the publication of his latest book, *Safe to Dive Submarine Support in Sydney 1914–1999* which we featured in the April edition. Printed and digital versions are now available for sale through the [website shop](#), see page 13 for details. Given the enormous challenges associated with the design, development and introduction into service of the AUKUS submarine this book which describes the history of submarine refits in Sydney from the arrival of AE1 and AE2 until the end of service of the Oberon-class submarines is essential reading for anyone involved in the project or with an interest in submarines. Plans for the official launch of 'Safe to Dive' will be advised when finalized.

Kind regards,
David Michael



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YouTube Member Presentations

Readers are reminded that should you miss one of our monthly presentations via Zoom they are recorded for later viewing. Most are posted to the Society's [YouTube channel](#) while others are made available through the [members area](#) of the website.

J Class Submarines

The most recent recording of Andrew Mackinnon's presentation on the J Class submarines is now available.

The presentation describes the emergence of the J-Class Submarines, which were built in the UK during World War I. It addresses their service in the Royal Navy, before all six were gifted to Australia in 1919 and made their way with a new depot ship HMAS *Platypus* to Australia. Their arrival thus saw a continuation of the RAN's submarine capability that was interrupted with the loss of submarines AE1 in 1914 and AE2 in 1915. The account also covers the maintenance challenges the J-Class faced on arrival in Sydney, their subsequent transfer to Corio Bay in Geelong, Victoria and an outline of their brief seagoing training activities on the Australian coast before disposal.



HMAS J1 in Australian Waters 1921

Navy Nashos

In July 1951 a new arm of the reserve forces was instituted following the proclamation of the National Service Act 1951. Those called up for training and duty under the provisions of the Act were enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve (National Service) RANR (NS).

The RANR (NS) was constituted under the Naval Defence Act 1910-1949 as a section of the Citizen Naval Forces. Persons called up for the service under the National Service Act were required to serve for a period of five years, during which time they were to carry out 176 days training. National servicemen were required to complete 124 days of that training during their first year of enlistment, the first 82 days of which were undertaken in a regional shore establishment. The remaining 42 days were completed in a sea-going ship.

In the event of war, or an emergency, national servicemen were liable to be called up to serve in accordance with the provisions of the Naval Defence Act. Their service added a new word to Australia's lexicon. They were 'nashos'. In the first National Service Scheme between 1951 and 1959, all men aged 18 received a 'Happy Birthday' greeting from the Prime Minister, and were asked to register for National Service. A total of 287,000 served in 52 intakes. Only 6300 of them went into the Navy.

All naval national servicemen wore a distinctive cloth badge of their left upper arm bearing the letters 'RANR (NS)', embroidered in red on a black rectangular background. Sailors wearing class II uniform were also issued with a distinctive cap ribbon bearing the same designation.



Royal Australian Naval Reserve (National Service) Trainee Class

Original articles

- [Nasho-Issue-No-123.pdf \(nashoqld.org.au\)](#)
- [Nasho vet looks back fondly | Defence](#)

Vietnam War commemorative medallion and certificate

To acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will produce a Commemorative Medallion and Certificate of Commemoration. The [DVA website](https://portal.nationalmailing.com.au/DVA/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fDVA%2fVietnam) describes it as follows:

'The medallion and certificate will be made available to every living veteran, widows of veterans and other family members of veterans of the Vietnam War. Please note that only one medallion is available per Vietnam War veteran. While Australia can never repay the debt, we owe to the 60,000 who served in Vietnam, this medallion and certificate are a small but meaningful way to honour their service and to recognise the sacrifice of those who never returned home.'



Eligible persons can apply for the medallion and certificate via the following link.

<https://portal.nationalmailing.com.au/DVA/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fDVA%2fVietnam>

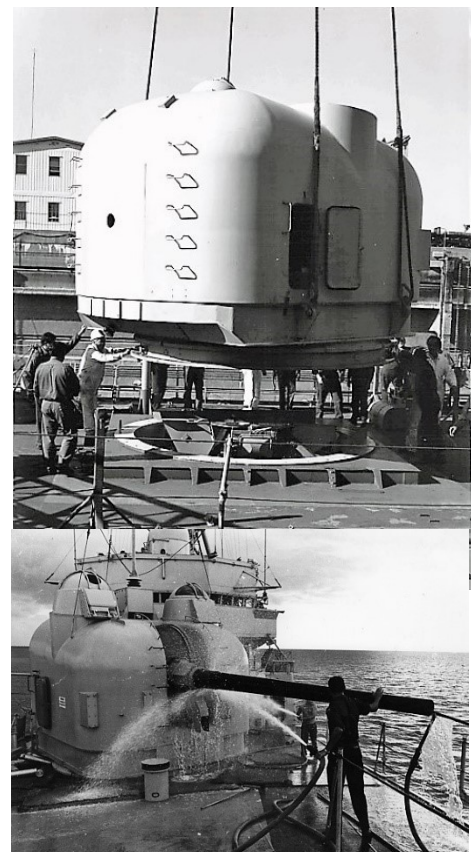
Royal Australian Naval Operations in Vietnam

Between 1965 and 1972 elements of the RAN undertook continuous operational service in Vietnam. During this period the Navy performed a variety of operational tasks at sea, ashore and in the air. Although the war in Vietnam was primarily a conflict on land, for the 13,500 members of the RAN who saw active service the war was just as real. The RAN's contribution, was diverse and played a significant part in the Australian Forces overall commitment.

Reference: Straczek, Jozef, Naval Operations in Vietnam, available on the Sea Power Centre Australia website, <https://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/naval-operations-vietnam>

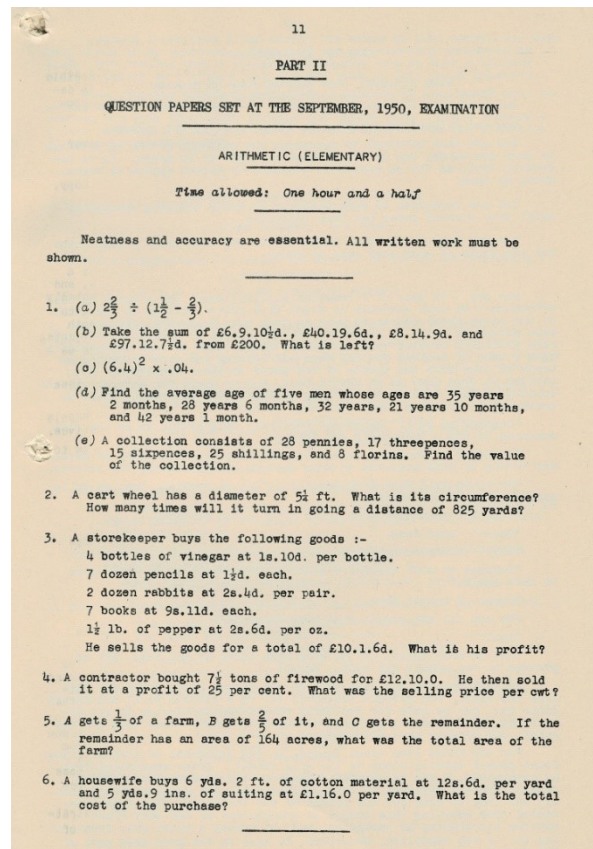
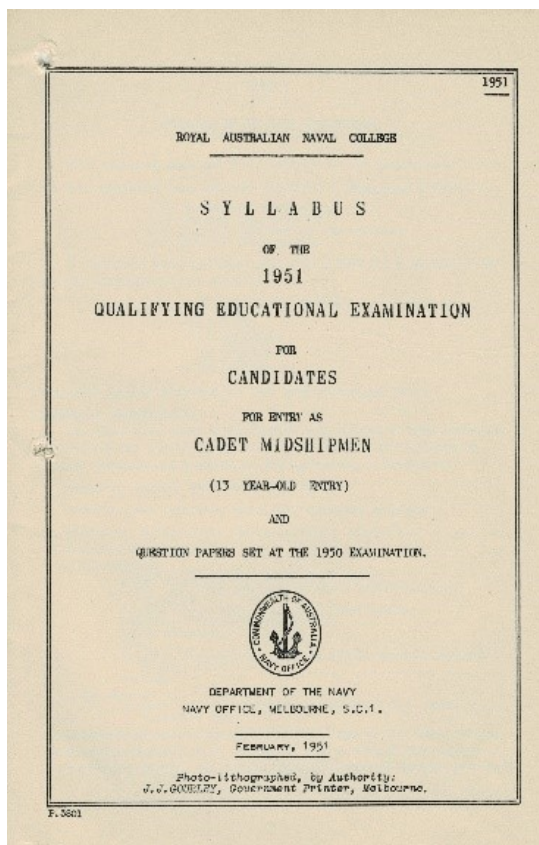
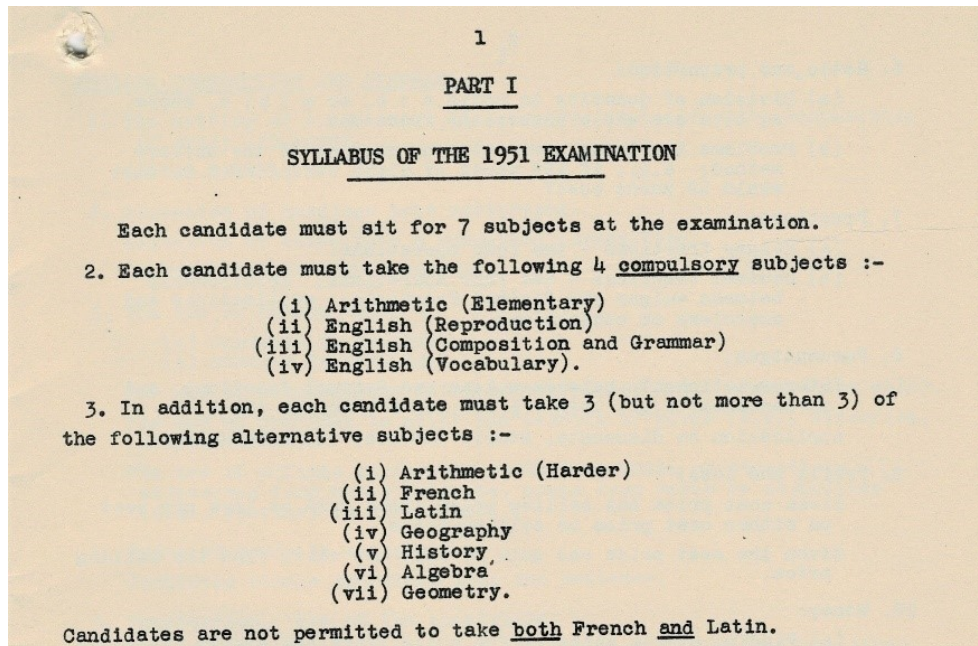


The 5 inch rapid fire gun fitted to the RAN's Charles F Adams Class - Guided Missile Destroyer (DDG)



Royal Australian Naval College Qualifying Educational Examination

A set of entrance examination papers for prospective 13-year-old entrants to the Naval College was recently donated to the Society archives. The papers were for the years; 1944, 45, 47, 50, 51 and 53. Each candidate was required to sit for seven subjects which ran for a total of 7.5 hours.



As an example, this is the 1951 elementary arithmetic paper. How would you score?

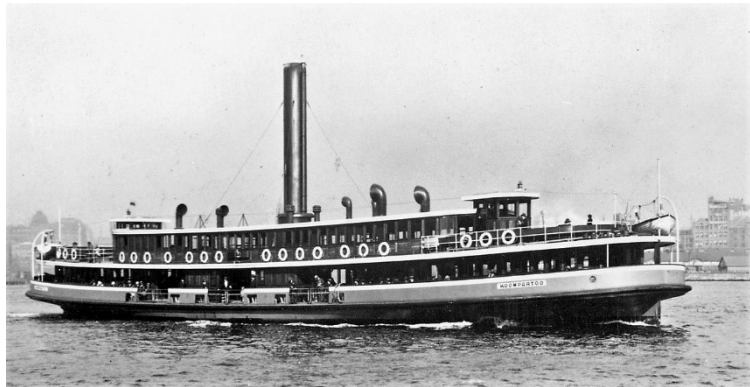
A copy of the full 1951 examination paper is available via this [link](https://navyhistory.au/wp-content/uploads/Syllabus-of-the-1951-Qualifying-Exam-for-RAN-College-13-year-old-Cadet-Midshipman.pdf),
<https://navyhistory.au/wp-content/uploads/Syllabus-of-the-1951-Qualifying-Exam-for-RAN-College-13-year-old-Cadet-Midshipman.pdf>.

HMAS *Koompartoo*

In the early twentieth century, prior to the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, Sydney Ferries Limited was running one of the largest ferry fleets in the world to cater for booming demand for ferry services across Sydney Harbour to Sydney's North Shore. In particular, more and bigger ferries were needed to service the crowded Milsons Point to Circular Quay route which was described as a short heavy-lift route.

SS *Koompartoo*, was built for this purpose by Walsh Island Dockyard and Engineering Works, Newcastle and entered service with Sydney Ferries Limited in May 1922. When brought into service the press described her as "Dreadnought for the Milsons Point run" and "a titan amongst ferries". Along with her sister ferry, *Kuttabul* they were the highest capacity ferries ever on Sydney Harbour. Following the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, both ferries were redundant.

Kuttabul and *Koompartoo* represented the peak of the K-class design of double-ended ferries with steel hulls and wooden superstructures unlike most other K-class ferries, which were built with timber hulls. They were certified to carry 2,089 people, which was the highest passenger capacity of any ferries ever on Sydney Harbour.



SS *Koompartoo* circa 1920s

The K Class ferries were all named with Aboriginal words starting with "K". The name, "Koompartoo", is thought to mean "fresh start or new beginnings".

With the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, the once crowded route was effectively redundant. *Koompartoo* and *Kuttabul* were too big to be useful on the other cross harbour routes which also saw significant and sudden drops in trade, and the two ferries were laid up. Almost twenty Sydney Ferries were decommissioned in the two years following the bridge's opening. The two were both of relatively young age and were considered for conversion to run the Manly route. However, *Koompartoo* was later made available for tourist, spectator and concert cruises on the harbour.

During World War 2 *Koompartoo* was purchased from Sydney Harbour Ferries Ltd by the British Ministry of War Transport for service in the Middle East. To prepare her for this role she



Koompartoo as a concert boat in 1938

underwent conversion at Mort's Dock in Sydney, but due to the outbreak of war in the Pacific never deployed. Instead, she was taken over by the RAN on 18 June 1942 for use as a Boom Defence Vessel. Commissioning as HMAS *Koompartoo* on 23 December 1942, under the command of Lieutenant GG Moss, RANR(S), she deployed for Darwin in January 1943 where she served as a Boom Gate Vessel until the end of World War II. She returned to Sydney in 1950 and was placed in the

Reserve Fleet at Athol Bight. In April 1962 she was declared for disposal and was sold out of the Service on 8 June 1962.



HMAS *Koompartoo* alongside another ex ferry, *Kara Kara* at HMAS Waterhen circa 1957

Stripped of her superstructure and she was towed to Launceston in 1966 for use as a bauxite barge. Her final fate is unclear.

References:

- Gillett, Ross (February–April 1977). "Sydney's Fighting Ferries". *The Navy, the Magazine of the Navy League of Australia*. 39: 29–32. Retrieved 5 January 2019.
- Andrews, Graeme (1975). "*The Ferries of Sydney*". Published by AH and AW Reed.
- Sea Power Centre Australia. HMAS *Koompartoo*, available at <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-koompartoo>

RNAS and RAF Aircraft carried on Royal Australian Navy Ships 1917 - 1919

During the last two years of World War 1, three RAN ships, the battle-cruiser HMAS *Australia* and the light cruisers HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Sydney*, worked as units of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet in the North Sea. All three ships carried aircraft at various times. HMAS *Australia* had extendible 30 ft ramp referred to as a flying off deck fitted over 'P' and 'Q' turrets and could generally carry one fighter, typically a Sopwith Pup or Sopwith Camel, and one reconnaissance aircraft, a Sopwith 1½ Strutter modified as a 'Ship Strutter'. The two light cruisers were fitted with a revolving flying off deck mounted behind but extending partly over 'A' turret and usually carried a fighter, either a Sopwith Pup or a Sopwith Camel.

HMAS *Sydney*, under the command of a very aviation-minded captain, Captain J.S Dumaesq, RN, was a pioneer in the launching of land aircraft from revolving flying off decks on cruisers. These decks measured about 16 ft from the aircraft wheels to the leading edge so wind over the deck was vital for safe launching.

A revolving platform could be turned to provide wind over the deck without the ship turning off course.



A Sopwith 1½ Strutter launching from one of HMAS *Australia*'s turrets

The aircraft carried were not permanently allocated to the ship but were loaned for varying, usually short, periods from a nearby air station. Until 31 March 1918 they were operated by the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and from 1 April 1918 when the Royal Air Force was formed. Pilots appear to have been appointed to the respective ships as they flew various different aircraft. The only other RAN ship recorded as carrying an aircraft was the cruiser HMAS Brisbane which embarked a Sopwith Baby floatplane in the Indian Ocean for a short period in 1917 to assist in the hunt for the German commerce raider Wolf.

The aircraft were removed from the RAN ships in early 1919 before they returned to Australia. The Sopwith was withdrawn from service in 1919 and this ended the era of revolving flying off decks on cruisers. During 1920, Commodore J.S. Dumaresq, RN, by now the RAN Fleet Commander, persuaded the Naval Board that HMAS Australia and HMAS Melbourne could each usefully carry an Avro 504 seaplane from the Australian Flying Corps. For a variety of reasons this trial failed and the RAN ships then carried no aircraft until after the arrival of six Fairey IIIDs in late 1921.

The full list of aircraft and their allocations from log and pilot records is available at [RAN Ships Aircraft 1917-1919 \(adf-serials.com.au\)](http://adf-serials.com.au)

Photo of the Month



A ScanEagle drone is launched from the flight deck of HMAS Newcastle in the Middle East region

To support the introduction of Maritime Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems, ScanEagle conducted the Royal Australian Navy's first simultaneous operations of manned (MH-60R Seahawk) and unmanned aircraft during HMAS *Newcastle*'s deployment (Rotation 65) to the Middle East region on Operation *Manitou*.

The ScanEagle unmanned aerial system (UAS) is one of the most widely used tactical UAS in the world, having flown over one million flight hours globally.

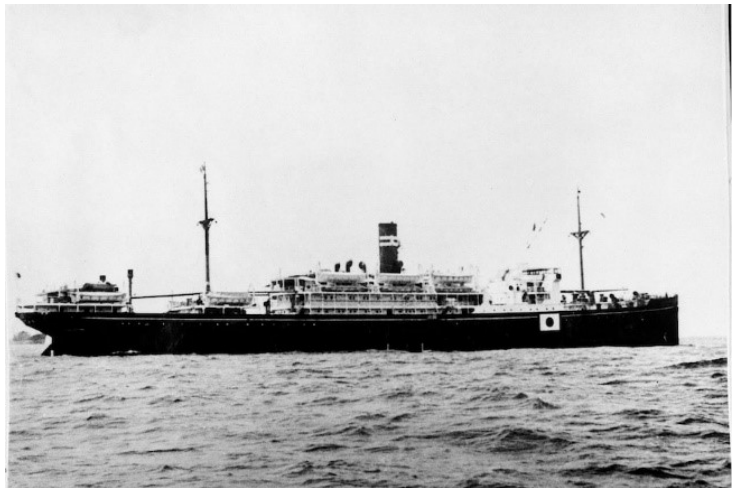
The ScanEagle system consists of multiple remotely piloted aircraft (RPA), a pneumatic catapult launcher, a Skyhook recovery system, and a ground control system (GCS) with associated antennas and interconnections necessary for command and control of the RPA component. ScanEagle RPA is a small carbon fibre, long endurance, fixed wing aircraft capable of runway independent operation from land bases and seagoing vessels.

It is operated by 822X Squadron RAN which has been testing the ScanEagle and S-100 Camcopter since being commissioned in 2018.

News

Montevideo Maru

The ship at the centre of the worst maritime disaster in Australia's history has been discovered more than 4,000 metres beneath the sea, 81 years after it sank. Japanese transport ship SS *Montevideo Maru* sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on July 1, 1942, off the coast of the Philippines. It was torpedoed by an American submarine, which did not know it was carrying prisoners of war and civilians captured in Rabaul. In total, about 1,060 prisoners were lost, including 850 service members and 210 civilians from 14 countries.



SS *Montevideo Maru* was found after 12 days of searching in the South China Sea, by a team led by not-for-profit Silentworld Foundation, deep-sea survey specialists Fugro and supported by the Department of Defence. The discovery was a long time in the making for technical director and submarine specialist Captain Roger Turner, who spent years researching the wreck to narrow down its location. "We had Japanese researchers and American researchers helping to put together the story," he told ABC News. "There was a lot of information out there but ours was the first time it had all been considered in one breath and put together in an argument that demonstrated where we hoped to find it. "We should refer to it as not a wreck but a tomb. It's where more than 1,100 souls now lie at peace."

Unmanned Vessel Construction in Australia

Austal Australia and Saildrone have entered a teaming agreement to jointly identify opportunities to collaborate on the manufacture of Saildrone Surveyor in Australia, for deployments in the Indo-Pacific region.

Saildrone Surveyor USV is 20 meters long and designed specifically for deep ocean mapping and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) applications, above and below the surface.

While Saildrone is a US-owned and operated company based in Alameda, California, it will establish Saildrone Australia in 2023 to cater to the commercial and government sector in Australia and the broader Indo-Pacific Region.



Video of the Month

Given the focus in recent years on autonomous aircraft it is interesting to look at trials that took place 10 years ago with the Northrop Grumman X-47B.

On 4 May 2013, it successfully performed an arrested landing on a simulated carrier deck at Patuxent River.

The X-47B launched from the USS *George H.W. Bush* on 14 May 2013 in the Atlantic Ocean, marking the first time that a UAV was catapulted off an aircraft carrier.

On 17 May 2013, another first was achieved when it performed touch-and-go landings and take-offs from *George H.W. Bush* while underway.

On 10 July 2013, the X-47B launched from Patuxent River and landed on the deck of *George H.W. Bush*, conducting the first ever arrested landing of a UAV on a carrier at sea. It subsequently completed a second successful arrested landing on *George H.W. Bush*, but a third attempt was diverted to the Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia due to a technical issue. One of the UAV's three navigational sub-systems failed, which was identified by the other two sub-systems and indicated to the operator, who followed procedures to abort the landing. The Navy stated that the problem's detection demonstrated the X-47B's reliability and ability to operate autonomously.

X-47B UCAS Aviation History Under Way

http://www.youtube.com/embed/WC8U5_4lo2c?feature=player_embedded



This Month in History

May 1856	The sloop-of war HMCS VICTORIA, (CMDR W. H. Norman, RN), arrived at Port Phillip, Melbourne, VIC, on her maiden voyage from the United Kingdom. VICTORIA was proclaimed as the 'first vessel of war built to the order of a British colony', thus launching Australia's first colonial navy.
May 1884	Tasmania's only warship a 2nd class torpedo boat known as TB191, arrived in Hobart.
May 1913	The Minister for the Navy approved the formation of the Naval Dockyard Police. The initial strength was one Chief Warrant Officer, one Sergeant, nine Senior Constables, and 29 Constables.
May 1916	On the day of the Battle of Jutland HMAS Australia was returning to Scapa from Devonport, having departed at 10 a.m. on 31 May. She arrived at Scapa at 6:30 a.m. on 3 June
May 1918	CAPT R. A. Little, DSO and Bar, Croix de Guerre, an Australian who served in the RNAS, and No. 203 Squadron, RAF, was fatally wounded in a night engagement with a German Gotha bomber over Vieux Barquin, France. Little was in a position to shoot down the enemy aircraft when he was blinded by an Allied searchlight. CAPT Little was credited with the shooting down of 47 enemy aircraft.
May 1928	HMAS SYDNEY was paid off for breaking up at Sydney and on 10 January 1929 was delivered to Cockatoo Island for breaking up
May 1940	ANZAC troop convoy US.3 departed Wellington with troopships Aquitania (45,647grt), Empress of Britain (42,348grt), and Empress of Japan (26,032grt), escorted by HMAS Australia and HMNZS Leander.
May 1941	Ordinary Seaman Ian Rhodes, a RAN Volunteer Reserve sailor, was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for courage in action when HMS Kashmir was sunk during operations to defend Crete. Ordinary Seaman Rhodes was part of the gun crew for the Aft Port Oerlikon gun. With the water rising up around the weapon as the ship sank, and under fire from German aircraft which strafed the ship and survivors already in the sea alongside, Ian Rhodes climbed up to the weapon on the other side of the ship and commenced returning fire, shooting down an aircraft. For his courage in action, he was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, the award for gallantry second only to the Victoria Cross for sailors, and the only Australian Sailor to receive the decoration during both world wars.
May 1949	HMAS SYDNEY (III) arrived in Jervis Bay with the Fleet Air Arm's first Naval Air Squadrons, 805 and 816 Squadrons, embarked. Two Supermarine Type 309 Sea Otters were lowered into the water and flew to Nowra while 27 Hawker Sea Fury FB II's and 27 Fairey Firefly AS 5s were landed ashore by aircraft lighters along with the associated stores, machinery, aircraft documentation and personal baggage. Once ashore, the aircraft were towed to Nowra in convoys, the last arriving on 29 May. It was another two weeks before flying could commence due to inclement weather.
May 1956	First Gannets delivered to RAN FAA
May 1963	HMAS QUEENBOROUGH struck HMS TABARD while exercising off Sydney. Both vessels were damaged but returned to Port under their own power.
May 1967	Three divers of Clearance Diving Team 3 were flown to Phu Loi, Vietnam, to recover a Chinook helicopter which had crashed into the sea. The team recovered the bodies of the crew and assisted in the raising of the sunken helicopter. Two battalions of troops guarded the area against Viet Cong attack during the operation.
May 1977	HMAS SWAN sailed in response to an urgent request for medical assistance from SS Austral Moon. Two crew members had suffered serious injuries when the 30,000 tonne American freighter encountered heavy weather some 650nm due east of Sydney. Swan rendezvoused with Austral Moon that afternoon. The inclement weather precluded the use of Swan's boats so a line was passed to the freighter and connected to an inflatable naval life raft. Surgeon Lieutenant Brian Misso and Leading Seaman Phillip Littlewood were lowered into the raft to be pulled across to Austral Moon while Swan afforded a lee as best she could in the conditions. There were tense moments as the line parted during the crossing but Lieutenant Misso and Leading Seaman Littlewood were able to secure the raft and board the freighter. They remained on board Austral Moon until she arrived in Sydney the following morning and the two injured sailors were transferred to a waiting ambulance at Circular Quay.
May 1984	The RAN established the world's first seabed mine de-magnetising range, at Shark Point, Sydney. Ships passing over the range are automatically de-magnetised.
May 1992	The former HMAS STUART (II) sailed for Singapore to be broken up.
May 2003	HMA Ships Anzac III and Darwin returned to Australia from the Middle East region. They were the Navy's 23rd and 24th ship deployments to the Middle East region since 1990

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

- Occasional Paper 161 - HMAS *Tobruk* Recognised for Operation Solace
- Occasional Paper 162 - Port Phillip Fleet Review May 1920

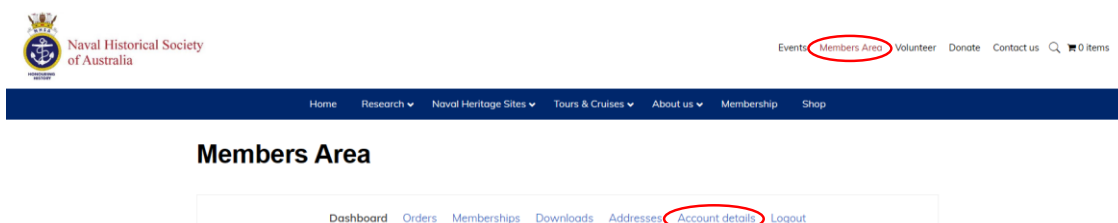
Society Matters

Accessing the website members area

Periodically advice is received from members that they are unable to access the '[Members Area](#)' of the website. Access is important if you are to receive full value from your membership. Each month new occasional papers are posted to the page and your magazine; the *Naval Historical Review* is posted quarterly. For members receiving digital publications access is essential.

To access the members area from the home page or elsewhere simply click on 'Members Area' on the top right of your screen. This will take you to the dashboard from which you can access publications, the members image gallery, video presentations and other areas.

From the dashboard you can also access your personal space to view; past purchases, your membership history, to change your address and in the 'Account details' section change your password.



If you experience ongoing difficulties accessing the website or come across a page with broken links or is out of date, please e-mail the Society at office@navyhistory.au.

New Book, hot off the press

Safe to Dive: Submarine Support in Sydney 1914 to 1999

Now available through the [website shop](#).

This book details the vital support provided to RAN submarines over the decades. That support is essential to their safe, effective and continuing operation in peace and war. This book, tells the story of support of Australia's submarines in Sydney from the arrival of *AE1* and *AE2* in 1914 to the decommissioning of HMAS *Platypus* in 1999.

Price

PDF Download \$15

PRINTED incl. postage to AU address \$50

PRINTED incl. postage to overseas address \$65

