



NAVAL HISTORY

**"The maintenance of the
maritime well-being of the
nation"**

is
the
principal
objective
of
the
Navy League
of Australia

Patron:

Governor of Victoria

President:

LCDR Roger Blythman

RANR RFD RET'D

Snr Vice President: Frank

McCarthy

Vice President Secretary: Ray

Gill

PP: Treasurer: Special Events:

CMDR John Wilkins OAM RFD
RANR

BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

As we detailed at length in last months (April 2014)) newsletter the Battle of the Coral Sea from 4th May to 8th May 1942, in which the United States Navy together with the Royal Australian Navy engaged the Japanese was the first naval battle in history where opposing fleets were never in visual contact.

The month of May 2014, marks the 72nd anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea.

The R.A.N.'s cruisers HMAS Australia and HMAS Hobart participated in the Battle of the Coral Sea, together with units of the United States navy including the United States aircraft carriers USS Yorktown and USS Lexington.

The Battle of the Coral Sea may well have been the turning point of the Japanese threat against Australia.

THE LOSS OF THE A.H.S. "CENTAUR"

May 14th 2014 marked the 71st anniversary of the loss of the hospital ship "Centaur".

The sinking of the Australian hospital ship "Centaur" resulted in the loss of 268 lives. A Japanese submarine off the Queensland coast torpedoed the "Centaur" at 0400 hours on 14th May 1943.

The 64 survivors of the sinking were rescued 36 hours later by the USN destroyer USS MUGFORD.

"Centaur" a motor passenger ship of 3275 tonnes owned by the Ocean Steamship Company Limited, and registered at Liverpool England, had formerly been in the West Australia-Singapore trade. She was made available by the Ministry of War Transport for conversion to a hospital ship in January 1943, for use in the New Guinea area.

The "Centaur" was converted to a hospital ship at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard Melbourne in early 1943. She left Melbourne on her maiden voyage as an Australian hospital ship on 12th March 1943.

It was on “Centaur’s” second voyage to New Guinea when she was 2 days out from Sydney that she was attacked by a unit of the Japanese first submarine squadron and sunk, resulting in the biggest individual loss of life from a Japanese torpedo suffered in Australian waters during the war.

Those who perished in the “Centaur” were 45 members of the ship’s crew including the Master Captain G.A. Murray and 233 medical personnel including 11 nurses.

Many of the medical personnel were members of the 2/12 field ambulance.

Until 4.1/2 years ago the exact location of the wreck of the “Centaur” was unknown, however, world-renowned shipwreck hunter David Mearns found the wreck, via sonar tracking, on December 20th 2009 at a depth of 2059 metres, 48km east of the southern tip of Moreton Island.

LOSS OF HMAS KUTTABUL

In the last few hours of May 31st and the early hours of June 1st 1942, now 72 years ago, Japan brought World War 2 to Sydney, when Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour to attack allied shipping.

HMAS KUTTABUL, a converted Sydney Ferry being used as a naval accommodation vessel, was sunk with the tragic loss of 21 lives. The Dutch submarine K9 was damaged in the attack, and the Japanese midget submarines were subsequently destroyed.

CORRECTION: - My Article on U.S. Navy ships visits April 2014 newsletter.

In our April 2014 edition of Navy League Newsletter, we advised that the first two United States Navy visitors to Melbourne following the end of World War 2 were the Carrier USS TARAWA and Destroyer USS O’BANNON, both arriving in May of 1954. This is incorrect and should have read the first USN visitors to commemorate the Battle of the Coral Sea. The first USN visitor to Melbourne following the end of World War 2 was the Cruiser USS BIRMINGHAM in December of 1945. A further visitor was the Submarine USS DOGFISH in October of 1948. We are grateful to Mr. Alf Batchelder for pointing out these details.

SHRINE REPORT APRIL – MAY 2014

Navy League of Australia Executive Committee member, Mr. Ken Crook, has kindly made available a report detailing the redevelopment work currently being carried out at Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance.

Ken’s report as follows:-

SHRINE REPORT MAY 2014

The Shrine redevelopment is reaching a visually interesting stage of the project. The development will expand and improve facilities for exhibitions, community research and the delivery of school and community education programs. Already (in late April) the Southern Extension complex was handed over from the builders (Probuild) to the Shrine. All landscaping and covering over of the new complex is now completed (including covering of the logistics tunnel). It will enhance the Shrine's capacity to meet demand for commemorative activities during the centenary of ANZAC and WWI commemorative period 2014-18.

The DEVANHA (Gallipoli landing boat), which was first ashore on ANZAC day 25th April 1915, was delivered and an unveiling ceremony held on Sunday 4th May. It was unveiled by the Premier of Victoria, Dr Dennis Naphine, and is now in situ in the Eastern Exhibition Gallery. The existing Northern Visitors Centre was used for the last time on Friday 9th May.

The retail complex and offices have moved to the new Southern Extension. From 10th May, the Shrine took possession of the Southern Extension comprising courtyards, foyers, offices, auditorium, plant room, toilets and storage. The Undercroft Tunnel and all other areas remain in Probuild's possession as construction zones.

The old Visitors Centre was handed over to Probuild on 10th May for rebuild of a larger Retail Centre and improved facilities for the public and Service Organisations. Access to all Shrine areas will be 1st October. The enhanced Northern Visitors' Centre will reopen to the public on 4th August. This day will also see the launch of the Touring Exhibition and VIP Event and is the centenary of the commencement of WWI. 15th October is the date for the completion of the Galleries and is also a VIP event. Remembrance Day, Tuesday 11th November, is the Official Dedication of the Galleries and the 80th anniversary of the Shrine's original Dedication Ceremony performed by HRH Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, representing King George V in 1934.

In recent years, visitation has risen significantly, from 250,000 in the year 2000 to over 700,000 in 2013. It is anticipated that number will reach around 1,000,000 by the Centenary of ANZAC, in 2015, including 80,000 school children. A Rolling Scroll for WWII, Korean War and Vietnam will complement the existing Books of Remembrance. Some 360,000 names of Victorians in post WWI conflicts will be on display. The vast exhibition space in the new Undercroft will emphasise the community origins of war service and sacrifice.

The new permanent Education Centre provides for the increasing demands of school student visitation. Audio visual techniques will be used to interpret objects and storage. This area will incorporate a new auditorium with seating for 137 people plus three wheelchair positions. There will be three activity pods within the Exhibition space. There will also be a fourth pod, the Research Centre, which will allow all visitors the opportunity to explore our rich military heritage through the use of computer kiosks.

Many artefacts and personal accounts will be on display telling the story of those who served in war

“AS IT WAS”

Once again we invite you to join us as we take a look at more recent naval history at items that involved, or caught the eye of Navy League over the years on our “Keep Watch” brief. This time we go back 10 years as we browse through our records and reports to May 2004. We note that it was around this time we reported on the following:-

HMAS LEEUWIN AND NORMAN VISIT MELBOURNE

Two of the RAN'S ships visited Melbourne recently with HMAS LEEUWIN and HMAS NORMAN arriving at Station Pier Port Melbourne 23rd April 2004.

HMAS NORMAN under the command of LCDR Darren Johnstone is a Huon Class Coastal Mine Hunter MHC84 and is the third ship of a six-ship class.

HMAS NORMAN follows the lead ship of the Class HMAS HUON No.82 and HMAS HAWKESBURY No.83; she is in turn followed by HMAS'S GASCOYNE No.85, DIAMANTINA No.86 and YARRA No.87.

The main characteristics of the Huon Class of Minehunters are as follows:-

Displacement	720 Tonnes
Length	52.5 Metres
Beam	9.9 Metres
Speed	14 Knots
Ships Company	38 Including 6 Officers

During my visit to HMAS NORMAN I left copies of the Leagues magazine “The Navy” with NORMANS Executive Officer LEUT Paul Rule.

HMAS LEEUWIN No.A245 is a Hydrographic survey ship under the command of LCDR. John McGannon and is the lead ship of a two ship class with HMAS MELVILLE No.A246 as a sister ship.

Both ships can operate up to 300 days a year at sea as the RAN operates the ships with three crews, red, white and blue, rotating the crews through the two ships. At the time of this Melbourne visit, white crew were in control of LEEUWIN .

The main characteristics of the LEEUWIN Class of Hydrographic survey ships are as follows:-

Displacement	2550 Tonnes
Length	71.2 Metres
Beam	15.2 Metres
Speed	14 Knots
Ships Company	50

During the ships stay in Melbourne a group of Navy League members accepted a luncheon invitation to dine on board HMAS LEEUWIN as guests of LEEUWIN'S C.O. LCDR. John McGannon, ably assisted by his Executive Officer LEUT. Chris Jones. The C.O. of HMAS NORMAN, LCDR Darren Johnstone, also joined with League members in accepting LEEUWIN'S luncheon invitation.

“AS IT WAS” C”tnd

The League's Federal President Graham Harris spoke of the Leagues support of RAN at the luncheon and presentations also took place with ships crests of LEEUWIN and NORMAN being presented to the League, and in turn the League's Victorian President John Wilkins made presentations of Navy League magazines and Leagues crests to LEEUWIN and NORMAN.

HMAS NORMAN'S visit to Melbourne was in line with a de-ammunitioning program for the Mine Hunter at Point Wilson. Whilst in Melbourne the ships company participated in Anzac Day ceremonies, including marching with the members of "N" Class destroyers Association.

HMAS LEEUWIN'S visit to Melbourne as a routine port visit in between survey duties in Bass Strait, however, during the ships stay in Melbourne LEEUWIN'S survey motor boats were put to good use surveying the bottom area in and around Victoria Dock in preparation for the Commissioning of HMAS BALLARAT in that region during June of this year. LEEUWIN'S ships company also participated in Melbourne's Anzac Day march.

ANZAC FRIGATE HANDED OVER TO RAN

The Anzac Class Frigate Nuship BALLARAT FFH155, was handed over to the Navy at Tenix Shipyard Williamstown on Friday 30th April 2004.

BALLARAT is the eighth of a series of 10 Anzac Class Frigates being built at Tenix Williamstown for the Australian and New Zealand Navies.

The managing Director of Tenix Mr. Paul Salteri said during the handover ceremony, that Nuship BALLARAT has exceeded expectations at its sea trial in March 2004.

BALLARAT is scheduled to be commissioned in June 2004 at Melbourne's Victoria Dock.

HMAS BENDIGO VISITS MELBOURNE

For the first time since 1991, the Fremantle Class Patrol Boat HMAS BENDIGO Pendant No.211, paid a visit to Melbourne berthing at Victoria Dock.

HMAS BENDIGO, with LCDR. Bryan Parker as Commanding Officer, LCDR. Chris Brough as Executive Officer, and SBLT John Mitchell as Public Relations Officer, arrived in Melbourne on 7th May 2004 for a three day port visit.

During BENDIGO'S port visit to Melbourne the ship's company travelled to the Victorian City of Bendigo to engage in the ceremony of "Freedom of Entry" to the city. The previous occasion having been in 1988.

HMAS BENDIGO arrived in Melbourne from HMAS CRESWELL via a patrol of the Bass Strait oil rigs.

HMAS BENDIGO departed Melbourne on 10th May 2004, probably for the last time, as she is due to pay off and decommission in April 2006. The boat headed north to return to her home base port of Cairns Queensland via a refuelling stop at Newcastle NSW. Once back in Cairns, a birthday party is planned to celebrate the 21 years since HMAS BENDIGO'S commissioning in May 1983.

All 15 of the Fremantle Class Patrol boats are scheduled to pay off between 2004 and 2007, to be replaced by Armidale Class Patrol Boats.

The 12 Armidale boats will operate from their respective bases in groups of 4 boats. Each group of 4 boats will have 6 crews thus maximising each boats sea time availability.

Membership

Any person with an interest in maritime affairs, or who wishes to acquire an interest in, or knowledge of, maritime affairs and who wishes to support the objectives of the League, is invited to join.

OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of the Navy League of Australia is "The maintenance of the maritime well-being of the Nation" by:

- Keeping before the Australian people the fact that we are a maritime nation and that a strong Navy supported by maritime elements of the Air Force and Army and other Government Maritime agencies are indispensable elements of our national well-being and vital to the freedom of Australia.
- Promoting defence self-reliance by supporting maritime research, defence industry, Australian shipping, ship-building, port and transport infrastructure and off shore resource exploration and development.
- Promoting and encouraging the interest and training of youth in the sea.

ACTIVITIES

The Navy League of Australia works towards its objectives in a number of ways:

- By including in its membership leading representatives of the many elements which form the maritime community.
- Through soundly-based contributions by members to journals and newspapers, and other media comment.
- By publishing *The Navy*, a quarterly journal reporting on local and overseas maritime happenings, past, present, and projected.
- By organizing symposia, ship visits and various other functions of maritime interests throughout the years.
- By supporting Australian Navy Cadets, and assisting in the provision of training facilities.

Member participation is encouraged in all these activities.

POLICY

The policy of the League can be found at the back of *The Navy*.

Correspondence:- All articles for publication in the Navy League of Australia (Vic.Div.) Newsletter, should be addressed to the Editor, Frank McCarthy, email:- (alistle@bigpond.com). All other correspondence should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Navy League of Australia (Vic.Div.) P.O.Box 2340, Mount Waverley, Victoria 3149: (raydotgill@optusnet.com.au).

Disclaimer: - Opinions and views expressed in editorial and contributed articles are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Navy League. The Editor reserves the right to publish abridged articles, special features due to space constraints. The Navy League Editor and authors expressly disclaim all and any liability to any person, whether a Navy League member or not, who acts or fails to act as a consequence of reliance upon the whole or part of this publication. No responsibility is accepted by the Navy League for the accuracy of information contained in advertisements. Publication of any advertisement does not constitute endorsement by the Navy League of any product, nor warrant its suitability. Advertisements are published by the advertisers. E&OA

***Copyright The Navy League of Australia Victoria Division and Frank McCarthy.**


Joining the League

To become a Member of The League, you do not need to have had any previous maritime experience. You merely need an interest in maritime affairs. Simply complete the Application Form below, and post it, together with your first annual subscription of \$35.00 (which includes the four quarterly editions of The Navy), to the Hon Secretary of the Division of the Navy League in the State in which you reside, the address of which are as follows:

New South Wales Division: GPO Box 1719, Sydney, NSW 2001.
Victorian Division: PO Box 2340, Mt Waverley, Vic 3149.
Queensland Division: GPO Box 1481, Brisbane, QLD 4001.
South Australian Division: PO Box 3008, Unley, SA 5061.
West Australian Division: 3 Prosser Way, Myaree, WA 6154.

If you live in Tasmania, please post the form to the Hon Secretary of the Victorian Division. If you live in the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory, please post the form to the Hon Secretary of the New South Wales or South Australian Division respectively.

Subscriptions are due on 1 July in each year, and your membership will be current to 30 June immediately following the date on which you join the League, except that if your first subscription is received during the period 1 April to 30 June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30 June in the following year.

THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA		
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP		
To: The Hon. Secretary The Navy League of Australia		
Division _____		
I wish to join the Navy League of Australia, the objectives of which I support, and I enclose a remittance for \$35.00 (including \$3.18 GST) being my first annual subscription to 30 June next.		
Name: [Mr] [Mrs] [Ms] [Rank] _____		
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY		
Street _____		
Suburb _____	State _____	P/code _____
Phone _____	Mobile _____	
Email _____		
Signature _____		Date _____
<i>Subscriptions are due on 1 July in each year and your membership will be current to 30 June immediately following the date on which you join the League, except that if your first subscription is received during the period 1 April to 30 June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30 June in the following year.</i>		