



Call the Hands



Issue No. 83

March 2024

From the President

Welcome to this the 83rd edition of *Call the Hands* and occasional papers. I hope you find them of interest and as always, feedback is welcome.

Occasional paper 181 on the Royal Navy's HMS *Challenger* (V) and (VI) both of which served on the Australia Station is derived largely from a journal in the Society's archives. The journal which is now held by the Australian War Memorial includes newspaper clippings from the late 1860s when *Challenger* (V) served in Australia. This famous ship was later honored with the naming of the research ship *Glomar Challenger*, the Apollo 17 lunar module and the Space Shuttle Challenger. *Challenger* (VI) was, in the early 20th century, a new protected cruiser which served in Australian waters in 1904.

Occasional paper 182 by Vic Jeffery describes the World War 2 SCRIVEN BATTERY of 2 x 9.2-inch guns which was located on Garden Island, Western Australia. This battery was just one of an extensive network of coastal gun batteries which protected the bustling Port of Fremantle.

Readers who are not members will know that they are missing out on occasional papers which are not made public for one year as well as the many stories published in the quarterly *Naval Historical Review*. Perhaps it is time to take out [membership](#) for as little as \$35 per year.

In this edition we recognize two admirals who made significant contributions to the RAN and Australia in different eras. Vice Admiral Ian Knox, AC who crossed the bar in January 2024 served from 1947 to 1989. His final appointment was as Vice Chief of Defence Force. Engineering Rear Admiral Percival McNeil CB RAN who served from 1911 to 1943 is recognized for his outstanding contribution to naval engineering. As one of the founding fathers of Australian shipbuilding he is also recognized for overseeing the design and construction of many RAN ships during World War 2.

Another well-known and highly respected admiral, Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths, AO DSO DSC RAN Retd celebrated his 101st birthday on Friday 1 March 2024. It is a great honour for the Society that he served as our President in 1997-98.

Finally, many readers will be aware of the RAN's Sea Power Centre-Australia (SPC-A) established in the 1990's to fulfill several functions including the preservation of Australian naval history and heritage. Unfortunately, the Centre's [website](#), highly regarded as an invaluable resource for the community, historians and the Society has been taken down. Fortunately, the site (as at 18 December 2023) has been archived in the National Library's research portal, [Trove](#). However, searching the site is now difficult. Similarly, because of this change the many links in Society publications to SPC-A web pages have been broken. We hope to rectify this problem when the way forward for the SPC-A website is known.

I trust you will find this edition of interest.

Kind regards,

David Michael



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Lessons from the Cod War

Readers may recall that *Call the Hands*, Edition 76 in July 2023 included a story on 'The Icelandic Coast Guard and the Cod Wars'. A recent story published on the *Navy Lookout* website entitled, '[Lessons from the Cod War](#)' provides analysis of the preparedness of today's Royal Navy to counter such asymmetric situations as encountered in the Cod Wars. The analysis includes a comparison of escort fleet numbers in the 1970's with today and concludes that a similar rotation of a four frigate deployment would be impossible to sustain today.



Despite being what might now be called an asymmetric and non-kinetic conflict, the Cod War costs to the RN were considerable. Damage to HMS Falmouth's bow after ramming ICGV Týr at 22 knots, May 1976.

The paper states that lessons learnt from this fisheries dispute shifted the focus for such operations away from frigates to Offshore Patrol Vessels which are both smaller and agile with fewer crew and without expensive armament. A small number of offshore patrol vessels such as HMS *Tamar* and HMS *Spey* currently deployed in the Indo Pacific region are intended to sustain British global reach, and fisheries protection in the EEZ of British Overseas Territories. However, their numbers are relatively small.

The concept of an EEZ introduced at the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1973–82) was developed to settle potential disputes between countries by awarding sovereign jurisdiction within boundary waters to coastal states. However, despite the EEZ convention being broadly accepted by most nations, there is no guarantee that serious disputes will not occur. As an example, in the highly contested South China Sea the risk of conflict remains high.

The paper concludes that the Cod Wars provide a useful reminder of the varied threats the RN may face and that they demonstrate the dangers of the unexpected, for example the Falklands War. Whilst the RN had the hull numbers and flexibility to rapidly change posture and react to such disputes in previous decades this flexibility is now diminished.

Rear Admiral Percival McNeil CB RAN (1883-1951)

In 2016 the Australian Naval Institute (ANI) created the McNeil Prize to honour Rear Admiral McNeil for his outstanding contribution to naval engineering and as one of the founding fathers of Australian shipbuilding. McNeil served from 1911 to 1943. His sea postings included several of the RAN's first fleet units. These included HMAS *Parramatta*, *Yarra*, *Warrego*, *Psyche*, *Brisbane*, and *Penguin*. His major contribution to Australia and the RAN came during his posting as Director of Engineering (Naval) in 1931. He continued in this same role after promotion to Engineer Rear Admiral in 1934. He kept the Naval Board well apprised of engineering problems in the fleet; particularly the need to replace ageing ships. Similarly, as the world drifted towards war, he oversaw the significant ship building/acquisition program as the RAN increased in size during the late 1930s.



McNeil played a pivotal role in preparing the RAN for war. Many of the ship types such as the Bathurst Class corvettes, River Class frigates and Tribal Class destroyers commissioned during the war all began as concepts or blueprints in the Directorate of Naval Engineering under McNeil's control. His report on Merchant Shipbuilding, presented to the War Cabinet in January 1941 formed the basis for a significant standardised merchant ship building program that commenced in May of that year.



Visitors at Cockatoo Island Dockyard 29 July 1941

left to right: Rear Admiral P. McNeil, Engineer Member Naval Board; W. Griffith, Finance Member Naval Board, Hon. R. Menzies, Prime Minister; Senator P. McBride, Min. Munitions, Mr. A. Frazer, Manager, Cockatoo Dock. Mr. J. Cahill, Min. for Works, Hon. F. Kneeshaw, and Mr. R. Bower Acting Trade Commissioner for Canada.

Reference: Sea Power Centre Australia, Rear Admiral Percival Edwin McNeil Biography.

The McNeil Prize: 2024

The Australian Naval Institute recently advised that nominations are open for the 2024 McNeil Prize which is given annually to an individual or team who have made an outstanding contribution to the capability of the Royal Australian Navy. Details of [previous winners](https://navalinstitute.com.au/events/mcneil-prize-archive/) can be found on the ANI website at: <https://navalinstitute.com.au/events/mcneil-prize-archive/>.



Nominations for this year close on 1 May 2024. The Prize will be awarded at the ANI's Vernon Parker Oration and Annual Dinner which will be held in Canberra on 15 May 2024.

Volunteers Visit to HMS *Tamar* 13 February 2024

During a visit to Sydney by the Royal Navy's offshore patrol vessel [HMS *Tamar*](#), Society volunteers were treated to a short notice tour of the ship. Welcomed by the commanding officer Commander Tom Gell, volunteers then received a comprehensive briefing on the ship's role and operations in the Indo Pacific region with sister ship, HMS *Spey*. After a comprehensive tour of the ship, it then was a pleasure to provide a Garden Island Heritage tour to twelve members of the ships company. It was pleasing to see their keen interest in the Dockyard and its rich history particularly its long association with the Royal Navy in the 19th century.

Commissioned in December 2020 *Tamar* has been forward deployed since September 2021 to the Indo Pacific region for a minimum of five years. Designed to deploy globally, these 2,000-ton ships are versatile and capable. They can support a large variety of operations such as mine clearance and drone operations (air and undersea). They are also capable of being used for constabulary duties such as counterterrorism, counter-piracy and anti-smuggling operations.

HMS *Tamar* will remain around Australia and Oceania in the coming months while *Spey* will concentrate her efforts around Central and East Asia.



HMS Tamar berthed at Garden Island, Sydney 13 February 2024. NHSA image

Vice Admiral Ian Warren Knox, AC: 1933 - 2024

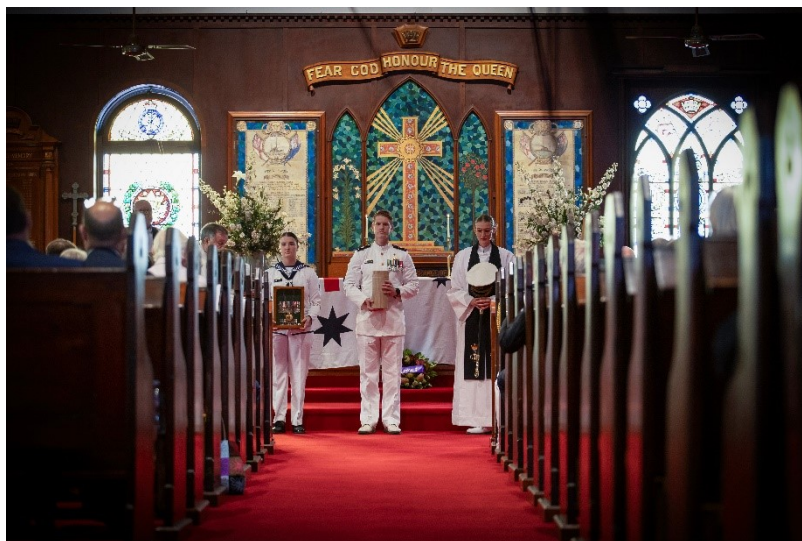
A funeral service for Vice Admiral Ian Knox was conducted in Sydney at the Garden Island Naval Chapel on 9 February 2024. Admiral Knox had crossed the bar aged 90 on 14 January after a long illness.

Vice Admiral Knox served in the Royal Australian Navy from 1947 to 1989, initially specialising in torpedo and anti-submarine warfare. He served at sea, ashore and overseas with appointments including Command of the Australian Fleet from 1985 to 1987. He was also the Defence member of the Australian Delegation to several sessions of the United Nations Law of the Sea conference. His final appointment was as Vice Chief of Defence Force from 1987 to 1989. His sea commands included HMAS *Torrens* on commissioning and HMAS *Melbourne* in her twilight years (1980-81).



Commander Ian Knox, as CO HMAS Torrens in 1971. Photo by John Jeremy.

From a Torpedo and Anti-Submarine Warfare perspective his posting to the Aeronautical Research Laboratory in 1960 as the Anti-Submarine Warfare Project Officer cannot be overstated. In this role he assisted in the development of the world class Ikara ASW Guided Missile System operated by RAN ships from 1968 to 1991. Access to VADM Knox's personal archive on the development of Ikara assisted Society volunteer Angus Britts greatly when writing the history of Ikara.



The ashes of the late Vice Admiral Ian Knox, AC, RAN (rtd) prepare to depart the Garden Island Chapel at the conclusion of a funeral service at HMAS Kuttabul. RAN image.



Current VCDF, Vice Admiral David Johnston, AC, RAN, who served as Admiral Knox's Aide-De- Camp, addressed guests along with his son Mr Guy Knox who delivered the eulogy. RAN image.

Further Reading

Obituary: Vice Admiral Ian Knox AC RAN Retired, January 20, 2024, Australian Naval Institute, available at: <https://navalinstitute.com.au/obituary-vice-admiral-ian-knox-ac-ran-retired/>

Sycamore Helicopters in the RAN

When RAN Fleet Air Arm was formed in 1948 the plan included two light-fleet carriers. The first, HMAS *Sydney*, was delivered with two Supermarine Type 309 'Sea Otter' amphibian biplanes, for Search And Rescue work. By then, however, advances in helicopter design had rendered the 'Sea Otter' obsolete in this role and the search for a replacement began.

During the Korean War, USN Sikorsky HO3S-1s and RN Westland WS-51 Dragonfly helicopters flew SAR and plane guard duties while attached to HMAS *Sydney*. The versatility and advantages of those machines made it clear that helicopters were to be an indispensable part of naval aviation's inventory. This view was sealed by the stunningly successful rescue of two downed FAA aircrew from behind enemy lines by the ship's borrowed Sikorsky.

The Helicopter Choice

Before deciding on the Bristol Sycamore, the RAN surveyed a range of helicopter types. While it was noticed the RAAF had ordered two Sycamores for operations at Woomera; several factors influenced the RAN in also selecting the Sycamore. For example: they could operate by day or night and were equipped with a hydraulic winch; and their range and payload also allowed for medivacs, passenger and freight transport, pilot training, and fleet support tasks. Another feature of the Sycamore was the folding main rotor blades, allowing them access to the hangar deck of an aircraft-carrier; furthermore, the use of strong hydronalium alloy in the airframe (resistant to seawater corrosion) was an asset. Also, the Sycamore's top speed was high (for the era), they were cleared for tropical use, and were well-suited to RAN needs.

The Sycamores Arrive

In 1951 the RAN placed an order for three HR 50 helicopters with Bristol Aircraft Limited, Filton, England. The Australian HR.50 was similar to the RAF HR.13 SAR model, but had taller and stronger landing gear for shipboard operations. On 16 January 1953 the first three (XA219 to XA221) were flown aboard HMAS *Vengeance* in the UK, arriving in Australia on 11 March – and were assigned to 723 Squadron. *Vengeance* was on loan from the RN until 1956, then replaced by HMAS *Melbourne* which ferried two more Sycamores HR 51s (XK902 & XL507) from the UK on her maiden voyage to Australia. Eight more Sycamore HR 51s were shipped to Sydney on merchant vessels, the last arriving in June 1961.

Sycamore Training Begins

In 1952, prior to the arrival of the Sycamore HR 50 helicopters, two RAN pilots Lt Neil MacMillan and Lt Gordon McPhee were sent to the UK for helicopter instruction and conversion to the Sycamore at RNAS Gosford (HMS *Siskin*). They were joined by a third pilot, Lt Don Farquarson RN, on loan to the RAN as a helicopter instructor. On 16 January 1953 they landed the first three Sycamores on HMAS *Vengeance* near Weymouth, ready for her voyage to Australia. On 11 March 1953 *Vengeance* arrived in Australia. Here the Sycamores were assigned to 723 Squadron, the Fleet Requirements Unit, stationed at HMAS Albatross (RANAS Nowra). Lt Farquarson ran the first RAN helicopter pilot training course, with the assistance of Lt McPhee and MacMillan.

The Versatile Sycamore

The Sycamores were based at RANAS Nowra, but variously served on the aircraft carriers HMAS *Vengeance*, *Sydney*, or *Melbourne* whenever they were at sea with fixed-wing squadrons embarked. The Sycamore's main role was 'plane guard', hovering near the bow or stern of the carrier during catapult launches and deck landings in case of an emergency.

At sea they were also used for medical emergencies, communication duties, personnel transportation, photographic exercises, mail deliveries, and utility duties around the fleet. The Sycamores worked hard, becoming a crucial part of the carrier's aviation component. In the 1950s helicopters were something of a novelty and the Sycamores attracted a great deal of attention, creating excitement wherever they went.

When embarked the Sycamores were greatly valued as the following indicates. In his June 1953 Report of Proceedings, the Captain of HMAS *Vengeance* stated: "Helicopter serviceability proved most encouraging, and the single aircraft embarked was available at all times during flying. In addition to its value as a plane guard its use for general fleet requirements cannot be over-emphasised."



Sunset for the Sycamores

Following the 1959 government decision to disband the fixed-wing element of the RAN in 1963, there was a pause in FAA activities. But with the 'Cold War' and regional tensions brewing, the fixed-wing commitment was renewed, and a strong anti-submarine focus adopted. In April 1961 the RAN ordered 27 Westland Wessex HAS 31A ASW helicopters from the UK. This gave the Sycamores and 723 Squadron a new importance, as the urgent need for ASW helicopter pilots meant ramping up training operations using both ab initio trainees and more experienced fixed-wing pilots.

During the late 1950s and early 60s, following initial training at HMAS Cerberus, RAN aircrew recruits were drafted to RAAF Point Cook where they joined the No 1 Basic Flying Training School as probationary pilots. The course covered flight theory, basic navigation, flying Winjeels and other fixed-wing piston aircraft. After graduating at Point Cook, pilots then transferred to RANAS Nowra to begin training with 723 Squadron flying Bristol Sycamores.

Given the low-tech nature of the aging Sycamores – this meant learning the fundamentals of flying a helicopter, without the technology and instrumentation of the new generation machines. Because the Sycamore had just one collective pitch lever mounted between the pilot's seats, they were less than ideal for training. Also, without hydraulics or automatic stabilising equipment, piloting involved plenty of physical exercise.

The Sycamore's idiosyncrasies meant pilots on conversion courses learnt their rotary-wing lessons the hard way. Yet, once confident, pilots developed a respect for the Sycamore, and a

keen sense of what is needed to fly a helicopter effectively. The high standard of RAN helicopter pilots is testimony to the competence and skills generated during the Bristol Sycamore era. This played a notable part in the transition to the new Westland Wessex ASW helicopters that arrived at NAS Nowra in the early 1960s.

Farewell the Sycamores

The Bristol Sycamores were the first rotary-wing aircraft purchased by the RAN. They performed valuable service and established a place for helicopters in Australian naval aviation. With the arrival of the Westland Wessex HAS 31As in 1962 the Sycamores became redundant and the need for a new training helicopter was pressing. After rejecting several contenders, the replacement came in the form of the Bell UH-1 Iroquois in 1964.

Source [Our Heritage: The Bristol Sycamore - Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia \(faaaa.asn.au\)](http://faaaa.asn.au)

Occasional Papers

- Occasional Paper 180 - HMAS *Yarra* (III): IKARA related Configuration Changes Through Life
- Occasional Paper 181 - HMS *Challengers* on the Australian Station
- Occasional Paper 182 - Scriven Battery



HMAS Yarra III

Videos of the Month

Sydney Ammunition Pipeline in the 1990s

https://borclaud.au/ranad/pipeline_video.html

The term "[Sydney Ammunition Pipeline](#)" came into use during the 1980s as a convenient way of denoting the network of armament depots, maintenance establishments and transport routes that terminated at naval ships moored at explosives buoys in the Man of War anchorage in Port Jackson.

The last ammunition operation was conducted over the Newington wharf on 14 December 1999.



Note:

The video narration refers to Newington as originally operated by the Royal Marines. This is incorrect. When the first buildings were constructed on the site in 1897-98 they were for the New South Wales Military Forces.

Duration: 13:08 mins.

For more information on RAN Armament Depots visit: <https://borclaud.au/ranad/index.html>

The History and Operation of the Newington Armament Depot

https://borclaud.au/ranad/newington_history_video.html

This video was prepared in 1999 by the University of Western Sydney Macarthur for the Olympic Coordination Authority with the participation of current and former staff of the Newington Armament Depot.

Duration: 45 mins

For more information on RAN Armament Depots visit: <https://borclaud.au/ranad/index.html>



The Otranto Shield

At the end of each year the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Proficiency Awards are announced. One of the oldest of these is the Otranto Shield which is awarded annually in December to the fleet unit which, in the opinion of the Commander of the Australian Fleet, has achieved the best and most consistent gunnery and surface-to-air missile results during the year.

This, however, has not always been the case. Originally there were two Otranto Shields, one being for gunnery and the other being for torpedo gunnery. The provenance of the shields can be traced to 1910 when Australian sailors were taking passage in the Orient passenger liner *Otranto* on their way to pick up the new torpedo boat destroyers HMA Ships *Parramatta* (I) and *Yarra* (I). Recognising the uniqueness of the occasion, passengers in the *Otranto* donated a generous amount of money to fund two ornate presentation shields to be competed for by the men of the Australian Navy. The shields were manufactured by a leading London firm and each contained 200 ounces of silver. The cost was £132 each which today equates to a staggering \$18,000. Once made, the shields were conveyed to Melbourne by the *Otranto*, which had the pleasure of catching up with the two destroyers in Colombo during their passage to Australia.

Lost with HMAS *Voyager* (II) was the Otranto Shield for torpedo gunnery which she had won in 1963. On 10 February 1984, 20 years after *Voyager's* loss, the RAN instituted the HMAS *Voyager* (II) Trophy for anti-submarine warfare proficiency, to be awarded annually to the "...escort which in the opinion of the Fleet Commander has achieved the best and most consistent anti-submarine sensor and weapon performance during the year."



A rare photograph of both original Otranto Shields, seen here onboard HMAS *Stalwart* (I) in 1924.

Further Reading: [Otranto Shields | Royal Australian Navy - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](https://trove.nla.gov.au)

News

Australia to more than double naval surface fleet, grow defense budget.

The Royal Australian Navy will have its largest fleet since the end of World War II if it implements recommendations from a new independent review of its surface combat ships. The government's "Enhanced Lethality Surface Combatant Fleet" review, released Feb. 20, advocates for a flotilla of 26 warships, more than double the 11 hulls the service currently possesses. The government has accepted the recommendations except for one regarding the continuation of an upgrade for the aging Anzac-class frigates.



"The size, lethality and capabilities of the future surface combatant fleet ensures that our Navy is equipped to meet the evolving strategic challenges of our region," Chief of Navy Vice Adm. Mark Hammond said in a statement following the report's unveiling.

To supplement its forthcoming nuclear-powered submarines, to be acquired under the AUKUS agreement with the U.K. and U.S., the future surface combatant fleet will feature nine so-called tier 1 destroyers and frigates, 11 smaller tier 2 frigates, and six optionally manned vessels. Tier 1 vessels will comprise three existing Hobart-class air warfare destroyers — to receive an upgrade to the Aegis combat system and the installation of Tomahawk missiles — and six new Hunter-class anti-submarine frigates. BAE Systems was originally contracted to produce nine frigates, with the first to be commissioned in 2034.

Parker, a former naval officer, said the most significant problem for the service is a looming capability gap, as the first-of-class Anzac frigate will not sail again, and a second is set to retire in 2026, meaning the Navy will have a total nine warships by the end of this decade.

With this pending shortfall, the review recommended commissioning 11 general-purpose frigates at least the size of the Anzacs to "provide maritime and land strike, air defence and escort capabilities," the government explained in a summary of the report.

Australia plans to procure the first three frigates from overseas, with the remainder constructed in Henderson, Western Australia. The Navy has narrowed contenders to Germany's MEKO A-200, Japan's Mogami class, South Korea's FFX Batch II/III, and Spain's Alfa 3000. The government will make a selection next year, with the first delivery scheduled in 2030.

The planned six large optionally crewed surface vessels are based on an American design and feature 32 missile cells. Built in Henderson and destined to enter service from the mid-2030s, Parker said these are not traditional surface combatants because "their role will be to extend the magazine capability" of other ships.

Apart from surface combatants, the review proposed a fleet of 25 "minor war vessels" for constabulary tasks. These include six Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels, or OPV, slashed from the original 12 that Lürssen Australia is constructing.

Source: Gordon Arthur, Defense News, 29 February 2024, available at: [Australia to more than double naval surface fleet, grow defense budget](#)

Further Reading: Government of Australia, Enhanced Lethality Surface Combatant Fleet Analysis, available at: https://www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-02/ELSCF_Factsheets_Western_Australia_Aust_Defence_Industry.pdf

Photo of the Month



Two Bristol Sycamore helicopters hover over the aircraft carrier HMAS Vengeance, on their arrival in Australia

This Month in History

March 1801	LEUT John Murray, RN, in HMC Brig LADY NELSON, explored and took possession of Port Phillip. He named the bay in honour of the first Governor of NSW, CAPT Arthur Phillip, RN.
March 1901	An order was gazetted directing that all Australian armed forces should be transferred from the jurisdiction of the State Governments to the Federal Government, which under the Federal Constitution, would be the sole Australian Defence authority. The Commonwealth Naval Force came into existence. It's war equipment consisted of a motley collection of largely obsolescent warships, including, HMC Ships CERBERUS and PROTECTOR, torpedo boats CHILDERS, COUNTESS OF HOPETOWN, LONSDALE, NEPEAN, and MOSQUITO, gunboats GAYUNDAH and PALUMA, and several small naval auxiliaries. Naval personnel strength was 240 permanent members, and 1348 members of the Naval Brigade.
March 1915	HMAS AUSTRALIA took part in her first operation, a patrol across the North Sea with the Grand Fleet and light forces, from Harwich, England.
March 1918	A Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutter aircraft was successfully launched from HMAS AUSTRALIA
March 1928	HMAS SYDNEY starred in a film, depicting SYDNEY'S victory over the German armed merchant cruiser Emden, in 1914. Australian producer Ken Page made the film at Jervis Bay, NSW.
March 1936	The last Australian Seagull III was disembarked at Point Cook after being operated by HMAS CANBERRA during 1935-36
March 1940	HMS KANIMBLA, largely manned by RAN personnel, seized the Soviet steamer VLADIMIR MAIAKOVSKY (3972grt) in the Sea of Japan and took control of it because she was carrying a cargo of copper from the United States to Germany
March 1942	HMAS PERTH was sunk by enemy action. 23 officers and 333 ratings lost their lives. HMAS HOBART evacuated 512 refugees from Padang and landed them at Colombo.
March 1945	HMAS TERKA sank in Benner Harbour, New Guinea
March 1953	723 Squadron received the RAN's first rotary wing aircraft – three Bristol Sycamore helicopters – adding search and rescue, rotary wing training and fleet support to the Squadron's roles.
March 1963	Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II signaled the destroyer HMAS ANZAC at the conclusion of the Royal Tour of Australia; "Splice the main brace". The RAN does not splice the main brace except on the order of the Commander-in-Chief.
March 1972	The fast troop transport HMAS SYDNEY and the supply ship HMAS JEPARIT returned to Sydney, thus completing the RAN's involvement in the Vietnam War. SYDNEY made 24 voyages to Vietnam, and JEPARIT made 43, carrying troops and supplies to the Australian forces involved in the fighting in Vietnam.
March 1987	HMAS OVENS sank the stripped hulk of the navy tank cleaning vessel, ex-HMAS COLAC, off Sydney, with a Mk.48 torpedo.
March 1992	The guided missile frigate HMAS DARWIN, (CMDR Martyn Bell, RAN), commenced boarding and searching operations in the Red Sea. She operated with the United Nations force policing trade with Iraq.
March 2006	A Kalkara (aboriginal for storm bird) unmanned aerial target successfully flew mission 100 on 27 March 2006 (from Gilbert Point at HMAS Stirling) and despite having been in use for several years, providing aerial targets to ships and aircraft missile systems, the Kalkara unmanned aerial target system did not achieve operational release until 10 August 2006 despite the first flight having taken place on 19 June 1998. 21 target aircraft were produced (Serial numbers N28-001 to N28-021). It was phased out of service in 2008.
March 2020	WO Agnes 'Lennie' Maiden, the first woman to be promoted to the highest rank as a senior sailor passed away aged 82. WO Maiden served in the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) for nearly 29 years, from 1956 until 1984

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/>

IKARA, Australia's Cold War Wonder Weapon

Published by the Naval Historical Society in 2021, this book describes the history of the Australian designed and built IKARA anti-submarine missile system. It traces the story of Ikara from concept development to feasibility study in 1959 through to approval, design, production, and service ending in 1991. During its period of service, Ikara proved to be the most effective means to engage submarine targets at longer ranges and with faster response times and greater accuracy than any other system available worldwide.

This 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 book also demonstrates clearly that Australia had the ability to be self-reliant in the development of world class precision weapons in the past.

It provides a historical reconstruction of both the scientific, technological, and engineering challenges involved, and the top level of Defence and government decision making and provides an insight into how such processes proceed and the many factors that affect the initiation, continuation and ultimately the ceasing of such programs over several decades.

The author, Angus Britts addressed all aspects of the weapon and fleshed out issues which remain relevant in discussion surrounding the nation's defence requirements and procurement practices today through the recollections of those associated with Ikara during the various phases of its lengthy career.

The book provides understanding of how Australia achieved success in the past and avoided pitfalls with the Ikara system. It is essential reading for anyone with an interest in future missile and guided weapons production enterprises in Australia.



Buy Your Copy

Copies of the book are available through the Society's online [shop](#) in digital and printed versions.

Digital download: \$10

Printed and posted to an Australian address; \$40.00

Many other titles are also available.

