



Call the Hands



Issue No. 75

June 2023

From the President

Welcome to this 75th edition of *Call the Hands*. As usual we aim to provide a mix of stories on a variety of subjects across the history of the Royal Australian Navy. This edition has a focus on people and podcasts of which there are numerous excellent productions available to members and the public.

Our video of the month is a compelling recording of a Zoom presentation by Angus Britts on the Ikara missile, 'Australia's Cold War Wonder Weapon'. A recording of John Smith's rollicking tale entitled 'Napoleon, the Royal Navy and Me' can be found on page eight along with a link to the latest 'Life on the Line' podcast relating to actions in the Mediterranean in 1941.

In addition to our tribute to John Smith, Society volunteer and researcher for many years, we acknowledge the great contribution to recording Australian naval history by Society past president, Vince Fazio and to the last survivor of HMAS *Perth* (I) Frank McGovern. After surviving the loss of *Perth* on 1 March 1942 Frank led a remarkable life until crossing the bar aged 103 on 24 May 2023.

In recent news we note the imminent decommissioning of the survey motor launches HMA Ships *Benalla* and *Shepparton* which commissioned on 20 March and 24 January 1990 respectively. After decommissioning in June the mantle of 'First Lady of the Fleet' will pass from *Shepparton* to HMAS *Anzac* (III). *Anzac* commissioned on 18 May 1996. As with the Adelaide class FFGs and other classes of frigates and destroyers which have gone before, a sailor's passion for his or her ship is well demonstrated in the page 5 video of HMAS *Newcastle*'s, 2017 Middle East Deployment. The last of the RAN's FFGs, HMAS *Newcastle* decommissioned four years ago in June 2019.

Occasional papers (163 and 164) accompanying this edition of *Call the Hands* are provided by two long term members of the Society. Stephen Youl has provided the biographical notes on Able Seaman Frank McGovern, OAM, 1919 – 2023 and Ross Gillett addresses the interesting story of Australia's first destroyer HMAS *Parramatta* (I) after decommissioning in 1928.

Finally, we invite all readers who are not yet members of the Society to consider joining the Naval Historical Society after 1 July 2023. Membership is low cost and great value for money. On page 12 we outline the benefits of membership and will remind you again in the next edition of this newsletter.

Kind regards,
David Michael



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of Australia

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The Fall of Singapore: Video Recording now Available



The recording of this Zoom presentation to members delivered by Nigel Rogers on Wednesday 17 May 2023 is now available on the website for those who missed it. It can be located via the Research/[Podcast page](#). It will be made available on the Society's [YouTube channel](#) in July.

New Book: Safe to Dive: Submarine Support in Sydney 1914 to 1999

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

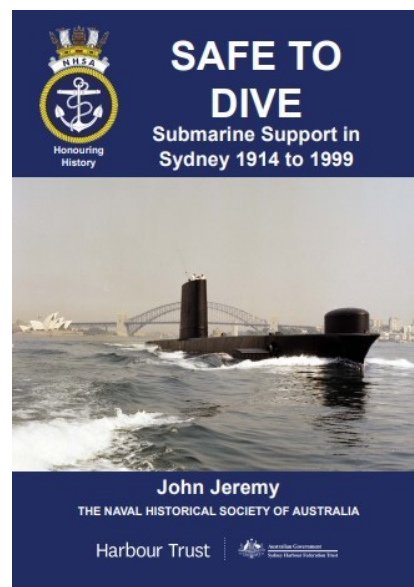
Safe to Dive: Submarine Support in Sydney 1914 to 1999
Now available through the website shop. This book details the vital support provided to RAN submarines over the decades. That support is essential to their safe, effective and continuing operation in peace and war. This book, tells the story of support 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



Shipwright Lieutenant Vincent Fazio, RAN, 1929 - 2015



In early May 2023 the Society was privileged to receive a large collection of items from the family of past president, Vince Fazio who crossed the bar in 2015. This donation followed an offer from the Honourable Amanda Fazio, Vince's daughter to receive the collection which included many books, plans, models and manuscripts. Of particular interest were the manuscripts relating to several books which Vince had authored during his long and distinguished life both in the Royal Australian Navy and as a historian in retirement. He served as Society president from 2000 to 2001. The manuscripts of his many works will assist the Society with its book digitization project.

Vincent Fazio, joiner 4th class at work circa 1952-53

Vincent's major written works for the Society include:

HMAS Condamine in Korea 1952–1953 (1986). Re-printed in 2002 as HMAS Condamine — The story of a uniquely Australian frigate.

The Battle of Salamis 480 BC (1993).

HMAS Nirimba: December 1955–December 1959 (1993).

RAN Aircraft Carriers 1929–1982: The story of the service in the Royal Australian Navy of HMA Ships Albatross, Sydney, Vengeance and Melbourne (1997).

Tribal and Battle Class Destroyers (1999).

The Battlecruiser HMAS Australia: First Flagship of the Royal Australian Navy (1999).

Daring Class Destroyers: The story of Vampire and her eleven sister ships in the RAN and RN (1999).

The River Class Frigates of the Royal Australian Navy 1942–1972 (2003).

Vincent Barry Fazio: Biographical Notes

By Greg Swinden

Vincent 'Vince' Barry Fazio was born in Taree, NSW, on 8 April 1929, the eldest son of Victor Warren Fazio and Jean Nelson Fazio (nee Kelly). His father served in the RAN during 1928-1945, attaining the rank of petty officer, and was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) in October 1945 for sustained service in the South West Pacific Area in HMA Ships *Bendigo* and *Kalgoorlie*.

After completing his schooling Vince trained as a carpenter and joined the RAN at HMAS *Cerberus* on 7 November 1950 as a recruit (joiner). After completing his basic training, he was rated as an acting joiner 4th class and continued to serve at *Cerberus* until joining the frigate HMAS *Condamine* in January 1952. *Condamine* was deployed to the Korean War between August 1952 – March 1953, and its service was later to be the subject of Vince's first book.

Upon return to Australia in April 1953 Vince joined the depot ship and floating workshop HMAS *Platypus*, based in Sydney. He also later served in HMA Ships *Melbourne* and *Vendetta*, as well as the shore bases *Tarangau*, *Cerberus*, *Nirimba*, *Albatross* and *Penguin*. He recalled his first posting to *Nirimba* was actually to *Kuttabul* (for *Nirimba*), and that when he arrived at *Kuttabul* he was told to find his way to 'an obscure place called Quakers Hill'. From November 1955 until July 1956, he was the shipwright on the base and busy setting up the Shipwright Training School for the first apprentice intake in July 1956.

By 1958 Vince had attained the rank of naval shipwright 3rd Class, and on 13 November 1961 he was commissioned as an acting sub-lieutenant shipwright. He then proceeded to the United Kingdom for officer training at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, and the naval constructor's course at the Royal Navy Engineering College (HMS *Thunderer*) at Keyham.

Vince returned to Australia in mid-1962, in the newly commissioned minesweeper HMAS *Hawk*, after which he served in the tanker HMAS *Supply* and the shore base HMAS *Waterhen*. He was promoted to shipwright lieutenant on 26 May 1964, and in July of that year joined the fast troop transport HMAS *Sydney*. During his service in Sydney the ship conducted the first two troop transport voyages to South Vietnam (Operation *Trimdon* during May – June 1965, and Operation *Tanton* during September – October 1965).

After his service in *Sydney*, he saw service again at *Waterhen* and *Nirimba* (where he oversaw the Shipwright Training Section) before a posting to the aircraft carrier *Melbourne*, from July 1969 – December 1971. Whilst there he was involved in the major repairs to the ship after the collision with the destroyer USS *Frank E. Evans*. In early 1972 Vince Fazio joined the staff of the Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet as the Fleet Shipwright Officer. His final appointment was in April 1975 to the Junior Recruit Training Establishment (HMAS *Leeuwin*) in Western Australia as the Depot Shipwright Officer.

Vince retired from the RAN, as a shipwright lieutenant, on 16 October 1975, and pursued civilian employment. He became a member of the Naval Historical Society where he was a prolific researcher and author. Vince Fazio passed away in Sydney on 24 July 2015 at the age of 85. He was survived by his wife Beryl 'Ruth', and his two children John and Amanda.

HMAS Newcastle

After more than 25 years of service in the Royal Australian Navy, HMAS *Newcastle* decommissioned at Garden Island, Fleet Base East, Sydney on Sunday, 30 June 2019. The sixth and final of Australia's Adelaide class guided missile frigates (FFGs), *Newcastle* was built by the Australian company, AMECON in the Williamstown Naval Dockyard, Victoria and commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy on 11 December 1993.

During its life in the Royal Australian Navy *Newcastle* steamed 813,904.36 nautical miles and spent 69,820 hours and 45 minutes underway. After decommissioning, the ship remained alongside Fleet Base East, Garden Island, Sydney, until being renamed and commissioned into the Chilean Navy on 15 April 2020 as the *Capitan Prat*.

Highlights of *Newcastle*'s service life included six deployments to the Middle East where it played an active role in enforcing United Nations sanctions against Iraq during Operation Damask and contributing to the stability and security of the region. It also participated in peacekeeping efforts, including the INTERFET operation in East Timor in 1999, where it supported Australian troops in restoring peace and stability. The numerous exercises in which it participated included multinational exercises to foster cooperation and interoperability with allied navies such as RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific), Talisman Sabre, and Kakadu.

A notable event occurred in 2001 during its participation in Operation *Relex*, the RAN's commitment to Australia's maritime border security and immigration policies. *Newcastle* was dispatched to intercept the MV *Tampa* with the objective being to prevent asylum seekers entering Australian waters. *Tampa*, a Norwegian cargo ship, had rescued a group of asylum seekers whilst en route to Australia. The 'Tampa Crisis' became the catalyst for a new Australia's 'border protection' policy and became a pivotal issue in the 2001 federal election campaign.

Further Reading

Schroder Andrew, Australian Warship Joins Chilean Navy, Australian War Memorial, June 2020, available at: https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/hmas_newcastle

Sea Power Centre-Australia, HMAS Newcastle, available at: <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-newcastle>

Australian War Memorial Video, HMAS *Newcastle*, 2017 Middle East Deployment, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQTZXxV5hoQ&list=RDCMUCBysIDU3NVAQKtN5mRR500Q>



HMAS *Newcastle* departs Newcastle Harbour for the last time before decommissioning

Able Seaman Frank McGovern OAM 1919 – 2023; Last survivor of HMAS Perth Crosses the Bar

World War Two veteran Frank McGovern sunk twice by torpedos on HMAS *Perth* in the Sunda Strait and the *Rakuyō Maru* died on 24 May 2023 at the age of 103. His remarkable story of survival as a prisoner of war against all odds is told in Occasional Paper 163 circulated with this newsletter.

WW2 veteran Frank McGovern at his Randwick home, 2020. *Louise Kennerley*



Video: HMAS *Perth* (I), USS *Houston* - Battle of Sunda Strait Sea Power Centre - Australia



On the nights of 28 February/1 March 1942 HMAS *Perth* (I), in company USS *Houston*, made a desperate bid to force passage through the Sunda Strait in an effort to reach the safety of Tjilatjap in the aftermath of the disastrous Battle of the Java Sea. Low on fuel and ammunition, both ships proceeded at high speed but were detected by a superior force of Japanese warships.

This extract from the Royal Australian Navy production "The History of the Royal Australian Navy Volume Two, 1919-1945" recreates HMAS *Perth*'s desperate final action and the gallantry of the crews of *Perth* and *Houston*, both of which were sunk.

It can be accessed via this [link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87NgnoWfcuU). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87NgnoWfcuU>

Further Reading

Sea Power Centre -Australia, HMAS *Perth* (I) History available at, <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-perth-i>

Photo of the Month



HMAS Vendetta crew members Mick Pettingell and Gordon Hill on sentry duty in Malta June 1940.
HMAS Vendetta was in refit at the time.

From the Society's Archive

13/6/40 Thursday and we are living ashore in a dugout, sleeping on
18 wooden ^{BENCHES} stools. The place is cut in the side of a tunnel and
is about 75 ft. long and 15 ft. wide. It is damp and dirty
and we live like rats. There have been eight raids today
and if we are working on the ship we run like hell to our
pill box to guard against parachutists. The "Vendetta"
was bombed unsuccessfully, the bombs landing about 150 yards
away. Mick was shot at by the machine gun from the plane
and did he run. (We have let one Italian liner go for a
British one.)

Extract from diary of Gordon Hill

Current News

Five Power Defence Arrangement exercise

Exercise Bersama Shield – a bi-annual military exercise between the five nations in the Five Power Defence Arrangements - concluded in Malaysia on Friday 12 May.

Approximately 250 Australian Defence Force personnel participated in the two-week exercise involving military forces from Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom. The exercise focused on combined joint operations in a multi-threat environment, with training designed to enhance interoperability and strengthen professional relationships.



HMAS Anzac conducting Officer of the Watch Manoeuvres of the coast of Malaysia during Exercise *Bersama Shield* 6 May 2023

Australia units involved included Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon and KA350 King Air tactical mobility aircraft, and HMAS Anzac.

“Exercises such as *Bersama Shield* continue to develop and provide the ADF and FPDA partners the opportunity to exercise together in a contemporary and complex environment.

Exercise Croix du Sud 2023

The Pacific Support Vessel, Australian Defence Vessel Reliant with elements of a Royal Australian Navy Clearance Diving Team embarked joined other ADF elements participating in the French led Pacific disaster relief exercise Croix du Sud 2023 in April - May 2023.



ADV Reliant with Fiji Navy Ship Savenaca during Exercise Croix du Sud 2023, RAN image

Led by the French Armed Forces in New Caledonia (FANC), Croix du Sud is a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) multilateral exercise which prepares partner nations to respond to HADR operations in the Pacific region. The exercise this year was the largest in the exercise's history, with more than 3,000 participants, 10 surface vessels and 15 aircraft from 19 nations responding to a simulated humanitarian crisis.

Navy's First Lady Final Port Entry

Navy's First Lady of the Fleet, HMAS Shepparton and sister ship HMAS Benalla sailed into Cairns for the final time on 15 May 2023. Personnel from HMAS Cairns lined the wharf to mark the occasion, which signified the imminent joint decommissioning of both Survey Motor Launches' scheduled for 16 June 2023. The vessels were part of Navy's Hydrographic Fleet and the last of the Paluma class vessels to retire. Together the two ships served for over 60 years.



HMAS Benalla makes her final approach into HMAS Cairns

Video of the Month

The IKARA Missile: Australia's Cold War Wonder Weapon

[The IKARA Missile: Australia's Cold War Wonder Weapon - YouTube](#)

Naval Historical Society of Australia Presentation to members, 15 June 2022.

By Angus Britts.

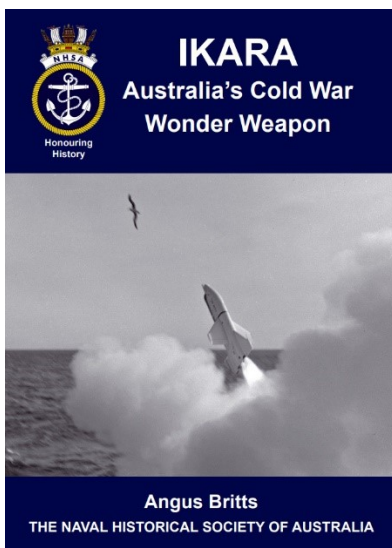
Duration: 1 hour 24 mins.

Other interesting recordings of the monthly Zoom presentations to members can be accessed via the Society's [YouTube Channel](#).



No single weapons platform at sea benefited more from the rapid advances in post-WW2 military technology than the submarine. The evolution of atomic power and guided missile delivery systems resulted in submarines becoming the apex predators at sea, as well as instruments of potential global annihilation. This in turn created an ever-greater need for effective stand-off antisubmarine warfare defences within a field of operations that presented enormous technological challenges for the major naval powers to overcome. Yet one of the most significant advances in the ASW domain was to emerge from a small player in the form of Australia, and from 1959 onwards create the foundations for that nation's future defence industries and defence science innovation. From drawing board to operational service, the narrative of the Ikara ASW system provides a fascinating insight as to how this project transformed Australia into a viable producer of high-quality military hardware on the world stage.

A Good Read



This book traces the story of Ikara from concept development to feasibility study in 1959 through to approval, design, production and service ending in 1991.

The history of the Ikara missile is a case study which demonstrates the ability of Australia's Government, Defence Department, research laboratories and Defence industry to work together to develop a state-of-the-art weapon system.

The Ikara history demonstrates clearly that Australia had the ability to be self-reliant in the development of world class precision weapons in the past.

Available from the Society's [website shop](#)

Podcasts

'Napoleon, the Royal Navy and Me' by John Smith

Included in the June 2023 edition of the Society's quarterly magazine, *The Naval Historical Review* is a tribute to long-standing Society volunteer, CMDR John Smith RAN Rtd. Members reading the tribute will know that in addition to focusing on John's life it includes considerable information about the remote island group of Tristan da Cunha which lies in the Roaring Forties, about halfway between South America and South Africa. John's exploits on Tristan da Cunha as officer in charge of a landing party in 1959 while serving in HMS *Lynx* was the start of his lifelong fascination with Napoleon and the Royal Navy. Napoleon had been imprisoned on the not-too-distant St Helena and some of his guards relocated to Tristan in November 1817 when the garrison was withdrawn.



LEUT John Smith RAN

The audio recording made in July 2018 with John in full flight at the Chatswood RSL telling his tale of 'Napoleon, the Royal Navy and Me' is available on the Society's website via this [link](#).

<https://navyhistory.au/podcast/>

Life on the Line Podcasts



The latest season of 'Life on the Line' podcasts includes a miniseries entitled FOR SCHOOL AND COUNTRY about World War II veterans who went to school together, and then to war. In the second episode, 'Scuttled & Sunk', John Reid describes action in the Mediterranean while serving in HMAS *Nizam*. His interview includes his eyewitness account of the loss of HMS *Barham* a Queen Elizabeth class battleship. This series, introduced by Dr Brendan Nelson can be access via this [link](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sZaTnYx2kc&t=205s>

HMS Barham: Survivors Account



The [June 1991 edition of the Naval Historical Review](#) included a personal account by Captain I.H. McDonald, RAN (Ret) of the loss of HMS *Barham*. At the time he was serving in Barham as Flag lieutenant to the 2nd in command of the Mediterranean Fleet and as Squadron Signal Officer of the 1st Battle Squadron.

On 25 November 1941 HMS *Barham* was off Bardia in Egypt when it was torpedoed at short range by U-331 resulting in the loss 862 lives. The Destroyer HMS *Hotspur* rescued 337 survivors.

Captain McDonald's account is also available on YouTube, entitled 'HMS Barham - A survivor's story' accessed via this [link](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k47hI9Q173w>

This Month in History

June 1858	The Admiralty approved an expenditure of from £4000 to £6000 for rendering Garden Island, Sydney, available for the repair of HM ships.
June 1902	HMS ENCOUNTER later HMAS ENCOUNTER, was launched at Devonport, England.
June 1916	Fleet Surgeon A. C. Bean, RN, was appointed as Director of Medical Services, RAN. In 1917 his title was changed to Director of Naval Medical Services, and under his leadership the RAN Medical Service was created.
June 1915	The RAN Bridging Train, (formed from members of the RAN Naval reserve), were embarked on the PORT MACQUARIE, for service in Gallipoli.
June 1919	HM destroyers Voyager (later HMAS) and Vivacious attacked the Russian Bolshevik destroyers Azard and Gavril at the entrance to Petrograd Bay.
June 1924	HMAS GERANIUM embarked a Fairey HID seaplane. GERANIUM was the first Australian ship to use aircraft for surveying.
June 1935	HMAS BRISBANE was ordered to assist HMS HASTINGS which ran aground on Shab Kutle Reef in the Red Sea. The cruiser stood by the stranded ship for a week until she was freed.
June 1940	HMAS VENDETTA commenced a long refit at Malta. During this time her ships company were loaned to the Army, and became part of the force ready to repel a possible invasion of the island by enemy forces.
June 1943	HMAS WALLAROO sank in a collision with the American merchant ship HENRY GILBERT COSTIN, 60 miles west of Fremantle, WA. 3 ratings lost their lives.
June 1948	The RAN Nursing Service, (RANNS), which had been formed in October 1942, was disbanded. 57 uniformed nursing sisters had served in the RANNS during WWII. Civilian nurses were employed to provide care to RAN personnel from this time.
June 1954	Delivery of the first RAN Vampire trainer took place when Lieutenant Peter Goldrick, RAN accepted the de Havilland Sea Vampire Mk T.34 at the de Havilland workshop in Bankstown on behalf of 723 Squadron. The aircraft was then flown to its permanent home at HMAS Albatross where it was used as a land-based trainer for Sea Fury pilots converting to the soon to be delivered Sea Venom jet fighter.
June 1961	HMAS MELBOURNE used the RAN-devised Bailey Bridge loading ramp for aircraft carriers at Garden Island, Sydney. The ramp greatly reduced the time required for loading.
June 1968	Three members of 723 Squadron, Lieutenant P.C. Ward, Petty Officer D.J. Sanderson and Naval Airman Mechanic Airframes and Engines (NAMEA) R.K. Smith, were lost when their Iroquois crashed over the cliff at Beecroft Head Firing Range and fell into the sea while on a range clearing flight.
June 1974	HMAS BUNA, (landing craft heavy), lost her bow ramp in heavy seas off the NSW coast. She was taken in tow and brought safely into port by HMAS PARRAMATTA
June 1981	HMAS MELBOURNE and HMAS TORRENS rescued a group of 99 Vietnamese refugees from dilapidated vessels in the South China Sea.
June 1989	CDRE M. Taylor, RAN, Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station, HMAS ALBATROSS, Nowra, NSW, and LEUT K. Champion, flew the RAN's last UH 1B Iroquois helicopter flight.
June 1994	Two workmen were killed when acetylene cylinders exploded on the floor of the Captain Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island, Sydney. The men were working on the Australian icebreaker AURORA AUSTRALIS.
June 2001	HMAS KANIMBLA arrives in the Solomon Islands to commence peacekeeping duties as part of Operation Trek. She was later relieved by HMAS MELBOURNE in July 2001
June 2019	HMAS Newcastle I decommissioned

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 163 - Able Seaman Frank McGovern OAM 1919 – 2023
- Occasional Paper 164 - The unusual post-war career of the first Australian destroyer

Society Matters

Membership

For readers who are not already Society members the following are the benefits of membership;

- Access to the Members Area of the Society's website,
- Four issues of the *Naval Historical Review*, the Society's premier quarterly magazine. Each issue of around 48 pages is withheld from general release for 12 months.
- Four issues of the members newsletter *The Buzz*,
- Eleven issues of *Call The Hands*, including includes 2 or 3 Occasional Papers on a variety of newsworthy subjects. These attached papers are also withheld from public issue for 12 months.
- Entitlement to a 10% discount on all shop items except Ships' Plans.
- Advance notice and cost discount for Society events and tours
- Access to online presentations that are for Members only.
- Access to the Society's Library



By any standard membership of the Society represents great value for money. Various options are available; periods of 1 or three years and the receipt of publications in print or digital formats.

Membership Opportunity from 1 July 2023

Our new membership period commences on 1 July 2023. If you are considering membership, please mark your calendar to join ASAP after 1 July. By doing this your membership will be managed under new and improved arrangements including membership renewal on the anniversary of joining and automated reminders.

2023-24 Membership Rates

One-year Digital publications, **\$35**

One-year, Printed publications, by post, **\$85**

Three-years, digital publications, **\$105**

Three-years, Printed publications, by post, **\$195**

We will remind you of this great opportunity again in the July edition of *Call the Hands*.