

AUSTRALIAN NAVAL ANNIVERSARIES AND COMMEMORATIONS - 2018

Throughout 2018 the Royal Australian Navy will pause to commemorate a significant number of important anniversaries, each of which forms a part of the rich historical tapestry of both the Navy and our Nation. At the heart of these commemorations are the Navy's people, the men and women who serve at sea, ashore and in the air in the pursuit of maintaining maritime security, safeguarding our shores and protecting the saltwater highways on which Australia's economic survival depends.

Many of the anniversaries covered in this Semaphore newsletter highlight wartime achievements and sacrifices while others serve to remind readers of the inherent dangers of day-to-day life, living and working in a diverse maritime environment.

At a time of growing uncertainty in our region it is worth reacquainting ourselves with the events of the past, not only from a commemorative perspective, but also with a view to examining the cause and effect principles underpinning them. One may well ask how things might have been done better or differently. The answers to those questions will not be found in this paper but it is hoped that the hyperlinks included within it might inspire the reader to delve further into the annals of the RAN and take away some of the hard learnt lessons of the past.

"Those that fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it"

Winston Churchill

100th Anniversaries

One hundred years ago RAN ships and personnel were deployed variously around the globe during what was to be the final year of fighting during World War I. Many of those personnel had not seen Australian shores since 1914 at which time the ships they were serving in had been ordered to the northern hemisphere to join the Royal Navy fleet in the war at sea against Germany. As the conflict was drawing towards its conclusion the RAN continued to contribute ships and personnel to a number of notable actions and events, several of which are highlighted below.

22 April 1918. On the night of 22-23 April 1918, the Royal Navy carried out an audacious raid on the German held ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend in occupied Belgium. The purpose of the raids was to render the ports unusable as U-boat and destroyer bases. Among the hundreds of RN and Royal Marine personnel involved in that action was a small group of RAN volunteers, a number of whom were decorated for their bravery.

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

11 November 1918. On this day the armistice was signed ending World War I. Counted among the RAN's losses

were HMA Submarines *AE1* and *AE2* and more than 200 personnel who lost their lives due to wartime service.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-ae1>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-ae2>

21 November 1918. On that date the German High Seas Fleet surrendered to the Allies in the Firth of Forth, Scotland. Present were HMA Ships *Australia* (I) (Captain TN James, RN), leading the British port line, *Melbourne* (I) (Captain EA Rushton, RN) and *Sydney* (I) (Captain JS Dumaresq, CB, MVO, RN). The German vessels were subsequently escorted to their internment at Scapa Flow.

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

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

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

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/1918-victory-sea>



Although hostilities had ceased there were other demands to be met by the RAN during the post armistice period. On 24 November 1918, the Naval Board despatched the cruiser HMAS *Encounter* to Fiji and Samoa on what became Australia's first overseas humanitarian assistance operation. *Encounter* embarked medical stores and a joint Army and Navy relief expedition to provide valuable aid following a severe outbreak of influenza among the indigenous populations.

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

<http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-march-2006>

75th Anniversaries

Following what was arguably the RAN's darkest year of World War II, 1943 began with further losses before the Allies gradually began to turn the tide in the Pacific Theatre.

22 January 1943. On this date, the auxiliary minesweeper, HMAS *Patricia Cam* (Lieutenant AC Meldrum, RANR(S)), was bombed by a Japanese float plane, suffering a direct hit. Such was the damage caused that *Patricia Cam* sank within a minute, taking one sailor with her. The aircraft returned to attack the survivors in the water, killing three more, before landing on the water and taking prisoner one of the survivors, the Methodist missionary the Reverend Leonard N. Kentish. Of the 20 survivors left in the water, two perished 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. The unfortunate Reverend Kentish was later executed by the Japanese on 4 May 1943.

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

On **10 April 1943** the *Bathurst* class corvette HMAS *Pirie* suffered 7 killed when the ship came under aerial attack from Japanese aircraft while conducting operations off Oro Bay in New Guinea. The vessel survived the encounter but was withdrawn to Australia to effect repairs. The second ship to carry the name *Pirie* in the RAN is an *Armidale* class patrol boat engaged in fisheries and border protection duties as part of the contemporary fleet.

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



A piece of timber from *Pirie's* deck held in the collection of the Sea Power Centre - Australia serves as a touchstone to the events of April 1943.

14 May 1943. The Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur*, en route from Sydney to Cairns, was torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese submarine *I-77* south of Moreton Island, off the Queensland coast. Of the 332 people on board, only 64 survived. The wreck of the *Centaur* was discovered in December 2009 in approximately 2000 metres of water.

20 July 1943. On this day the modified *Leander* class cruiser HMAS *Hobart* 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* reached Espiritu Santo under her own power the following day where she

underwent temporary repairs before being escorted back to Sydney for refitting.

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

On **2 September 1943**, a captured Japanese motor fishing vessel re-named *Krait* set out from Exmouth in Western Australia bound for Singapore, well inside Japanese controlled waters. By the time it returned nearly seven weeks later, the crew of 14 had carried out one of the most successful clandestine raids in Australian history. Learn more about the RAN's involvement in this audacious operation on the following links:

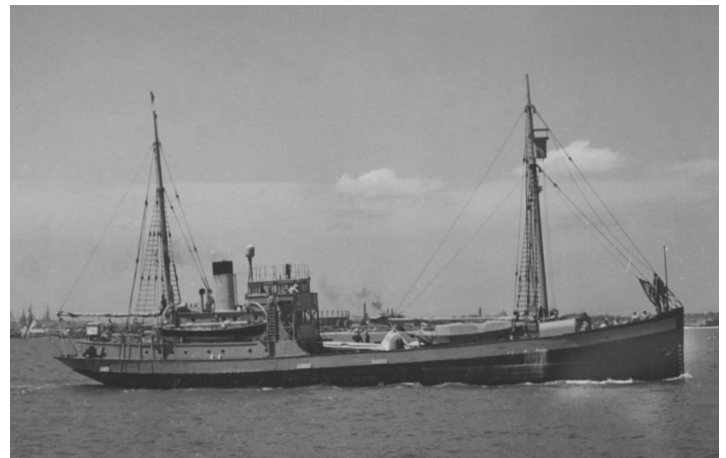
<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/krait-and-operation-jaywick>

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/operation-rimau-tragic-sequel-jaywick>

70th Anniversaries

In the summer of 1947-48 Australia's first Antarctic exploration since the Mawson voyages of 1929-31 were undertaken in a vessel barely suited to the task. The voyage of HMAS *Wyatt Earp* was the direct result of the establishment of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE) as a move by the Australian Government to consolidate its claim to Antarctic territory. The voyage was fraught with obstacles, hazards and atrocious weather but in spite of them the expedition accomplished a running survey of the glaciated and little-known Balleny Islands calling at Macquarie Island on the voyage back to Australia.¹

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



HMAS Wyatt Earp

31 August 1948. On this day the RAN's premier air station situated at Nowra, NSW, commissioned as HMAS *Albatross*. The name perpetuates the service of the RAN's first aircraft carrier – a seaplane carrier equipped with Seagull and Walrus aircraft. During the last 70 years *Albatross* has been home to the Fleet Air Arm throughout its evolution from piston engine aircraft to the jet age and the adoption of various types of helicopters.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/base-histories/hmas-albatross-history>

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



Sea Power Centre - Australia
Department of Defence
PO Box 7942
Canberra BC ACT 2610
AUSTRALIA
seapower.centre@defence.gov.au
www.navy.gov.au/spc/



60th Anniversaries

Two important 60th anniversaries fall this year. The first of these marked the return of the Royal Australian Naval College from HMAS *Cerberus* to its former location at Jervis Bay where it commissioned as HMAS *Creswell* on 20 January 1958. The second marks the date on which the first edition of Navy News was published on 18 July 1958. Since that time it has been distributed to naval personnel, wherever they have been deployed, keeping them informed of the RAN's activities and achievements.

http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-July-18-1958.pdf

50th Anniversaries

Important anniversaries marking the RAN's participation in the Vietnam War will be commemorated this year. In 1968 the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV) suffered three fatal casualties during airmobile operations in South Vietnam, while on the gunline HMAS *Hobart* lost two members of her crew following a friendly fire incident involving US fighter jets. Those who will be remembered this year include:

RANHFV

Lieutenant Commander PJ Vickers, RAN – 22 February 1968

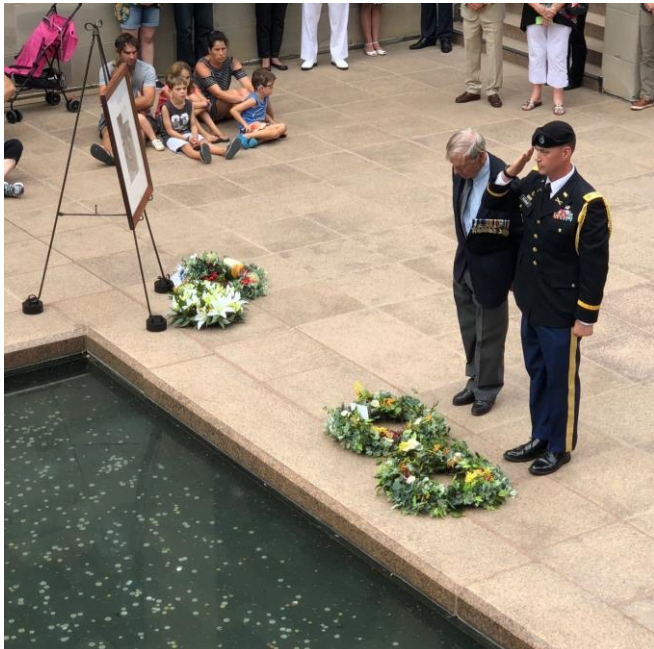
Lieutenant AA Casadio, RAN – 21 August 1968

Petty Officer O'BCI Phillips – 21 August 1968

HMAS *Hobart*

Ordinary Seaman RJ Butterworth – 17 June 1968

Chief Petty Officer RH Hunt – 17 June 1968



Left: RADM N Ralph, AO, DSC, RAN, a former commander of the RANHFV, pays his respects to his comrades at a recent Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. He is flanked by Colonel PA Teague, US Army Defence Attaché.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/ran-fleet-air-arm-ashore-vietnam>

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

40th Anniversaries

Integral to supporting the RAN fleet are the commissioned shore establishments situated around Australia. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the commissioning of HMAS *Stirling* situated at Garden Island, Western Australia. The facility formally commissioned on 28 July 1978 and within a decade it was home to a number of ships as the Navy implemented a two-ocean basing policy. Forty years later *Stirling* is well-established as Fleet Base West servicing and supporting numerous RAN and visiting warships as well as being home to the Australian Submarine Squadron.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/establishments/fleet-base-west>

25th Anniversaries

In the aftermath of Gulf War 1 RAN warships routinely deployed to the Middle East region conducting maritime security and interception patrols under the auspices of Operation DAMASK. During DAMASK VI HMAS *Canberra* (II) (Commander RW Gates, RAN) was assigned as consort to the destroyer USS *Caron* during the period 13-19 January 1993. The two ships operated closely together in the Northern Red Sea at a high state of readiness to launch Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles against military targets in Iraq. During the evening of **17 January 1993** *Caron* was assigned a firing position and strike window to engage those targets. Throughout the attack phase *Canberra* provided AAW defence for *Caron* during which time the air threat warning was raised from white to yellow in response to a Scud missile alert. *Canberra's* S70B-2 helicopter provided range clearance throughout the strike.

Throughout HMAS *Canberra* (II)'s commission she participated in numerous operations and exercises before decommissioning on 12 November 2005.

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

January 1993 also saw HMA Ships *Tobruk* and *Jervis Bay* arrive in Mogadishu, Somalia as part of Australia's response to the worsening humanitarian crisis there. Under the auspices of Operation SOLACE the two vessels undertook the largest military sea lift operation since the Vietnam War, ferrying troops and equipment to the region in support of a greater coalition peacekeeping operation designated RESTORE HOPE. *Tobruk* was to remain in the area of operations until 20 May 1993 at which time the main body of Australian forces withdrew.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/operation-solace-ran-relief-somalia-1993>

This year will also mark the 25th year in service for the guided missile frigate HMAS *Newcastle* which commissioned on 11 December 1993. Built in Australia at Williamstown, Victoria she is the first ship in the RAN to carry the name of the city of Newcastle. Throughout her commission she has seen extensive operational service in the Middle East region conducting maritime security and anti-piracy patrols.



Sea Power Centre - Australia
Department of Defence
PO Box 7942
Canberra BC ACT 2610
AUSTRALIA
seapower.centre@defence.gov.au
www.navy.gov.au/spc/





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

20th Anniversaries

In 1997 the ADF responded to an agreement ending nine years of civil war on Bougainville by contributing assets in support of a multi-national Truce Monitoring Group. Under the auspices of Operation BELISI (I), that commitment saw HMA Ships *Success*, *Tobruk*, *Betano*, *Brunei*, *Labuan* and *Tarakan* deploy variously in support of operations ashore in late 1997.

In **1998** the mission transitioned from truce monitoring to peace monitoring and the Operation was renamed BELISI (II). Elements of the ADF were to remain in Bougainville until August 2003 at which time the operation came to an end. During that time the RAN continuously assigned maritime assets to the peace monitoring process including HMA Ships *Kanimbla*, *Tobruk*, *Balikpapan*, *Betano*, *Brunei*, *Labuan*, *Tarakan*, *Wewak*, *Mermaid*, *Paluma*, a detachment from Clearance Diving Team 1, and the MSAs *Bandicoot*, *Brolga* and *Wallaroo*.

HMAS *Westralia* (II) fire.

1998 was also a year marked by tragedy for the RAN when a serious fire erupted in the engine room of HMAS *Westralia* (II) in waters not far from Fleet Base West on **5 May**. The fire was serious and other RAN units in the area rushed to the assistance of the stricken vessel. In spite of the bravery displayed by her crew to combat the blaze Midshipman Megan Pelly, Petty Officer Shaun Smith, Leading Seaman Bradley Meek and Able Seaman Phillip Carroll lost their lives. The tragedy was deeply felt throughout the fleet and those who perished are remembered each year through annual commemoration services held chiefly at HMAS *Stirling* and around Australia.



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

10th Anniversaries

With news of the discovery of the wreck of HMA Submarine *AE1* in December 2017, in waters near the Duke of York Island, another enduring Australian maritime mystery has been solved and the submarine's missing crew commemorated.

This year will mark the tenth anniversary of the discovery of the the wreck of HMAS *Sydney* (II) on 16 March 2008. Each year *Sydney's* loss is commemorated on 19 November and this year's commemorations will no doubt take on a special meaning a decade after her discovery.

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



The first glimpse of HMAS Sydney (II) in 66 years was of one of her aft 6-inch gun turrets

John Perryman

Director Strategic & Historical Studies

Sea Power Centre - Australia

¹ Phillip Law, *The Antarctic Voyage of HMAS Wyatt Earp*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995.



Sea Power Centre - Australia
 Department of Defence
 PO Box 7942
 Canberra BC ACT 2610
 AUSTRALIA
seapower.centre@defence.gov.au
www.navy.gov.au/spc/

