



# NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA VICTORIA TASMANIA DIVISION MARCH – JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

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**“Keeping Watch over the Maritime Wellbeing of Australia”**

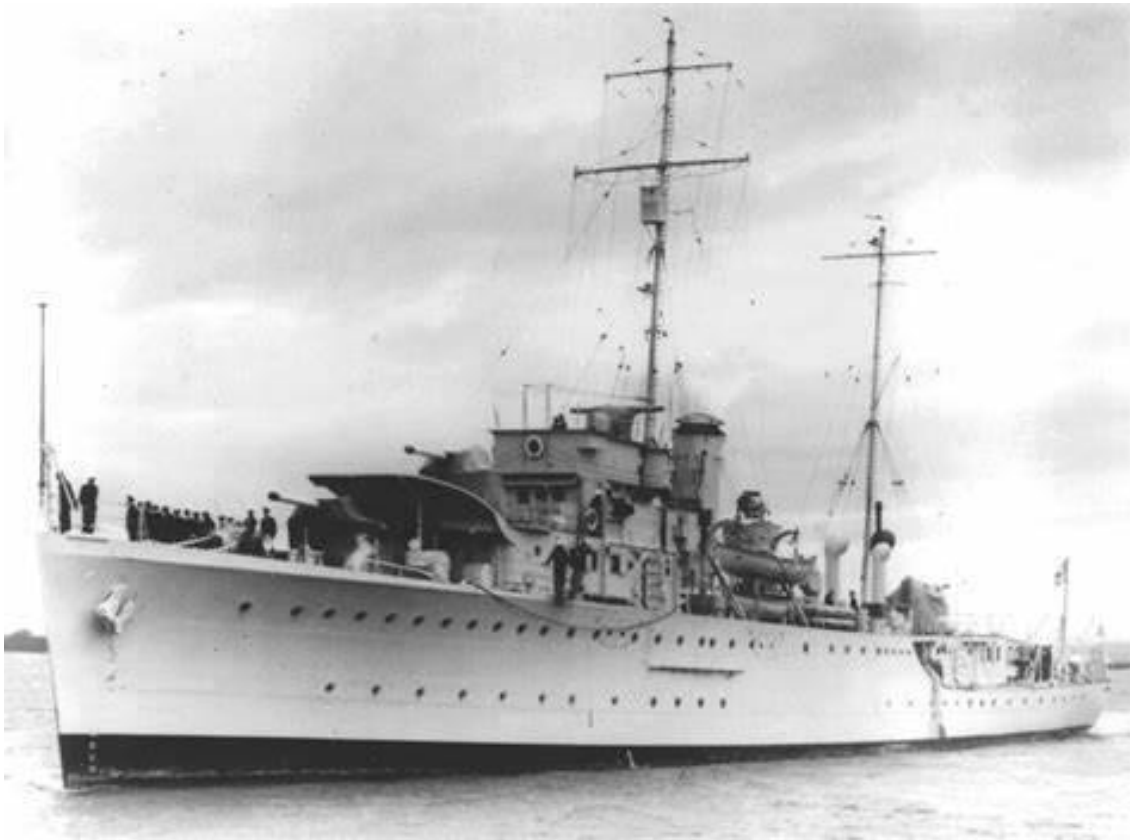
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**HMAS Yarra II**

(Photo provided by the Royal Australian Navy)

# HMAS YARRA II COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE

Lynda Gilbert and Ken Crook attended the HMAS Yarra II commemorative ceremony usually held on the first Sunday in March each year.

We were delighted to note that the road to the Memorial and the historical Gatehouse has been resurfaced, with extra concrete paths built alongside. The Memorial is very artistic and a beautiful location for this solemn memorial service.



Mr David Leviston, Honorary National Memorial Coordinator, did a sterling job to ensure everything ran smoothly.

We were sorry to hear that Mrs Mena Walsh was too ill to attend this year. For the past 24 years, Mena provided morning tea at the Gatehouse. Mena is the wife of the late Angus Walsh, AOM, who was the driving force for the concept of the Memorial.

The Commanding Officer of HMAS Yarra IV, LCDR Rodney Weeks RAN, flew in from Sydney and spoke at the service. He has been on seven ships, as well as attending training in the USA prior to joining HMAS Yarra IV. He believes in strength, resilience and unity. He challenges his crew to learn to be “comfortable with the uncomfortable” especially as Yarra IV is a minehunter.

Councillor Jonathon Marsden this year represented the Mayor of Hobsons Bay City Council. Jonathon has always been a strong supporter of the Memorial. He is stepping down from the Council next year, but he assured us he will continue to attend the Memorial Service.

The bugle was played magnificently by ABMUSN William Foster RAN, HMAS Cerberus.

As in previous years, the Naval Cadets from TS Voyager turned out for the event as well as the Hyde Street Youth Band.







TS Voyager cadets



*L-R Mr Rick Parry, LEUT Ashley Alp ANC, LCDR Bentley Hon RAN OIC, Chaplain Vadim Butov, MSWO, RAN HMAS Cerberus, Councillor Jonathon Marsden, Hobsons Bay City Council*

Guest speaker LCDR Hon brilliantly recounted the history of the sinking of HMAS Yarra II; Councillor Jonathon Marsden emphasised the importance of service to others, in peace or war; Chaplain Butov gave a wonderful message about having a grateful heart for those who fought for Australia and its people. He described those who attended the service as a “miniature Australia”.

Mr Rick Parry, author of the updated book on HMAS Yarra II (built on the memoirs of his father Arthur Parry in 1944) spoke of his father’s devotion to his career at sea, travelling to Tobruk, Persia, Colombo and Singapore.

After the service, David’s aunt provided rose petals for attendees to scatter on the water whilst reflecting on the loss of HMAS Yarra II.

Rotary turned on the barbecue once again to provide a sausage sizzle. We gathered at Pelicans Landing afterwards for drinks and fellowship.

# CRESWELL ORATION 6 MARCH 2024

This event is held each year in honour of Vice Admiral Sir William Rooke Creswell, KCMG, KBE (1852-1933), the “Father of the Navy”. It was a delight to see two of his descendants at the luncheon on 6 March, Janet Sevier and Peter Creswell. The Vice Admiral’s personal memorabilia – his sword, medals and hat – were on display as in previous years.

This year we were pleased to have Captain Andrew Mackinnon CSC RAN (Retd) as the Master of Ceremonies for the 22nd annual “Creswell Oration” held at the Waverley RSL. Thank you, Andrew, for doing such a wonderful job.

The Guest of Honour was CDRE Greg Yorke AM CSC RAN, who spoke to the 43 attendees on “Australia’s strategic position, and the importance of the Indo Pacific and the Royal Australian Navy in that position”.

CDRE Greg Yorke provided a thought-provoking Oration, which included a summary of the findings of the Government’s recently-announced Surface Fleet Review. His presentation can be seen via YouTube at <https://youtu.be/si9jWpuG4gk>.



*CDRE Greg Yorke AM CSC RAN*





*Attendees at the Creswell Oration 6 March 2024*

# FIXED WING NAVAL AVIATION REVISITED

## INTRODUCTION

The following paper is in response to the Executive Committee of the Navy League of Australia Victoria/Tasmania discussion on Naval Aviation following a NLA Meeting in June 2023.

## DISCUSSION

The NLA has been supportive of fixed wing naval aviation (FWNA) capability as one of its planks in the platform of naval capability. LCDR John Bird RNR, naval officer, aviator and senior member of the NLA at both the federal and state level was a leading exponent of FWNA especially Short Take Off Vertical Landing (STOVL) capable aircraft. He maintained this belief and actively promoted STOVL as the fixed wing solution in naval aviation until his passing.

Australia has a coast line of nearly 25,760 kilometres in length, a huge economic exclusion zone and very long sea lines of communication. The country relies on sea freight for over 97% (by value) of its combined imports and exports. All of this needs to be able to be protected, along with offshore oil and gas infrastructure, undersea cables and sovereign fishing zones

Since the increased tensions in the region started to appear about five years ago, the QUAD defence alliance of India, USA, Japan and Australia was formed as a part response. All of the members have the capability to conduct FWNA except for Australia. It is considered that given this situation the capability of FWNA should be revisited by the Government so as to be a fully supportive member of this group.

Anecdotally, during a recent visit of HMAS Adelaide III to Melbourne, a senior officer noted that a STOVL fixed wing aircraft would be allowed to land in an emergency on her deck, but would not be permitted to take off. The aircraft would have to be craned off at a suitable location. This current lack of cross-deck capability would have a significant impact on any Australian contribution to a multi-national task force.

Whether the RAAF or RAN would re-establish naval aviation is not part of this discussion. Given the 'purple' doctrine it would seem efficient and sensible for the RAAF to operate STOVL from HMAS Adelaide or Canberra or both. We note the RAAF has experience with the operations of four squadrons of F35A Lightning II aircraft. RAN personnel have experience in the operations of rotary wing aircraft (RWA) at sea. These skills could then be combined to support RAAF operations of FWA at sea.

The Canberra class ships, based on the Spanish *Juan Carlos I* design, were laid out as amphibious warfare vessels and as such were designed to carry fixed wing aircraft. Fixed wing operation would give these ships an enhanced capability and contribution to a variety of operational environments. For example, consider the following scenarios:

- In a humanitarian aid disaster relief operation, the air wing of the ship could be configured to include four STOVL aircraft. As the threat assessment would be low these aircraft, operating in pairs, could be used to provide 'eyes on' at short notice reconnaissance and assessment of existing conditions and incidents. The fast jets would be capable of conducting flyovers of the area of operations prior to a task force arriving to provide aid or relief operations.

- In a higher threat the air wing could be comprised of 8-10 STOVL aircraft and still maintain a RWA capability to support amphibious operations. The FWA would be able to provide a combat air patrol above the task force.
- Noting such an environment would probably include air warfare destroyer(s) providing a protective 'bubble' over the task force, and at greater distances than rotary craft. The advantage of the STOVL capability is again 'eyes on' a situation or incident. The presence of over flying aircraft is a clear and visible reminder of the forces in the conflict area capable of a response.
- With regard to the defence and protection of our northern approaches, STOVL aircraft provide an enhanced capability. Cocos/Keeling and Christmas Islands can all support land-based aircraft operations. The improvement of facilities at Cocos/Keeling is being considered by Government.

The addition of STOVL aircraft to the Canberra class would add two additional and movable sites to conduct flying operations. This would mean any aggressor would have to consider not only the fixed island facilities but two well-protected mobile ships also capable of flying operations. Protection would be provided in the form of surface and sub-surface assets. The value of this multi asset strategy was shown in the Falklands conflict by the Royal Navy. The task force aircraft carriers were able to be positioned to provide air defence of the task force. Sub-surface assets were used to blockade the Argentinian Navy in port.

The STOVL aircraft could form a new squadron for the RAAF. As previously stated, the squadron would draw on existing RAAF experience with the F35A operations and the RAN experience with conducting flight operations at sea. There would also be 100% compatibility of fuelling systems, armaments and missiles between the two F35 variants.

The new squadron would comprise say, 24 aircraft giving two flights of 12. These can then be configured to form an air wing on the ship to meet the need on the day. It may be worth considering a pure combat scenario which would result in the full squadron being deployed.

The conversion of these ships to enhance their operational capability by including FWA would be possible. Advice can be sought from the builders and draw on experience from the Spanish Navy with their operations of the Juan Carlos I that has operated the AV-8B Harrier and now the F35B. Noting the other Quad members also operate STOVL aircraft from a variety of platforms and could also provide operational guidance. If the RAN ships had the ability to carry the F35B, we would have full operational compatibility with other QUAD member navies for fixed wing operations.

The Canberra class ships have most of that which is required for FW operations, such as lifts, ammunition storage and handling, fuel storage and personnel capacity. The Canberra class recently cross-decked operations of the US Marines V22 Osprey from its flight deck, storing the aircraft in the hangar deck. The importance of this is that this aircraft, although propeller driven, is of similar dimensions to the STOVL F35B. This would give the RAN a more versatile ship. The platform would be able to supply air support to any amphibious operation and would complement any of our allies in their operations.



## CONCLUSION

The concept of fixed wing operations by the RAN is certainly worthwhile and definitely possible. We need to remember that the RAN has a long history of fixed wing operations. There is no question that the RAN would succeed at this again.

It is recommended by the Executive that:

1. An assessment be conducted to determine what is needed to modify the Canberra Class ships to operate the STOVL F35B.
2. A requirement be prepared as to whether the STOVL B variant can be included in the current order for F 35 A aircraft or a separate military sales case needs to be prepared for say, 24 B variants to establish a naval capability.
3. Identify training requirements for F35B operations for both RAN and RAAF personnel.

*This paper was prepared by drawing on the combined experience of the Executive Committee of the Navy League of Australia Victoria/Tasmania Branch at dedicated workshops.*

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Edited by:

Mr Ron Lyon, Executive Member, NLA Victoria/Tasmania

Commander Graeme Furlonger, RAN, Senior Vice President, NLA Victoria/Tasmania

November 2023



Ref: [HMAS Canberra.pdf \(defence.gov.au\)](#)



# SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE

## **SUNDAY 24 MARCH 2024 at 10.00 AM - Forecourt**

Visit of the RAN Recruits - This wreath laying service recognises the contribution made by the Royal Australian Navy to Australia's national security.

Each month the current recruits at HMAS Cerberus make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Remembrance. This visit links a sailor's experience at Recruit School with current and past members of the Defence Community.

Shrine Representatives:

- Shrine Governor Commander Terry Makings AM
- Shrine Governor Lieutenant Commander Jan Gallagher

## **SUNDAY, 24 MARCH 2024 1:00 PM TO 4:30 PM - Education Courtyard**

Immerse yourself in a captivating afternoon of performances at the Shrine, with Festival Of Veterans Arts (FOVA24). Hosted by the Australian National Veterans Arts Museum (ANVAM) in the Education Courtyard, this event features performances by veteran musicians such as Cate Taylor, the Airforce Band, Ravenscourt, Jarryd Goundrey, Buzz, and Lachie with friends.

## **TUESDAY, 9 APRIL 2024 11:00 AM TO 11:30 AM - Forecourt**

HMAS Vampire: a wreath laying to honour the service and sacrifice of those aboard.

Shrine Representatives:

- Shrine Governor Commander Terry Makings AM
- Shrine Governor Lieutenant Commander Jan Gallagher

## **FRIDAY, 19 APRIL 2024 11:00 AM TO 12:00 PM - WWII Forecourt**

Melbourne Legacy Students' Service. Around Anzac Day each year, Legacy holds a remembrance service for the students of Victoria. Thousands of students come to the Shrine to honour the service and sacrifice of all those who have served. All are welcome to join.

Shrine Representatives:

- Shrine Trustee Graeme Plumridge OAM
- Shrine Governor Squadron Leader Peter Meehan OAM (Retd)

## **THURSDAY, 25 APRIL 2024 5:30 am to 12:00 pm**

ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance.

## **THURSDAY, 2 MAY 2024 11:00 am to 4:00 pm Cost \$5, Please book in**

Uncover the stories behind the unique photographic exhibition *Recovering the Past* through this exclusive guided tour with artist Ian Alderman. Over an hour, the artist will reveal his inspiration for the exhibition, the process of shooting and developing each work and how the enduring repercussions of human conflict live on today. There are three tour times available: 11am, 1pm and 3pm Each tour will run for approximately one hour. The exhibition includes themes that may be upsetting for some visitors, including discussions around suicide.