



## AUSTRALIAN NAVAL ANNIVERSARIES 2021

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Throughout 2021 the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) will pause to reflect and commemorate a number of significant events that have shaped its character since its inception on 1 March 1901.

Over the last 120 years, Australian naval personnel have served variously around the world at sea, ashore and in the air establishing an enduring reputation that encompasses the modern Defence values of Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity and Excellence, often in the face of adversity.

This was particularly the case eighty years ago when, during World War II, the RAN was immersed in a global conflict in which sea power was to prove pivotal to both sustaining beleaguered allies and enabling the liberation of others. Indeed, Australia's very livelihood was then, as it is now, directly tethered to its dependence on the saltwater highways that connect our ancient continent with the rest of the world.

While there will be numerous 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations centered on the events of World War II, there will also be many other significant anniversaries that will command the Navy's attention in 2021. A variety of these are set out in this Semaphore along with links to informative historical background information for the interest of readers.

Big or small, heartfelt, commemorations continue to reinforce the value placed on the service of our officers and sailors whose deeds contribute significantly to both regional and international maritime security in an ever changing strategic environment.

### 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Formation of the Australian Navy

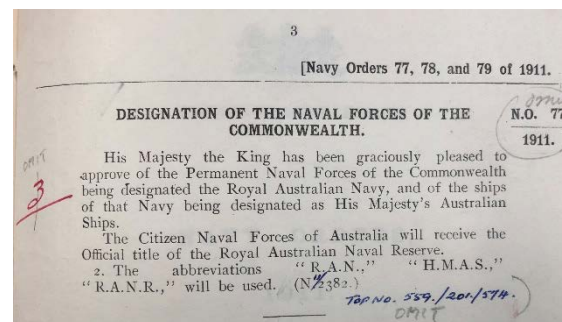
1 March 1901 – On this day the Australian States transferred their naval forces and everyone employed in their connection to the Federal Government. The ships inherited formed the Commonwealth Naval Forces.

<https://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-how-old-australia's-navy>

### 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

10 July – On this day in 1911, His Majesty King George V granted the title of 'Royal Australian Navy' to the Commonwealth Naval Forces of Australia. The decree was later promulgated in Navy Order 77 of 1911.

From that time on Australia's permanent naval forces officially became the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Citizen Naval Forces became the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, and RAN vessels officially carried the prefix His/Her Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS). At the stern of Australian ships, the Royal Navy's White Ensign replaced the Australian Blue Ensign, and the Australian Commonwealth flag thereafter took the place of the Union flag at the bow.



### 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

12 December – On this day in 1921, the first flagship of the RAN fleet, the *Indefatigable* class cruiser, HMAS *Australia* (I) decommissioned at Sydney. Less than three years later she was prepared for scuttling to comply with the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, which provided for a reduction in naval strengths.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-australia-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/loss-more-symbolic-material>

### 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

#### Battle of Matapan

29 March – On this day in 1941 the destroyer HMAS *Stuart* (I) (Captain H.M.L. Waller, RAN) re-joined the Royal Navy's Mediterranean fleet following the Battle of Matapan, fought against the Italian fleet. Waller remarked on the excellent behaviour of *Stuart's* ship's company, whose guns' crews were mainly composed of ordinary seamen from the Royal Australian Naval Reserve. Most had only been in the ship a matter of weeks



and the majority of them had never previously seen a gun fired at night.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-stuart-i>

### The Institution of the WRANS

18 April – On this day in 1941 the Minister for the Navy approved the employment of twelve female telegraphists and two attendants at the Harman Wireless Transmission Station in Canberra. On 21 April a Navy Office letter to the Commodore-in-Charge, Sydney authorised the entry of women into the service as WRANS. The fourteen women began their duties at Harman on 28 April 1941 paving the way for the eventual full integration of women into the Service.

<https://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-women-ran-road-command-sea>



WRANS telegraphists on watch at the Harman W/T station during World War II.

### Battle for Crete

20 May – The Battle of Crete 20-31 May 1941. With some 40,000 Allied troops on Crete, many of whom had already been evacuated from Greece, and with limited resources with which to mount a meaningful defence, a German airborne assault on Crete began on 20 May 1941. RAN ships involved in the defence, and subsequent evacuation, of Crete were HMA Ships *Perth* (I) (Captain Sir P.W. Bowyer-Smith, RN), *Stuart* (I) (Captain H.M.L. Waller, DSO, RAN), *Vendetta* (I) (Lieutenant Commander R. Rhoades, RAN), *Voyager* (I) (Commander J.C. Morrow, DSC, RAN), *Waterhen* (I) (Lieutenant Commander J.H. Swain, RN), *Napier* (Captain S.H.T. Arliss, RN) and *Nizam* (Lieutenant Commander M.J. Clark, RAN).

In the face of absolute enemy superiority in the air, the Navy did all it could, in spite of grievous losses, to save the island from German occupation, and when defence became no longer possible it managed to extricate some 17,000 troops from the island. Between 20 and 31 May the Mediterranean Fleet lost the cruisers *Gloucester*, *Calcutta*, *York* and *Fiji*; the destroyers *Juno*, *Greyhound*, *Kelly*, *Kashmir*, *Imperial* and *Hereward*; one minesweeper and 29 smaller craft. *Barham*, *Warspite*, *Valiant* and several cruisers were damaged. While no RAN ships were lost, two cooks, two sailors and nine passengers were killed when *Perth* came under attack from German aircraft on 30 May.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-perth-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-stuart-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-vendetta-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-voyager-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-waterhen-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-napier>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-nizam>

### HMAS *Yarra* (II) in Action

May – On this day in 1941, six sailors from HMAS *Yarra* (II) (Lieutenant Commander W.H. Harrington, RAN), disguised as Arab fishermen in a native bellum, took soundings of the Shatt-el-Arab near Habib Shawi in preparation for Operation SCOP. The objective of SCOP was “to attack and disperse all enemy found on the right (east) bank of the Shatt-el-Arab in the vicinity of Habib Shawi and to inflict maximum casualties.” The six sailors surveyed the landing position at Habib Shawi some seven miles up river from the Allied position at Ashar. The following night, the naval task force, consisting of *Yarra*, two tugs with two companies of Ghurkhas embarked, and two native mahailas, proceeded up river. By 0400 on 24 May all vessels were in position and *Yarra* began bombarding preselected targets and laying a smoke screen to cover the troop landings. By 0800 the operation was over and *Yarra* was on her way downstream. It had been, her proceedings recorded, “successfully completed, and [the targets] Big House and the South Village being left in flames. Expenditure of ammunition 43 rounds 4-inch, 216 rounds 0.5-inch and 550 rounds .303-inch.”

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-yarra-ii>



### HMAS *Waterhen* sunk

30 June – On this day in 1941, the V & W class destroyer and member of the famed Scrap Iron Flotilla, HMAS *Waterhen* (I) (Lieutenant Commander J.H. Swain, RN), was sunk in the Mediterranean Sea off Sollum, Egypt after coming under attack by enemy dive-bombers the night before. *Waterhen* and HMS *Defender* departed Alexandria for Tobruk with troops embarked on 28 June; part of the Tobruk Ferry Service. Though she did not suffer any direct hits when they came under attack the following evening, *Waterhen* was holed by a near miss and immobilised. Her crew and the embarked troops were removed to *Defender* with no casualties. *Defender* took *Waterhen* in tow but it soon became apparent that she could not be saved and she sank at around 1.50 am on 30 June. 'Chook,' as her crew affectionately knew her, was the first RAN vessel lost by enemy action in World War II.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-waterhen-i>

### Bravery Recognised - HMAS *Perth* (I)

5 August – On this day in 1941, Lieutenant Claude James Poigsdestre Guille, RANR(S), was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and Leading Stoker Peter George Allom was awarded the British Empire Medal for bravery and devotion to duty in boarding a burning merchant vessel during an enemy air attack. Both were part of the fire party from HMAS *Perth* (I) (Captain Sir P.W. Bowyer-Smyth, Bt, RN) which boarded the ammunition ship *Essex* after she had been struck by a bomb on 16 January 1941. Guille had previously served aboard *Essex* and his knowledge of the ship enabled him to direct fire parties, engineers and rescue parties, displaying the highest levels of leadership and disregard for personal safety. Upon seeing that the dockyard mains were insufficient, he insisted upon having hoses run from *Perth*'s own mains, which were ultimately the means of saving the ship. Guille was more responsible than any other individual for the ultimate safety of *Essex* and probably *Perth* as well. Allom directed the unwieldy fire hoses through portholes to fight the fire until it was extinguished, averting the explosion of the 4000 tons of ammunition the ship carried, and then assisted in the arduous task of removing casualties and debris. Other members of the fire party were similarly recognised.

### Petty Officer JT Humphrey – George Medal

25 August – On this day in 1941, Allied forces, led by the Australian armed merchant cruiser, HMAS *Kanimbla* (I) (Captain W.L.G. Adams, RN), occupied the Iranian port of Bandar Sharpur and captured a number of German and Italian merchant vessels. The respective German and Italian crews attempted to scuttle their vessels, however, all but one were saved. One, MV *Hohenfels*, had to be run aground to prevent her from sinking. Subsequently, Petty Officer J.T. Humphries, RAN, despite not being a trained diver, repeatedly dived into *Hohenfels*' flooded engine room and holds to close all the open valves in near zero visibility. For his courage in conducting this extremely hazardous operation, Petty Officer Humphries was awarded the George Medal on 17 February 1942.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/petty-officer-humphries-and-george-medal>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kanimbla-i>

### HMAS *Sydney* (II) Sunk in Action

19 November – On this day in 1941, the modified *Leander* class light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* (II) (Captain J Burnett, RAN) was lost with all 645 hands following a fierce engagement with the German raider HSK *Kormoran* off the coast of Western Australia. *Sydney* was the pride of the Australian fleet following her actions in the Mediterranean earlier in the war, and her loss was deeply felt by the entire Australian community.

Lest we forget.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-ii>



One of the last known photographs taken of HMAS *Sydney* (II), Geraldton, 1941.





### HMAS *Parramatta* (II) Torpedoed and Sunk

27 November – On this day in 1941, the *Grimsby* class sloop, HMAS *Parramatta* (II) (Commander JH Walker, MVO, RAN) was torpedoed by the German submarine *U559* while escorting a slow-moving convoy off the Libyan coast. Only 24 of *Parramatta*'s crew of 162 survived.

Lest We Forget.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-parramatta-ii>

### The Pacific War Erupts

7 December – On this day in 1941, Japanese forces invaded Malaya and Thailand, and launched a carrier-borne air attack against the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Further air attacks were carried out on the Philippines early the following morning. For the next four years, RAN units deployed throughout the Pacific in order to repel the greatest threat to Australian sovereignty ever encountered. Read more about the RAN's contribution to the Pacific campaign via the Sea Power Centre – Australia's *Feature Histories* webpage.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories>

### The Navy at Tobruk

8 December – On this day in 1941, the siege of Tobruk ended after 242 days. Nine RAN vessels, which became known as the Tobruk Ferry Service, were involved in the re-supply of Allied forces there. HMA Ships *Parramatta* (II) (Commander JH Walker, MVO, RAN) and *Waterhen* (I) (Lieutenant Commander J.H. Swain, RN) were lost during the operation.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-parramatta-ii>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-waterhen-i>

### First Enemy Submarine Sunk by RAN Ship

15 December – On this day in 1941, the 'N' class destroyer, HMAS *Nestor* (Commander AS Rosenthal, DSO, RAN) sighted the German submarine *U-127* on the surface off Cape St Vincent, Portugal. *Nestor* opened fire with her main armament forcing the submarine to dive and subsequently made a successful attack with depth charges. *U-127* was the first enemy submarine to be sunk by an Australian ship in WWII. Seven members of *Nestor*'s crew were recognised with gallantry awards for their respective parts in the action.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-nestor>

### 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

#### The RAN in Korea

##### HMAS *Bataan*

29 May – On this day in 1951, HMAS *Bataan* (Commander W.B.M. Marks, RAN) sailed from Hong Kong for home after eleven months service with the United Nations in Korean waters. *Bataan* was en route to Japan for her sixth post-war tour of duty with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force when the Korean War began on 25 June 1950. On 29 June 1950, *Bataan*, along with HMAS *Shoalhaven* (Commander I.H. McDonald, RAN), was placed at the disposal of UN authorities in support of the Republic of Korea. During her deployment, *Bataan* was underway for more than 4,000 hours on active operations and steamed some 101,860 kms.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-bataan>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/about/history/feature-histories/ran-korean-war>

#### ANZUS Agreement Signed



1 September – On this day in 1951 the ANZUS Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the US was signed in San Francisco. It came into force the following year on 29 April 1952. The treaty bound the signatories to recognise that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of them would endanger the peace and safety of the others. It stated 'The Parties will consult together whenever in the opinion of any of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific'. The three nations also pledged to maintain and develop individual and collective capabilities to resist attack. In 1984 the Treaty was affected by New Zealand's declaration that it would no longer permit US nuclear powered ships to visit its ports. In September 1986 the US suspended its treaty obligations with New Zealand. While this affected the trilateral aspects



of the treaty it has endured through separate bilateral agreements between Australia and the US and Australia with New Zealand.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed\\_Inquiries/jfadt/usrelations/appendixb](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/jfadt/usrelations/appendixb)

### **HMAS Anzac (II) Naval Gunfire Support in Korea**

26 September – On this day in 1951, the Battle class destroyer, HMAS *Anzac* (II) (Commander J. Plunkett-Cole, RAN) fired her 1000<sup>th</sup> round of 4.5 inch ammunition against enemy targets in Korea.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-anzac-ii>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/korean-war-60-years>

### **HMAS Murchison in Action on the Han River**

28 September – On this day in 1951, whilst conducting her fourth patrol in the Han River estuary, the modified River class frigate, HMAS *Murchison* (Lieutenant Commander A.N. Dollard, RAN), came under attack from North Korean shore batteries. With the Commander Task Force 95, Rear Admiral G. Dyer, USN, embarked at the time, *Murchison* responded with her 4-inch guns and with rapid short range fire, scoring several hits on the enemy and silencing all opposition.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-murchison>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/korean-war-60-years>

### **The Daring Rescue of Downed Fleet Air Arm Aviators**



26 October – On this day in 1951, a Fairey Firefly fighter from 817 Squadron embarked in HMAS *Sydney* (III) (Captain DH Harries, RAN), was shot down by North Korean forces some 50 miles behind enemy lines. The crew, Sub-Lieutenant

Neil MacMillan and Chief Petty Officer Phillip Hancox, resisted capture with the aid of an Owen sub-machine gun and overhead protection provided by RAN and RAAF aircraft. They were eventually rescued by *Sydney's* Dragonfly helicopter piloted by Chief Petty Officer Arlene 'Dick' Babbit, USN, who was awarded the Commonwealth Distinguished Service Medal as well as the United States Navy Cross for his efforts.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/squadron-histories/817-squadron-history>

### **First Combat Casualty for the Fleet Air Arm**

5 November – On this day in 1951, the RAN Fleet Air Arm suffered its first combat casualty when 805 Squadron (Lieutenant Commander JRN Salthouse, RAN) pilot Lieutenant Keith Clarkson, DFM, RAN, was shot down while diving on a road convoy in North Korea. He was the first of three naval airmen killed during the conflict.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/squadron-histories/805-squadron-history>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/korean-war-60-years>

### **Coalition Sea Power in Korea**

20 November – On this day in 1951, HMA Ships *Sydney* (III) (Captain DH Harries, RAN) and *Tobruk* (I) (Commander RI Peek, OBE, DSC, RAN) participated in Operation ATHENAEUM, a combined surface and air strike on Hungnam, North Korea. The force, which included the cruiser HMS *Belfast*, 4 destroyers and 3 USN rocket ships, bombarded North Korean coastal batteries over the next two days. *Sydney's* aircraft flew 113 sorties while some 200 tons of bombs, rockets and shells were expended by the force as a whole.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-iii>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-tobruk-i>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/korean-war-60-years>

### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries**

#### **RAN on the Gun Line in Vietnam**

5 April – On this day in 1971 the guided missile destroyer HMAS *Brisbane* (II) (Captain R.G. Loosli, RAN) took up station in Military Region 3 on the gun line in Vietnam. There she provided naval gunfire support to Free World Forces fighting ashore. Naval Gunfire Support remains an



important and effective aspect of naval operations to this day. Read more about the RAN's involvement in the Vietnam War on the following link:

<http://www.navy.gov.au/about/history/feature-histories/naval-operations-vietnam>

### Clearance Divers Return from Vietnam

5 May – On this day in 1971 the last contingent of Clearance Diving Team 3 to serve in Vietnam arrived back in Australia ending a four year presence in the war zone. CDT 3 was the first RAN unit to serve in Vietnam and 8 officers and 40 ratings saw service in 8 separate contingents.

[https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-May-14-1971.pdf](https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-May-14-1971.pdf)

### The Fleet Air Arm in Vietnam

8 June – On this day in 1971 the fourth and final contingent of the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV) ceased operations and returned to Australia. During its four-year deployment 200 Fleet Air Arm personnel had rotated through the RANHFV. They had continuously engaged in offensive operations, placing enormous demands not only on the pilots but also on the maintenance and support staff. Five of their number made the ultimate sacrifice and approximately 22 were wounded in action.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/squadron-histories/ran-helicopter-flight-vietnam-history>

### Conclusion of Gun Line Operations Vietnam

15 October – On this day in 1971, the *Perth* class (modified *Charles F Adams* class) class destroyer, HMAS *Brisbane* (II) (Captain RG Loosli, RAN), arrived back in Australia from Vietnam, the last RAN destroyer to serve on the gunline, marking the end of the RAN's combat role in the Vietnam War. During her 79 days on the gunline, *Brisbane* had fired a total of 7231 rounds of 5-inch ammunition and had steamed 27,011 nautical miles.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/naval-operations-vietnam>

### 50 years of Exercise RIMPAC

25 October – On this day in 1971 the RAN Flagship, HMAS *Melbourne* (II) arrived in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in company with HMA Ships *Hobart*, *Torrens*, *Yarra* to participate in the inaugural Exercise RIMPAC. The *Oberon* class

submarine HMAS *Onslow* also took part acting as a target vessel for trials on the RAN's *Ikara* anti-submarine weapons system.

[https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-December-10-1971.pdf](https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-December-10-1971.pdf)

### 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

16 January - On this day in 1991, President George H. W. Bush announced the start of what would be called Operation DESERT STORM—a military operation to expel occupying Iraqi forces from Kuwait, which Iraq had invaded and annexed months earlier. For weeks, a U.S.-led coalition of two dozen nations, including Australia, had positioned naval forces and more than 900,000 troops in the region, most stationed on the Saudi-Iraq border. A U.N.-declared deadline for withdrawal passed on 15 January and with no action from Iraq forthcoming, coalition forces began a five-week bombardment of Iraqi command and control targets from air and sea.

Despite widespread fears that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein might order the use of chemical weapons, a ground invasion followed in February. Coalition forces swiftly drove Iraq from Kuwait, advancing into Iraq, and reaching a cease-fire within 100 hours—controversially leaving Saddam Hussein in power. While coalition casualties were in the hundreds, Iraqi losses numbered in the tens of thousands.

HMA Ships *Brisbane* (II), *Sydney* (IV), *Success* and *Westralia* participated in Operation DESERT STORM and in a noteworthy operational first for the ADF, *Westralia's* ships company included seven women.

[https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-January-18-1991.pdf](https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-January-18-1991.pdf)







### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

#### 9/11 Terrorist Attacks

11 September – On this day in 2001, militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four US commercial aircraft and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which triggered major U.S and coalition initiatives to combat terrorism in the Middle East Region.

14 September – On this day in 2001 the Australian Government cited the terrorist attacks against the US as sufficient basis for invoking the mutual-defence clauses of the ANZUS Treaty. This was the first time the Treaty's clauses on acting to meet a common danger had been invoked since it was enacted in 1952. Parliament supported this decision on 17 September 2001.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BN/1011/MilitaryInvolvementAfghanistan](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/1011/MilitaryInvolvementAfghanistan)



*The World Trade Centre under attack on 11 September 2001. (Robert Clark/Associated Press)*

24 November – On this day in 2001, the *Anzac* class frigate, HMAS *Anzac* (III) (Captain NS Coates, RAN) arrived back in Fremantle from the Middle East Area of Operations. The successful deployment was the first to the Gulf for the RAN's new *Anzac* class frigates, and the last for Operation DAMASK. *Anzac*'s deployment was the RAN's 14th individual ship deployment to the Middle East Area of Operations since 1990. Read

more about *Anzac*'s deployment on pages 1 and 5 of the 25 November 2001 edition of Navy News, and pages 22 and 23 of the 10 December 2001 edition of Navy News.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-anzac-iii>

[http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-November-26-2001.pdf](http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-November-26-2001.pdf)

[http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-December-10-2001.pdf](http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-December-10-2001.pdf)

### 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

5 May - On this day in 2011 the world's last surviving World War 1 veteran, Chief Petty Officer Claude Choules, passed away in Perth, Western Australia. CPO Choules served in the Royal Navy during World War 1 in the battleship HMS *Revenge* and witnessed the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet in 1918. He later transferred to the Royal Australian Navy in which he served during World War II. The Amphibious Heavy Lift ship, HMAS *Choules*, was so named as a mark of respect to him and those of his generation.



<http://www.defence.gov.au/news/navynews/editions/5408/5408.pdf>