AUSTRALIAN NAVAL ANNIVERSARIES 2023

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Throughout 2023, a series of significant naval anniversaries will occur. Many readers will recall the tumultuous early 2000s when RAN units were near ever-present in the Middle East. Older readers may recall the end of the Vietnam War or even the cessation of hostilities in Korea. 2023 also marks 80 years since 1943, a year which saw the Allies begin to turn the tide in WWII and optimism begin to grow. Whether the activities be military, diplomatic or constabulary; social, technological or political, it is right to pause and pay respect to those who have come before, and paved the way for our current Royal Australian Navy.

10th Anniversaries

1 January 2013 - The final gender restrictions in the ADF relating to specific combat roles were removed, allowing women to serve in the clearance diving category and to qualify as mine warfare and clearance diving officers.

Women in the ADF: six decades of policy change (1950 to 2011)

24 November 2013 – HMAS *Tobruk (II)* was officially assigned to Operation PHILIPPINES ASSIST in response to Typhoon Haiyan. *Tobruk* remained in Philippine waters until 9 December providing logistic support to relief efforts ashore, and providing shore teams to assist with clean-up and repairs. Sailors who contributed to Operation PHILIPPINES ASSIST were later awarded the Philippine Civic Action Medal.

HMAS Tobruk (II) | Royal Australian Navy

20th Anniversaries

19 January 2003 - Operation BASTILLE began, with HMA Ships *Anzac* (III), *Darwin, Kanimbla* (II), and Clearance Diving Team 3 taking part. BASTILLE was intended to increase the pressure on the Iraqi regime to comply with UN Security Council resolutions regarding disarmament.

http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-February-13-2003.pdf

18 March 2003 - Then Prime Minister John Howard announced that the government had committed ADF elements to the Coalition of military forces prepared to enforce Iraq's compliance with its international obligations to disarm. Under the codename Operation FALCONER, the ADF contribution became part of the larger United States-led Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-March-27-2003.pdf

21 March 2003 - HMAS *Anzac* (III) delivered effective naval gunfire in support of No: 40 Commando, Royal Marines as the unit advanced on enemy positions on the Al Faw Peninsula, Iraq in an action which came to be known as 'Five Inch Friday'. It was the first time since the Vietnam War that an RAN ship had conducted naval gun fire support in combat. *Anzac* remained on station until 23 March, completing seven fire support missions. The peninsular was cleared and the enemy positions taken by the Royal Marines.

http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-April-10-2003.pdf

HMAS Anzac (III) conducts naval gunfire during 'Five Inch Friday'

21 March 2003 – During operations in the mouth of the Khawr Abd Allah waterway in Iraq, HMAS *Kanimbla* (II) boarding teams investigating three tugs and a barge discovered a clandestine mining capability present in the vessels. A total of 68 sea mines of differing types were discovered ready for laying.

HMAS Kanimbla (II) | Royal Australian Navy

16 July 2003 - Operation CATALYST began for the RAN with the deployment of HMAS *Newcastle* to the Middle East Area of Operations. Its purpose was to develop a secure and stable environment in Iraq, assist national recovery programmes and facilitate the transition to Iraqi self-government. Between 16 July 2003 and 31 July 2009, at which time CATALYST officially ended, seventeen RAN ships deployed to the Middle East in support of this mission.

24 July 2003 – Operation ANODE, the ADF's contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) began. Also known as Operation HELPEM FREN (Pidgin English for helping friend or help a friend), ANODE saw 19 Australian warships take part. The last of these, the patrol boat HMAS *Fremantle*, sailed for home in October 2004.

RAN Sea King helicopters transport officials to a weapons destruction ceremony during Operation ANODE. August 2003.

4 December 2003 – HMAS *Wewak* arrived in Topokia in the remote Santa Cruz Island group of the Solomon Islands to deliver over 65 tonnes of food supplies to local inhabitants impacted by Tropical Cyclone Gina. Supplies were also delivered to Anuta on 7 December.

HMAS Wewak | Royal Australian Navy

25th Anniversaries

21 April 1998 – HMA Ships *Fremantle* and *Whyalla* were tasked to transport vital supplies to Tanna Island in the Southern Vanuatu Group. The task was part of a disaster relief effort in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclones Yali and Zuman, which struck the Vanuatu islands from 21 March to 1 April 1998.

HMAS Whyalla (II) | Royal Australian Navy

HMAS Fremantle (II) | Royal Australian Navy

30 April 1998 – HMAS *Tobruk* (II) provided the venue for a meeting between warring factions in Bougainville during Operation BEL ISI. Following lengthy and complicated negotiations, an agreement was reached just hours before the formal ceasefire signing ceremony was due to be held. Supporters of the different parties gathered on the wharf during the night and *Tobruk's* Commanding Officer was presented with spears and other weapons which had been destroyed in a symbolic and poignant gesture.

https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-tobruk-ii

5 May 1998 - A major fire broke out in the main machinery space of the tanker HMAS *Westralia (II)*. Despite of the bravery displayed by her crew to combat the blaze, four members of the ship's company were killed during the incident.

HMAS Westralia (II) | Royal Australian Navy

30th Anniversaries

16 June 1993 - HMA ships *Jervis Bay* and *Tobruk* arrived back in Australia after conducting operations in Somalia in support of Operation SOLACE. The two ships berthed in Townsville, where a civic reception was held.

Operation SOLACE - RAN Relief to Somalia 1993 | Royal Australian Navy

HMAS Tobruk enters the port of Mogadishu. 20 January 1993.

50th Anniversaries

11 January 1973 - A Governor-General issued proclamation formally ended Australia's participation in the Vietnam War. Between 1965

and 1972 elements of the RAN undertook continuous operational service in Vietnam. During this period the Navy performed a variety of operational tasks at sea, ashore and in the air.

Naval Operations in Vietnam | Royal Australian Navy

HMAS Sydney (III) was regularly used to transport personnel and equipment to Vietnam.

70th Anniversaries

27 July 1953 - The Korean War came to an end with the signing of an armistice agreement. Nine RAN ships served in the conflict; HMA Ships *Sydney* (III), *Anzac* (II), *Bataan* (I), *Tobruk* (I), *Warramunga* (I), *Culgoa*, *Condamine*, *Murchison* and *Shoalhaven*. Three Fleet Air Arm squadrons also served aboard *Sydney*; 805, 808 and 817 Squadrons. Three RAN members were killed in action, and another six were injured.

The Korean War | Royal Australian Navy

75th Anniversaries

24 February 1948 - Vice Admiral Sir John Augustine Collins was appointed First Naval Member of the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board and Chief of the Naval Staff, the first RANC graduate to attain the

position. Collins retained the post until he retired on 23 February 1955.

Vice Admiral Sir John Augustine Collins | Royal Australian Navy

28 August 1948 - RAN Fleet Air Arm Squadrons 805 and 816 commissioned into the RAN at Royal Naval Air Station Eglinton, Northern Ireland.

805 Squadron History | Royal Australian Navy

816 Squadron History | Royal Australian Navy

31 August 1948 - The home of the RAN Fleet Air Arm, HMAS *Albatross* commissioned at Nowra. *Albatross* remains Australia's only Naval Air Station and is home to the Naval Air Squadrons, continuing a proud tradition of naval aviation in Australia.

HMAS Albatross History | Royal Australian Navy

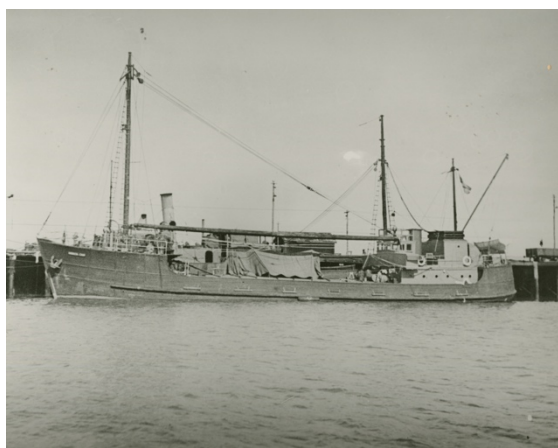*MH-60R Seahawk helicopters from 816 Squadron prepare to land at HMAS Albatross in Nowra, NSW.*

80th Anniversaries

22 January 1943 - The auxiliary minesweeper HMAS *Patricia Cam* was bombed by a Japanese float plane and suffered a direct hit. Such was the damage caused that *Patricia Cam* sank within a minute, taking one sailor with her. The Japanese aircraft continued to attack the survivors in the water, killing three more, before alighting on the water and taking one of the survivors, the Methodist missionary the Reverend Leonard N. Kentish, on board and departing. Of the 20 survivors left in the

water, two perished at sea while the other 18 made landfall on an islet near Wessel Island. Two more later died from their injuries. The 16 survivors were rescued on 29 January. Reverend Kentish was executed by the Japanese on 5 February 1943.

HMAS Patricia Cam | Royal Australian Navy

HMAS Patricia Cam was attacked by a Japanese float plane in January 1943. A direct hit saw her sink in minutes.

26 April 1943 - The RAN corvettes HMAS *Colac* and *Ballarat* were escorting a convoy of five ships about 20 miles south east of Cape Byron when the convoy came under attack by a Japanese submarine. The British ship MV *Limerick* was subsequently hit by a torpedo and sank. Efforts to locate and destroy the Japanese submarine failed, although *Colac* managed to rescue all but two of *Limerick*'s crew.

HMAS Colac | Royal Australian Navy

HMAS Ballarat (I) | Royal Australian Navy

14 May 1943 – The converted Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur* was sunk after being hit by a torpedo fired from a Japanese submarine. Of the 332 people embarked in *Centaur*, 268 did not survive the sinking. The final location of the *Centaur* was discovered off the coast of South-East Queensland in December 2009.

The Sinking of the Centaur - Anzac Portal (dva.gov.au)

Poster created in the aftermath of the sinking of the Centaur.

1 July 1943 – HMAS *Harman* was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy. During World War II, *Harman* provided communications services for ships of the allied navies working in the Pacific region. During this time, the first servicewomen began work as telegraphers, forming the basis of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS).

HMAS Harman | Royal Australian Navy

9 July 1943 – The Invasion of Sicily (Operation HUSKY) began**.** Present in the estimated 3000 ship invasion force
were HMA Ships *Gawler*, *Lismore*, *Maryborough*, *Ipswich*, *Cessnock*, *Geraldton*, *Cairns* and *Wollongong*. Once their part in the invasion of Sicily was completed the Australian ships returned to their vital and still dangerous task of escorting convoys through the Mediterranean.

The Invasion of Sicily - Operation HUSKY | Royal Australian Navy

11 July 1943 – HMAS *Wallaroo* collided with the United States Liberty Ship *Henry Gilbert Costin*. The collision occurred shortly after midnight off the Western Australian coast, approximately west of Fremantle. Wallaroo sank four hours after the collision, while endeavouring to reach Fremantle. *Henry Gilbert Costin* reached port safely with no casualties and only minor damage. Three ratings from *Wallaroo* were killed at the time of the collision.

HMAS Wallaroo | Royal Australian Navy

20 July 1943 - The modified Leander class light cruiser HMAS *Hobart* (I) was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine whilst en route to Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu, as part of Task Force 74. The torpedo struck aft on the port side causing considerable damage in the vicinity of the wardroom. Thirteen officers and sailors were killed and another seven injured. *Hobart* made it to Espiritu Santo the following day where she underwent temporary repairs.

HMAS Hobart (I) | Royal Australian Navy

22 September 1943 - Lieutenant Commander John Morrell Band, RANR(S), commanded a Beach Commando team which landed at Japanese occupied Finschafen, New Guinea. Band led the first wave of landing forces ashore and, although fatally wounded, continued to direct operations ashore and prevented one group of landing craft from landing in the wrong area where enemy fire was particularly heavy. He finally collapsed on the beach and was taken to a field hospital where he died the following day. He was posthumously awarded the USN Navy Cross.

RAN Beach Commandos | Royal Australian Navy

27 September 1943 - 7 Japanese ships, amounting to between 37,000 and 39,000 tonnes of shipping, were sunk or severely damaged in Keppel Harbour, Singapore. During the night, 6 Australian and British operatives snuck into Singapore Harbour in canoes and attached limpet mines to their targets before making good their escape and rendezvousing with their fellow operatives at Pompong Island. Operation JAYWICK, as it was codenamed, was one of the most successful clandestine raids in Australian history.

Krait and Operation JAYWICK | Royal Australian Navy

Operatives of Operation JAYWICK. The mission included a number of RAN personnel and was led by Major Ivan Lyon of the Gordon Highlanders (front row middle).

110th Anniversaries

4 October 1913 - The RAN Fleet Unit arrived in Sydney Harbour in a triumphant first entry. Led by the flagship, HMAS *Australia* (I), the fleet consisted of the cruisers *Melbourne* (I), *Sydney* (I) and *Encounter*, and the destroyers *Warrego* (I), *Parramatta* (I) and *Yarra* (I). The entry of the Fleet Unit signalled the beginning of Australia's role as an independent naval power within the region. Within one year of the event, the nation would be at war.

The RAN - A Brief History | Royal Australian Navy

Note:

All regularly occurring annual ADF commemorations can be found at the Department of Veterans' Affairs website: Days of commemoration in Australia - Anzac Portal (dva.gov.au)