



Call the Hands



Issue No. 76

July 2023

From the President

Our President, David Michael, has been exploring the far north (of the planet, not Australia) for the last month so it is my pleasure to introduce this edition of *Call the Hands* on his behalf. Despite being on holiday, David has found time to prepare a contribution for this edition, *The Icelandic Coast Guard and the Cod Wars*, inspired by his recent visit to Iceland.

With this edition of *Call the Hands* we publish Occasional Papers 165 and 166. The first is entitled *A Short History of Building 10* — and enigmatic title — in it I very briefly tell the story of a building which made, through those who worked in it, a major contribution to the naval, maritime, aircraft and general engineering development of Australia. To find out more, you will have to read the paper! The second paper, *A History of HMAS Waterhen*, is by CMDR Rick Westoby, OAM, RAN and tells the story of the Waverton naval base built on the site of the quarry which provided a great deal of fill for the construction of the Captain Cook Graving Dock in Sydney during World War II.

Over the last month our volunteers have kept the Boatshed buzzing with activity. The Harbour Cruises continue to be popular with good bookings over coming months, although we are having a break in the mid-winter period as demand reduces in the colder weather and *Benneelong*, our tour vessel, undergoes essential maintenance. The tours get high praise, just reward for the enthusiastic volunteers who provide the commentary and host the visitors on board.

On Monday 5 June some 40 members and guests gathered at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park for the launching by the Fleet Commander, RADM Chris Smith AM CSC RAN of our latest book, *Safe to Dive: Submarine Support in Sydney 1914 to 1999*. The book has been published under licence from the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust for whom it was originally written as part of a series examining the work and development of Cockatoo Island in Sydney. The Trust was represented at the launch by Mr Brad Manera (representing the Executive Director, Ms Janet Carding), who is also the Senior Historian and Curator of the Anzac Memorial. The Society is most grateful to the Memorial for their support and to Cumberland RSL for their financial support for the event.

On 29 June a party of 13 volunteer members enjoyed a visit to HMAS *Supply*, which is currently undergoing a maintenance period. We are grateful for the opportunity to visit this interesting ship.

Members will shortly receive a membership renewal notice. We look forward to everyone renewing their membership (details in this edition of *Call the Hands*) — why not invite a friend (or two) to join.

Kind Regards
John Jeremy
Vice President



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The Icelandic Coast Guard and the Cod Wars

Berthed alongside the excellent Reykjavik Maritime Museum is the former Icelandic Coast Guard vessel *Odinn*. Built in 1959, the 900 tonne *Odinn* is a museum ship of similar vintage to the former HMAS *Vampire* at the Australian National Maritime Museum. *Odinn* is a veteran of three Cod Wars between Iceland and the United Kingdom and West Germany which extended over two decades until resolution in 1976. The cod wars were a series of disputes running from the 1950s to the 1970s over the rights to fish in Icelandic waters. Resolution in 1976 was finally achieved after Iceland threatened to withdraw NATO access to its waters and Keflavik airport. Iceland was an important strategic location during the Cold War, particularly for monitoring Soviet submarine movements.



Former Icelandic Coast Guard Vessel *Odinn*, Reykjavik Maritime Museum image.

As Iceland, with a population of less than 400,000, does not maintain a defence force, the provision of access to NATO forces is its major contribution to the Alliance. Like other coast guards, the Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) is a law enforcement agency which is responsible for search and rescue, maritime safety, and security surveillance, hydrography and law enforcement in the seas surrounding Iceland. It is responsible for operational defence tasks in Iceland and provides Host Nation Support for NATO and Allied visiting forces when operating out of Iceland.

ICG currently operates three major vessels with the flagship ICGV *Thor* commissioned in 2011 berthed across the Reykjavik harbour from *Odinn*.



Icelandic Coast Guard Vessel Thor in Reykjavik, David Michael image.

The Icelandic Coast Guard played its largest role during the fishing rights disputes with the United Kingdom in particular. During the First Cod War in autumn 1958 after Iceland unilaterally increased its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from four nautical miles to twelve. A number of incidents took place including Icelandic patrol boats firing across the bows of British trawlers in an effort to force them to leave the new zone.

During the second Cod War in September 1972, when Iceland extended its EEZ from twelve to fifty miles and Britain again refused to recognize, the ICGs most effective weapon was the trawl warp cutter.

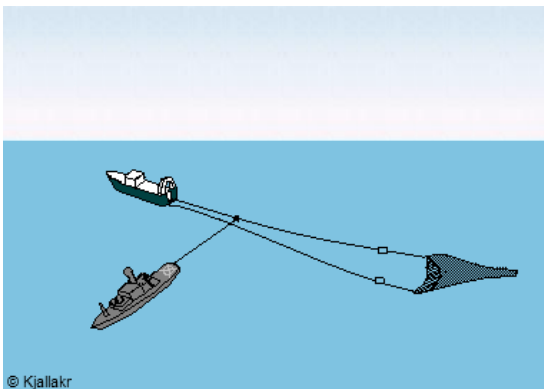
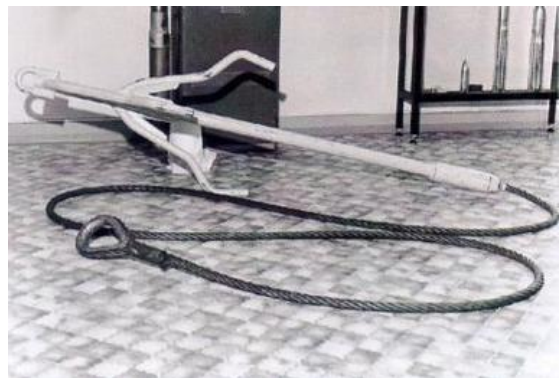


Illustration of how net cutters were used to sever a trawler's net. British Sea Fishing image.



Net Cutter used by Icelandic Coast Guard, Reykjavik Maritime Museum image.

During the Third Cod War (1972 and 1976) after Iceland increased its EEZ limit again, this time to 200 miles the ICGs goal was again to enforce the disputed expansion. However engagements between Icelandic vessels and British warships escalated to include ramming which became the tactic of choice. As a result at least 15 Royal Navy frigates, five Icelandic patrol boats and one British supply ship were damaged by ramming between 1975 and 1976. In the end, Iceland achieved its overall ambition of expanding its exclusive fishery zone to 200 nautical miles by June 1976.



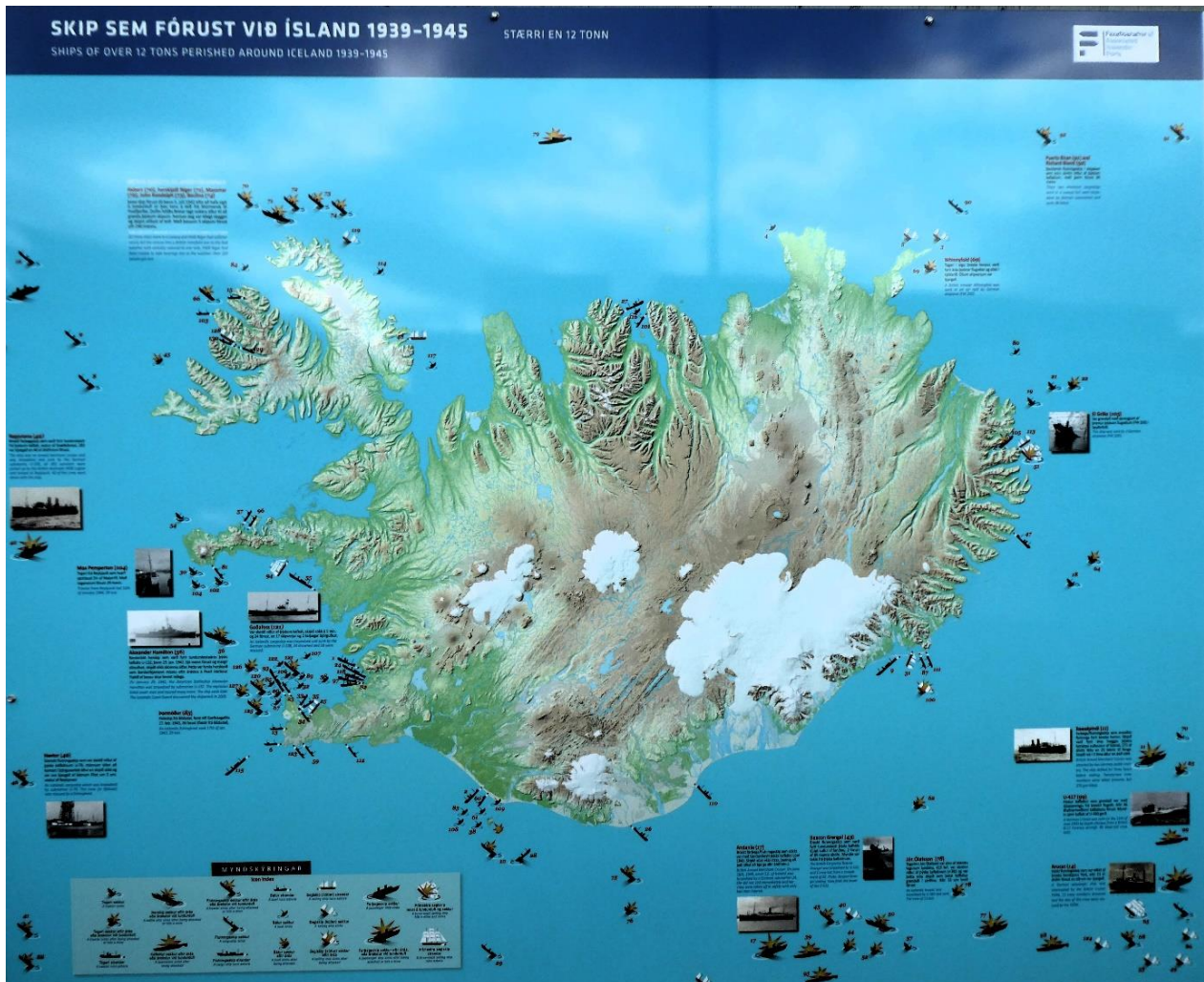
The Royal Navy's 2,500 ton Leander-class frigate HMS Scylla collides with the Icelandic vessel ICGV Odinn in the third and final Cod War. Ian Newton image.

Further Reading

- Coast Guard Vessel *Odinn*, Reykjavik Maritime Museum available at: <https://reykjavikcitymuseum.is/reykjavik-maritime-museum/odinn>
- The Cod Wars, Background to the Cod Wars: available at: <https://britishseafishing.co.uk/the-cod-wars/>
- Icelandic Coast Guard Service, available at: [Welcome to the Icelandic Coast Guard | English version | Landhelgisgæsla Íslands \(lhg.is\)](#)

Ship Wrecks around Iceland 1939 to 1945

An informative set of bill boards on the Reykjavik waterfront depict the many hundreds of ships lost in Icelandic waters over the centuries. Fortunately, the number has decreased in recent decades but naturally, the standout period was 1939 to 1945 when wartime losses on both sides were high both in terms of lives and tonnage.



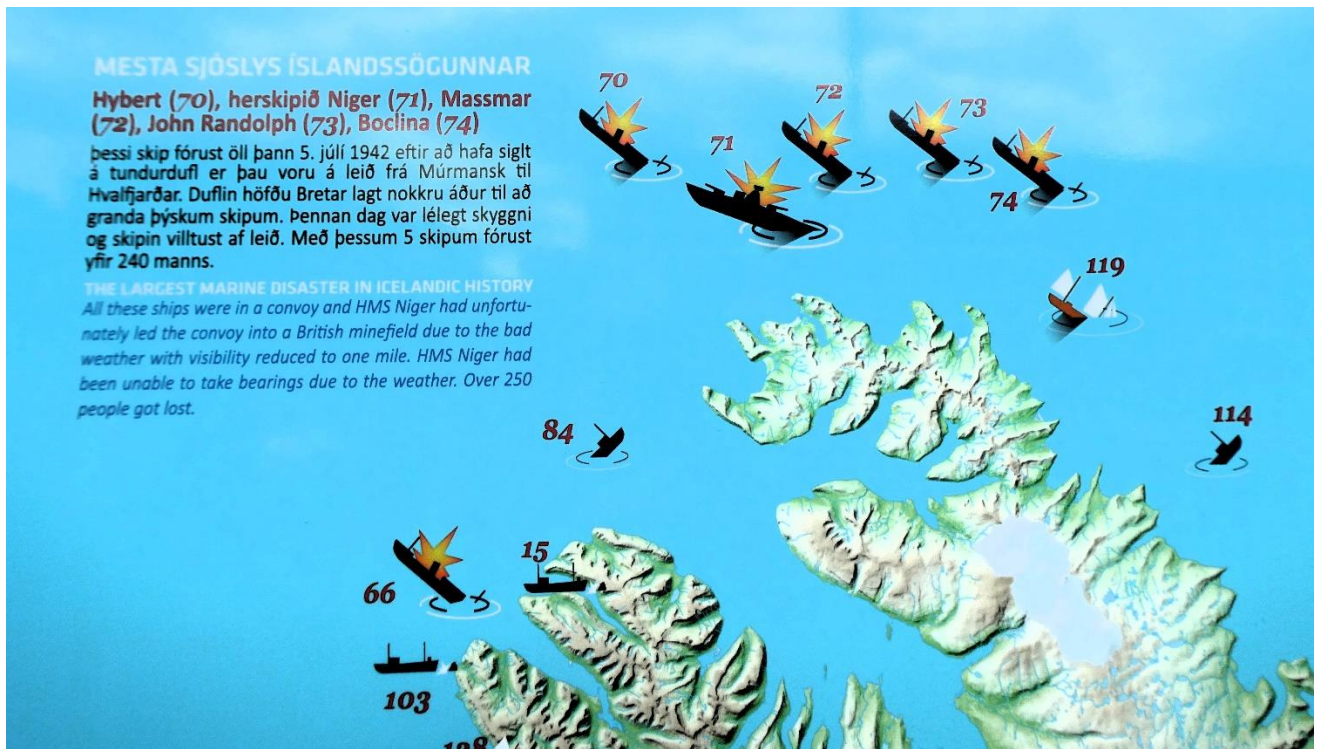
Depiction of vessels greater than twelve tons lost during World War Two in Icelandic Waters.

Of particular interest was the tragic loss of five ships in the Soviet Union bound, Convoy PQ-17 including their escort HMS *Niger* off the north west coast of Iceland. On 5 July in bad weather and reduced visibility of one mile which contributed to a navigation error *Niger* strayed into an allied minefield off Iceland and at 2240 and hit one of the mines, exploded and sank. Four other vessels of the convoy were lost.

Out of an original 35 ships in the convoy, only 11 reached Arkhangelsk. Matériel losses in the convoy were staggering as well: 3,350 vehicles, 210 aircraft, 430 tanks, and 99,316 tons of other cargo such as food and ammunition were lost.



HMS *Niger*



Further Reading:

- The National WWII Museum, New Orleans, *Horror in the Arctic: The Catastrophe of Convoy PQ-17*: available at: <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/horror-arctic-catastrophe-convoy-pq-17#:~:text=Out%20of%20a%20total%20of%2035%20ships%20in,coming%20out%20to%20intercept%20the%20convoy%20were%20false>



NHA President David Michael in Iceland 2023

USS *Canberra* Will Join the US Fleet in Australia to Honour Namesake

The future USS *Canberra* (LCS 30) will join the US Navy active fleet on 22 July with the US Navy's first international commissioning ceremony at the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Base East in Sydney.

Canberra is the first U.S. Navy warship to be commissioned in an allied country. It is the second US Navy ship to bear the name of *Canberra*.



The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra (LCS 30) sailing from San Diego Harbour in April (US Navy photo)

"I can think of no better way to signify our enduring partnership with Australia than celebrating the newest US Navy warship named for Australia's capital city, and commissioning her in Royal Australian Navy Fleet Base East surrounded by many of the Australian ships we have worked alongside for years," said the US Secretary of the Navy, Carlos Del Toro. "I look forward to this momentous day for the ship, crew, sponsor, and all our partners in government and industry who worked tirelessly to give the future USS *Canberra* the celebration it deserves."

The Australian Chief of Navy, VADM Mark Hammond, said that this historic event encapsulates both the depth of the historical ties, and modern day partnership between the Royal Australian Navy and the US Navy.

"This is a unique demonstration of respect by the US for the officers and sailors of the Royal Australian Navy," said VADM Hammond. "It is an opportunity to reflect on our shared history, and on a friendship forged while fighting side-by-side. On 9 August 1942 the RAN heavy cruiser HMAS *Canberra* was severely damaged off Guadalcanal (in the Solomon Islands) while protecting the US Marines fighting ashore. In a surprise attack by a powerful Japanese naval force, *Canberra* was hit 24 times in less than two minutes and 84 of her crew were killed including CAPT Frank Getting"

“I look forward to welcoming the US Navy, and the crew of USS *Canberra* to Australia and we are honoured to host the US Navy’s first international commissioning. It will be a historical event to see the USS *Canberra* and HMAS *Canberra* alongside each other in Sydney. As we look to the future, the strength of our partnership remains a cornerstone of a secure, stable, free and open Indo-Pacific Region.”

The first USS *Canberra* (CA-70/CAG-2) was named at the direction of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in honour of the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS *Canberra* for the ship’s courageous actions during the Battle of Savo Island which took place on 7–9 August 1942. The new Baltimore-class heavy cruiser was renamed *Canberra* from *Pittsburgh* on 16 October 1942, and was commissioned on 14 October 1943.



*USS Canberra (CA-70) operating with Task Force 38 in the Western Pacific, 10 October 1944
(US Navy photo)*

The first US Navy ship named after a foreign capital, *Canberra* (CA-70) was sponsored by Lady Alice C. Dixon, the wife of Sir Owen Dixon, then Australian Minister to the United States. Following World War II, *Canberra* was placed out of commission and in reserve on 7 March 1947. Five years later, the ship was selected to be the US Navy’s second guided missile cruiser. The ship was re-commissioned on 15 June 1956, as guided missile heavy cruiser CAG-2.

With its new designation, *Canberra* transported President Dwight D. Eisenhower and later was the ceremonial flagship for the selection of the Unknown Serviceman of both World War II and Korea interned at Arlington National Cemetery, was the Commander of the Atlantic Fleet Cruiser Force flagship, conducted an around the globe goodwill cruise, provided medical assistance to the crew of the Turkish merchantman Mehmet Ipar, was the Commander Task Group 136.1 flagship which was charged with maintaining a blockade during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and

served in Korea and Vietnam. To highlight the ship's role in naval gunfire support following operations in Vietnam, *Canberra* was re-designated to original classification and identification number CA-70 on 1 May 1968. *Canberra* received seven battle stars for her service in World War II. The ship was decommissioned on 2 February 1970, and was stricken from the US Naval Vessel Register on 31 July 1978.

The present day USS *Canberra* is the 16th Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship commissioned by the US Navy. The LCS are designed to be fast, optimally-manned, mission-tailored, surface combatants which operate in both littoral and open-ocean environments. The future USS *Canberra* was built by the Australian-owned shipbuilder, Austal USA, in Mobile, Alabama.

The ship's sponsor is Australian Senator, the Honourable Marise Payne, the former Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs who attended the ship's keel-laying ceremony in Mobile, Ala. in 2020. The ship was christened 5 June 2021, by Alison Petchell, the Australian Government's Defence Assistant Secretary for Industrial Capability Planning in the Nuclear Submarines Taskforce and former Minister Counsellor for Defence Materiel, on behalf of Senator Payne. The ship arrived for the first time at its homeport of San Diego last year.

London Service Honours Historic Links

In June RADM Guy Griffiths AO RAN (Rtd), a past President of the Naval Historical Society of Australia, presented a Royal Navy ensign to the captain of Britain's most powerful warship, aircraft carrier HMS *Prince of Wales*.



Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths, right, presents the Royal Navy ensign to Commanding Officer HMS Prince of Wales Captain Richard Hewitt.

Overseeing the presentation, Australian Submarine Task Force's UK Liaison Officer, CDRE Allison Norris, said that the link between Australia and *Prince of Wales* was a personal one. "The relationship goes back to World War II, when Admiral Guy Griffiths was starting his career," she said.

Rear Admiral Griffiths' formidable career began as a midshipman in 1937. He joined HMS *Repulse*, still a teenager, as it hunted the German battleship *Bismark*, and then a few months later *Repulse* was sent to Singapore in company with the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales*. On 10 December 1941 *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* were sunk by 86 torpedo bombers in a harrowing encounter off the coast of Malaya which cost many lives. RADM Griffiths saw further action in WWII and undertook active service in the Korean and Vietnam Wars commanding various Australian destroyers. He retired in 1979 after 43 years of service.

Ray Hyde became fascinated by the fates of *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* and decided to make a documentary, culminating in planting a Royal Navy ensign on both ships in a dive on their wrecks. The ensigns were blessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the dive was approved after much wrangling because of sensitivities about the site.

Unfortunately, poor weather allowed an ensign to only be planted on *Repulse*. So, on 1 June, CDRE Norris hosted RADM Griffiths to present the blessed ensign to Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier HMS *Prince of Wales*, CAPT Richard Hewitt RN. "The ensign will take pride of place and serve as a constant reminder of the service that Australian's made to the Royal Navy in WWII and provide a lasting memory of our common bonds," CAPT Hewitt said.



Captain Adrian Capner, Captain Richard Hewitt, Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths RAN (Rtd) & Commodore Allison Norris.

Amphibious Exercises off Queensland

The Whitsundays were the perfect setting in June for the start of the Australian Defence Force's largest amphibious exercises in North Queensland.

The ability for the ADF to function in a joint environment were tested across the Sea Series of exercises — Sea Explorer and Raider — with a full range of capabilities including infantry, armour, artillery, naval, aviation and logistics elements in a complicated littoral environment. Conducted over four weeks at sea and ashore in the vicinity of Bowen and Shoalwater Bay, the exercises provided realistic scenarios to certify, practice and develop the ADF's amphibious capability, ensuring the Australian Amphibious Force (AAF) can rapidly deploy forces ashore from the sea and air in a range of scenarios.



An Australian Army M1A1 Abrams Tank from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment enters on to the Heavy Vehicle Deck of HMAS Adelaide in Townsville, North Queensland

HMA ships *Adelaide* and *Choules*, this year's naval contribution to the AAF, embarked more than 700 soldiers and almost 100 vehicles in Townsville. The force comprises units and elements from across Army and Air Force, including 1st and 2nd Battalions, The Royal Australian Regiment, 3rd Combat Brigade, 17th Combat Service Support Brigade, 16th Aviation brigade and RAAF Tactical Air Control. Underpinning the joint nature of the AAF, Commander Landing Force, Colonel Douglas Pashley, said that teaming, integration and familiarity with the littoral environment were crucial. "The Sea Series is an opportunity for that joint team to come together, establish trusting relationships, learn from each other, appreciate the environment and to understand how each element can contribute to the objectives of the force across air, sea and land," he said.



An Australian Army M1A1 Abrams Tank from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment is transferred via Mexe-Float into the welldock of HMAS Choules in Townsville, North Queensland

Photo of the Month



Damage to HMAS Hobart, Vietnam 1968

On 17 June 1968, *Hobart* was in the vicinity of Tiger Island when when she detected an aircraft approaching her from the vicinity of Cap Lay. Although the aircraft was evaluated as friendly it continued to close and fired a missile that struck *Hobart* amidships on her starboard side. The warhead passed through the main deck, seriously damaging several compartments, while the body of the missile passed through the outer skin of the after funnel before ending up in the forward funnel. In its passage the missile killed Ordinary Seaman

Raymond John Butterworth and wounded Able Seaman JR Parker and Ordinary Seaman RF Davidson.

As *Hobart's* crew raced to action stations a second and third missile hit the ship. The second missile entered the transom without detonating, destroying the gunner's store before breaking up in the engineer's workshop and penetrating the after seaman's mess. The third missile hit the ship in the same area as the first, passing through one of the ship's fan spaces, the missile director equipment room and Tartar checkout room. Chief Electrician Raymond Henry Hunt was killed in this attack and several sailors injured. The aircraft was seen to pass over the ship before turning again for what appeared to be a further attack run. At 8000 yards the crew of *Hobart's* forward gun engaged the aggressor, firing five rounds in local control, causing it to turn away before being lost to radar south of Tiger Island. As *Hobart's* damage control parties made their assessment USS *Edson*, which was operating in company with *Hobart*, reported that she too was coming under fire from air launched missiles. The force consequently cleared the area to the west with *Hobart* departing the operational area to effect repairs in Subic Bay, Philippines. En route the ship's company began clearing away debris, finding and collecting pieces of the missiles which were later identified as being of US origin. It transpired that *Hobart* was one of several ships mistakenly attacked by US 7th Air Force jets on the nights of 16-17 June. *Hobart* subsequently arrived in Subic Bay on 19 June where her damaged was assessed. The destroyer had suffered serious damage to her weapons systems, electrical systems and hull. The Ikara missile magazine had also suffered heavy damage in the attack and it proved fortunate that it was empty at the time of the attack. On 25 July *Hobart* returned to Vietnamese waters where she resumed operations southeast of Da Nang.

Further Information:

- [Royal Australian Navy Gun Plot HMAS Hobart Vietnam 1968](#)
- Video on Youtube of damage - [22 6 68 HMAS HOBART DAMAGE - YouTube](#)

News

HMAS *Launceston* Decommissioned

The ship's company, VIPs and onlookers said farewell to 15-year-old HMAS *Launceston*, as the vessel was decommissioned at HMAS *Coonwarra* in Darwin on 1 June.

Launceston is the latest Armidale-class patrol boat to be decommissioned, and has conducted a wide variety of operations alongside Australian Border Force, Australian Fisheries and the Australian Federal Police. The Commanding Officer of *Launceston* Lieutenant Commander Adrian Hicks said that he felt privileged to be ship's final commanding officer. "This is my first command and I have been blessed to take over such an excellent crew and platform," he said. "It will be an emotional day when it comes alongside for the final time."

The vessel has sailed more than 471,000 nautical miles and has visited many ports, including Brunei, Cebu, Makassar, Zamboanga, Langkawi, Jakarta, Rarotonga and Singapore. Patrol boats are at the heart of the ADF's contribution to Operation Sovereign Borders and a key arm of Operation Resolute. Navy is undertaking a transition from the existing Armidale-class patrol boats and Cape-class patrol boats to 12 Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels. The new patrol vessels will provide a significant increase in capability over the patrol boats they will replace, and will enhance Australia's capacity to patrol its maritime territory and near region.



The ship's company line the upper decks of HMAS Launceston during her decommissioning ceremony held at HMAS Coonwarra, Darwin on 1 June

This Month in History

| | |
|-----------|--|
| July 1857 | HMS PELORUS, (screw steam corvette), was commissioned at Plymouth, England, under CAPT Frederick B. P. Seymour, RN. PELORUS was flagship of the Australia Station in 1860, and during that year participated in the Battle of Taranaki in New Zealand. In this battle, CAPT Seymour was seriously wounded while leading a naval brigade of 600 men against the Maori defences. |
| July 1910 | The Australian Government authorised the building of two light cruisers for the Australian Navy. The cruisers were named HMAS SYDNEY and HMAS MELBOURNE. |
| July 1915 | HMAS PIONEER and HMS HYACINTH bombarded the German cruiser KONIGSBERG, and shore defences in the Rufigi River, East Africa. |
| July 1918 | The first dentist appointed to the RAN, LEUT M. L. Atwill, joined HMAS AUSTRALIA in England. Surgeon LCDR(D) D. Austin, was later appointed Senior Dental Officer, RAN, at HMAS PENGUIN, Garden Island. |
| July 1925 | A US Naval Squadron consisting of US Ships CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, IDAHO, MARYLAND, MISSISSIPPI, TENNESSEE, and WEST VIRGINIA, arrived at Sydney for a goodwill visit. |
| July 1933 | HMAS ANZAC was paid off at Sydney. |
| July 1940 | HMAS HOBART landed 687 officers and men of a Punjabi battalion at Berbera, to reinforce British Somaliland. |
| July 1943 | Coastwatchers LEUT H. Josselyn, RANVR, and SBLT R. Firth, RANVR, rescued 165 survivors of the USS HELENA sunk off Vella Lavella Island by Japanese destroyers, in a night engagement. The Coastwatchers cared for the sailors until they were taken off, despite the presence of an enemy garrison of 600 troops on the island. |
| July 1952 | The Commander of 805 Squadron was killed flying a Sea Fury during an aerobatic practice session at RANAS Nowra. While rehearsing a formation roll with three other Sea Furies, at about 3 pm Lieutenant Commander Hare (P) RAN was killed when the wing tip of his Sea Fury struck the runway at high speed. The resulting impact with the ground shattered the aircraft, killing Hare instantly. |
| July 1960 | The first Junior Recruits, (boys aged between 15 and 17), commenced training at HMAS LEEUWIN, at Fremantle WA. The scheme was designed to provide boys with a year of academic and basic naval training, before they were sent to other bases for specialist training. The scheme continued until 1984, and over 12,000 Junior Recruits graduated from LEEUWIN during that 24-year period. Many went on to lengthy careers in the RAN, with a large number reaching commissioned rank. |
| July 1967 | The Minister for Defence, Mr Allen Fairhall, responded to the US request by announcing that the RAN would provide eight pilots, four observers, 24 maintenance personnel, four air crewmen and six support staff to serve as part of the US Army's 135th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC). This detachment would become known as the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV). |
| July 1973 | The bow and stern sections of the WWI torpedo boat destroyer HMAS PARRAMATTA, were salvaged from a mud bank on the Hawkesbury River, where she had foundered in 1934. The sections were transported by sea and land to the City of Parramatta for inclusion in a memorial to the ship. The patrol boat HMAS ARDENT, (LEUT J. Riley, RAN), rescued the crew of the fishing trawler ALECIA, which foundered and sank off South Babel Island, VIC. |
| July 1976 | HMAS HOBART arrived at Naples. HOBART was the first RAN vessel to visit Italy in 20 years, and the first Australian warship to pass through the Suez Canal in 14 years. |
| July 1984 | HMAS COOK located the wreck of the Japanese submarine I-24, some 37 miles off Darwin. I-24 was the first Japanese vessel sunk by the RAN. She was sunk by HMA Ships DELORAINE, KATOOMBA, and LITHGOW on 20 January, 1942. |
| July 1991 | HMAS SYDNEY was the first ship of the RAN to visit the German naval port of Kiel. The Australians were welcomed by survivors of the German raider KORMORAN, which sunk the second HMAS SYDNEY, in an action off Western Australia on 19 November, 1941. |
| July 2005 | HMAS Brisbane (II) was scuttled 4.2 miles off Point Cartwright on the Queensland coast. |
| July 2015 | HMAS Tobruk II 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 165 - A Short History of Building 10
- Occasional Paper 166 - A History of HMAS Waterhen

Society Matters

Safe to Dive Book Launch 5 June 2023

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.

The official Book launch took place on 5 June 2023 at the ANZAC Memorial, Sydney.



RADM Smith and John Jeremy at the Book Launch



Brad Manera, RADM Chris Smith and John Jeremy

Available in the NHSA online store

[Safe to Dive : Submarine Support in Sydney 1914 to 1999 - Naval Historical Society of Australia \(navyhistory.org.au\)](http://navyhistory.org.au)

Podcast

HMAS Armidale

This podcast on the wartime sinking of HMAS *Armidale* and the subsequent search for survivors is an epic of leadership and resourcefulness that was little known some 50 years after WWII owing to a veil of secrecy over the security classification of the ships mission.

The podcast is available on the NHSA website.

[HMAS Armidale - Naval Historical Society of Australia \(navyhistory.org.au\)](http://navyhistory.org.au)



Book Review

FLYING STATIONS II

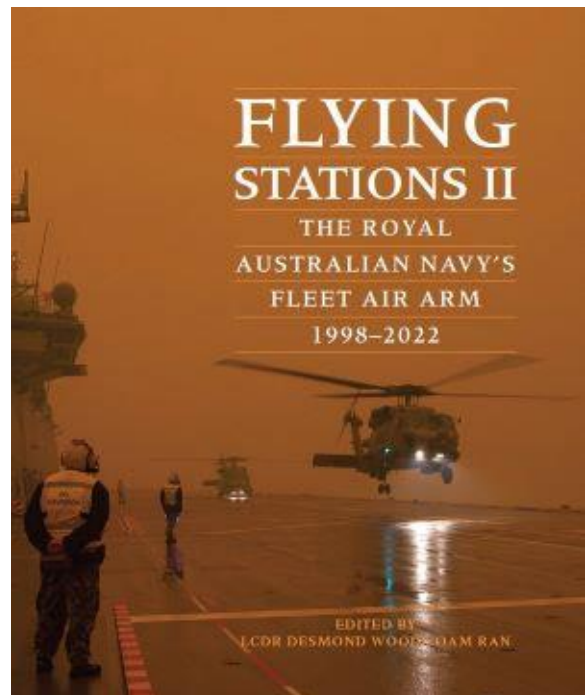
The Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm 1998-2022

Edited by Lieutenant Commander Desmond Woods OAM RAN

Published by the RAN Fleet Air Arm in conjunction with Avonmore Books, Kent Town, South Australia 5071

Reviewed by David Hobbs

In 1998 Allen & Unwin published *Flying Stations* to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm in 1947. It was edited by Mike Lehan, Director of what was then the Australian Naval Aviation Museum run by a Foundation Trust and written by a team of experts and historians, many of whom had first-hand experience of the events they described. In 2006 the RAN resumed full control of the Museum and restored its original name, the Fleet Air Arm Museum. *Flying Stations* had a picture on the dust jacket painted by the late David Marshall which depicted an S-2E Tracker of 816 NAS landing on HMAS *Melbourne* with flight deck personnel and a parked Sea King helicopter of 817 NAS in the foreground, clear of the wingtip safety line. The island is depicted to the left of the picture. The foreword was written by Admiral Sir Victor Smith AC KBE CB DSC who referred to the pride he felt in having served as an observer and in being associated with the Fleet Air Arm's establishment and development. He predicted that in due course there would be a sequel and *Flying Stations II* exactly fulfils that expectation. It has been published by the RAN Fleet Air Arm in association with Avonmore Books to mark its 75th anniversary and continue the story.



Like its predecessor, this book has no single author but contains text which, in many cases, was written by people who took part in the events they describe. The material has been expertly edited by Desmond Woods to create a chronological narrative with added chapters enlarging upon specific subjects. The earlier volume made use of black and white images but its successor takes advantage of improved printing technology to include a large number of coloured images, often several to a page, and many of them are the work of Navy photographers and imagery specialists. The result is a beautifully-illustrated volume that captures the spirit of the Fleet Air Arm from the perspectives of its history, aircraft and people during the period from 1998 to the present. The foreword is written by Vice Admiral Tim Barrett AO CSC, a former Captain of HMAS *Albatross* who was Commander of the Australian Naval Aviation Group between 2005 and 2008. He draws attention to Sir Victor Smith's comments and adds that *Flying Stations II* is the current generation's account of 'what has been occurring at sea, ashore, on operations and deployments in war and peace in the Fleet Air Arm'. This exactly describes what the book achieves so well.

To say that this book is impressive is an understatement as there is so much to engage readers' attention. The picture on the dust jacket is a photograph that has been chosen with care to complement David Marshall's original painting. It is taken from the same perspective and shows

MH-60R Seahawks of 816 NAS landing on HMAS *Adelaide* during Operation Bush Fire Assist in early 2020. Again the island is to the left and flight deck personnel are stood clear of the wingtip safety line watching the aircraft. Smoke from the fires burning ashore gives the image a distinctive burnt orange colour which, together with the aircraft lights reflecting on the wet deck, makes the image stand out. The book is divided into five chapters and an appendix. They are preceded by informative pages which list Commanders of the Fleet Air Arm under the various titles used since 1998, commanding officers of HMAS *Albatross*, RANAS Nowra, and the badges of units in existence during the period described. A thoughtful touch is the inclusion, on page 10, of an illustration of the 75th Anniversary shoulder patch.

Chapter One contains a chronology of events from October 1998 to March 2022. It is, therefore, as up to date as it can be at the time of publication. Events are covered in the order in which they occurred and the text is enhanced by carefully selected photographs of the people, aircraft and ships involved. There are also short service histories of some personalities which, apart from paying due respect to the individuals concerned, help to give the book a feeling of 'family'. The Fleet Air Arm has never been a large organisation but the descriptions of its many and varied activities tell a fascinating story. They are as diverse as aid to civilians in fire and flood situations in Australia, humanitarian aid overseas, rescues at sea and combat operations. There are, of course, many ceremonies, displays and other events that occur on a regular basis and it would be impractical to include them all but the editor has carefully chosen examples that are both illustrative and interesting. Whilst this book ideally captures the spirit of the moment in marking a significant anniversary, it deserves to be recognised as an invaluable resource for telling the Fleet Air Arm's story in an accessible way for many years to come. The appendix complements the text by listing the 76 members of the Fleet Air Arm who have been awarded Australia Day, Queen's Birthday Honours and foreign awards between 1998 and 2022.

After the chronological history in the first chapter there are three chapters which cover specific subjects in greater detail, all written by people who were intimately involved with them. Chapter 2 describes how a combination of factors led to the cancellation of the Seasprite project after the type had been evaluated and found wanting between 1997 and 2006. Imaginatively, in Chapter 3 the editor has included the stories of RAN aircrew who flew on long-term exchange programmes with the Royal Navy, the Royal New Zealand Navy and the United States Coast Guard. Some of these are remarkable stories in their own right and together they add to the completeness of the activities covered by the book besides allowing comparisons to be made with other air arms. Chapter 4 builds on the description of the tragic loss of Sea King *Shark 02* in 2005 in the main text by giving details of the subsequent Board of Enquiry and ends with a photograph of the Sea King Memorial at Russell Offices in Canberra. The last chapter describes a visit to 817 NAS, *Shark 02*'s parent unit, by a reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in August 2006 which revealed how the unit had been re-built as a team after the Sea King's loss.

I was delighted to be able to add an early copy of this outstanding book to my library. Not only would I highly recommend it, I would go further and say that I cannot understand why anyone with a connection or interest in the Fleet Air Arm would not want to own a copy. It will, of course, also be of considerable value to anyone following the evolution of the RAN during the twenty-first century. The editor has carefully selected and used both text and illustrations in a way that allows the reader to be absorbed into the recent history of a tightly-knit, gallant and resourceful organisation that has achieved success in a variety of different ways. One day there will be a *Flying Stations III*; I hope its editor will do as well.