LCDR Stoker – An Example of Leadership

An Expedition in Regime Change: Australia’s party to the Ralliement of New Caledonia during World War II

Those They Left Behind
The Forgotten Naval Men of Sydney

Port Ash Update
President’s Message

First, a number of thanks. First, to our Friends and Sponsors. Their support is helping restore the ANI to a sound financial footing. Next, as the President, to the Councillors. I mention the efforts of Geoff Lawes, whose work on the website has been terrific, and Josh Watkin and Robert Wright, all of whom have completed ADFA time and returned to sea. Lastly thanks to our office manager, Jean Davitt, who provides excellent value for money in her ANI services.

2006 was a good year. We held a number of successful social events, ADFA breakfasts and seminars. Headmark went from strength to strength – the ANI owes Peter Jones, the former chair, and all involved with the Journal’s renewal a very great deal. We have a good long term model.

Our Vernon Parker Orator was AUSTAL’s John Rothwell. His speech and the following dinner were a great success. Chris Skinner, our Maritime Advancement Australia Award winner for 2006-07, continues his study of the Collins class submarine project. We expect him to provide a presentation at the Seapower 2008 conference.

We have a number of events in train. The ANI will be closely associated with the July King-Hall Naval History Conference, sponsoring the air travel of Dr Eric Grove from the UK. Eric, well known to many of you, is always good value. In addition to the single day conference in Canberra - I will be asking Eric to speak at ANI events on the future of the Royal Navy, a subject of considerable concern in the UK.

We are looking at our programme for 2007 seminars. I hope to organise one on maritime surveillance and response, and one on naval warfare - I hope in conjunction with other organisations such as the Naval Warfare Officers’ Association. Booz Allen Hamilton and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security have indicated in principle their readiness to support a new cycle of the Maritime Advancement Australia Award. We will advertise this later in the year and seek applications, announcing the winner at Pacific 2008.

With the approval of Council, I have invited Mike Carlton, journalist and radio personality and well known friend of the Navy, to give the 2007 Vernon Parker Oration. I hope for this event, and the ANI annual dinner which follows it, to be held in Canberra in August.

What lies ahead for the long term? We will continue to expand membership, and build up resources, while expanding activities. I aim first to reach a financial strength so we can pay a skilled, enthusiastic person to be our events coordinator and general ‘make things happen’ person, and second to keep up the pressure on like-minded organisations to seek opportunities to work together and achieve critical mass.

JAMES GOLDRICK
Winter 2007

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Leadership and heroism are not the same, but we have much to learn about the latter in understanding the process of leadership.

General S.L.A. Marshall

The story of the first landings at Gallipoli by the 1st AIF on 25 April 1915 has earned a rightful place in Australia’s 20th century military history. Yet the achievements of the fledgling Royal Australian Navy, and in particular the exploits of the submarine AE2 on that day, are less well known. This is extraordinary since AE2 accomplished one of the most daring submarine feats of the war, becoming the first allied vessel to penetrate the treacherous Dardanelles Strait.

This oversight can be partly explained by World War One censorship and the view at the time that AE2’s achievement was a minor part of the overall naval effort. The lack of recognition for AE2’s heroic exploits continues with many contemporary Australian war historians choosing to deal with later 20th century conflicts and their influence on our national identity.

This essay does not aim to fill in those gaps nor is it meant to be a biography of Henry Dacre Gordon Stoker who, by any account, led an extraordinary and colourful life. Rather, this essay looks at some of the events, circumstances and personality traits that defined Stoker’s capabilities as a leader.

ORDERS ARE TO ‘RUN AMOK’ – THE INFLUENCE OF GOOD LEADERSHIP

Stoker was fortunate he commanded a new class of submarine. The AE2 and its sister vessel the AE1 were British built E Class submarines, one of the most advanced class of submarine afloat at the time. AE2 had a combined crew of English and Australian ratings and an engaging and flamboyant personality in her 28 year old Commanding Officer. Lieutenant Commander Stoker.

Stoker may have been lowest in seniority of the six officers appointed to captain the E class submarines at the time, but his leadership capabilities and confident personality quickly won him respect from among his colleagues and crew.

Stoker, an Irishman, was intensely proud of commanding an Australian submarine. An excellent writer, actor and games player, he was popular everywhere: C.G. Brodie (Commander of the E15 – author’s note) spoke for the staff when he said that he was ‘the very pattern of a forlorn hope leader.

Richard Compton-Hall

Stoker’s credentials as a submarine commander -- previously commanded E7 at Gibraltar -- were further enhanced when he successfully brought the AE2 13,000 miles to Australia including 9,000 miles under its own power.

AE2’s first war time mission assisting the occupation of German New Guinea was marred by the mysterious and tragic loss of AE1 off the Duke of York Islands on 14 September 1914 leaving a devastated crew of the AE2 to return alone to Australia. Stoker’s personal grief inevitably gave way to frustration as the months wore on and he sought to have the AE2 assist the Royal Navy in Europe.

In January 1915 AE2 served as the sole escort for a convoy of 17 transport ships taking the second detachment of AIF troops to the Middle East. The AE2 only reached the Mediterranean before it was diverted to the Dardanelles. Stoker received orders to force a passage through the straits into the Sea of Marmara and there try to block enemy traffic between the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. It was extremely dangerous. The 35 mile long Dardanelles Strait was considered impenetrable because of its strong currents, narrow passages, strong fortification and density of mines targeting surface shipping.

Despite the loss of several Allied vessels from the Turkish defences, Stoker was determined that the AE2 should be the first submarine of the British Empire to successfully penetrate the Dardanelles. AE2 crewmember Charles Suckling noted:
The difficulty of navigating a submarine while submerged, through a straight whose narrow passages and strong currents made it a difficult task even in a surface ship. Leut. Commander H G Stoker, the Captain of A.E.2 was the only officer present who thought the feat possible... It was a difficult business trying to persuade the Admiral or any of his Staff that it was possible, and Leut. Com. Stoker's application to be allowed to make the attempt was not favourably received. It was also a highly calculated risk. Stoker knew that he had one of the most modern submarines at hand and a well trained and close knit crew who had developed an intimate knowledge of their boat's capabilities over the past two years. However Stoker would have also been aware that E11 and E14, which were also arriving on station at the Dardanelles during the same period, were more battle hardened as they had already completed numerous patrols in the dangerous North Sea and Baltic region. He later wrote:

If we got through other boats would be sent after us, but if we failed no other boats would be allowed to attempt it. And finally wishing us luck, (the Admiral) concluded: If you succeed there is no calculating the result it will cause, and it may well be that you will have done more to finish the war than any other act accomplished.

Stoker was described as having 'a grin all over his face' when he was told that AE2 could 'have a go.' It was a measure of his leadership capabilities that his crew was able to share in his confidence. Charles Suckling explained:

Our Captain then told us that he honestly believed it possible to get through but if any man wished to leave the boat he was at liberty to do so, not one man asked to be relieved. I would like to state now that Leut. Com. Stoker was a man absolutely loved by his crew and there was not one of us who was not willing to go anywhere he cared to take us.

The willingness of a body of fighting men to follow their commanding officer into dangerous territory in order to complete their mission cannot be underestimated as one of the key qualities of a successful leader. The experienced crew of the AE2 recognised the magnitude of their task and was well aware of the fate of E15. In his essay: 'Leadership as an Art,' James L Stokesbury states that:

The leader therefore not only has to believe in his men, and have that belief reciprocated; he has to be able to inspire them to risk their lives for some greater end which they may only very dimly perceive, and he has to have himself the courage to demand that they do so. It is of course in this particular that military leadership differs from other kinds.

Stoker’s willingness to take the submarine to the limits of its capability was due his understanding of the capabilities of the technology combined with his confidence in the
LCDR Stoker – An Example of Leadership

Stoker’s later career in the theatre indicates that he implicitly understood the authority of stage presence. He would have been aware, perhaps instinctively, but also through his training that effective leaders convey confidence and assuredness through their voice, their physical presence and overall demeanour.

CONCLUSION

Without ‘emotional intelligence’ a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won’t make a great leader.

Daniel Goleman

American psychologist and journalist Daniel Goleman identifies ‘emotional intelligence’ as a driver for effective leadership. He cites personal competence, self awareness, self-management, social competence, social awareness and relationship management as key measures. In this regard, Stoker’s leadership can be linked to his high level of ‘emotional intelligence’.

There is still debate as to whether Stoker was overly rash in his determination to engage AE2 in the push through the Dardanelles. Although he succeeded in his goal, it came at a cost of the loss of a strategic fleet asset, years of hardship in Turkish prison-of-war camp and the ultimate death by disease of four of his crew. The Gallipoli campaign itself was ill conceived and poorly executed with the unnecessary loss of thousands of lives. Still, the wisdom of hindsight should not dilute our saluting the achievements of one of the 20th century’s greatest submarine commanders.

‘Appointed in late 2004, LEUT Debra Holland is about to complete her Reserve Entry Officers’ Course (REOC) as a Public Relations Officer. She has a 22 year career in journalism, media liaison and writing and is currently employed as the communications and events officer at the Heritage Office, within the NSW Department of Planning. Her interests include flamenco dancing, fencing and theatrical swordplay and she is learning to play the cello. This essay was initially submitted as part of her REOC Naval History requirement.’

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Brenchley F . and E. 2001 ‘Stokers Submarine’ HarperCollins Sydney
Wheat J., Personal Records -- Naval War 1914-18 ‘Typescript of a diary compiled by WHEAT, J. a member of the crew of the Australian submarine A.E.2’ DRL No. 2965 (3rd S.)Australian War Memorial PR MF 26
London


Endnotes:

10 On 24 May 1914, after a voyage of 83 days the E14 was out of commission for the few weeks required for emergency repairs that saw the water tanks of the submarine refilled.

16 Paper of AB Charles Suckling – Australian War Memorial – AWM 41/101/14 3DR 6266


20 ‘The potential leader cannot demand the unswerving loyalty of his followers unless he is willing to return it. If he sees his men only as instruments to further his own career, he is not going to be very successful…….’ (These men) also believed in a cause which transcended themselves and their own desires or ambitions…….it is probable that their followers believed less in these causes than they did in the men who led them.’ Leadership as an Art, James L. Stokesbury – Military Leadership In Pursuit of Excellence fifth edition edited by Robert L. Taylor and William E Rosenbach, Westview Press 2005.

22 ‘The potential leader cannot demand the unswerving loyalty of his followers unless he is willing to return it. If he sees his men only as instruments to further his own career, he is not going to be very successful…….’ (These men) also believed in a cause which transcended themselves and their own desires or ambitions…….it is probable that their followers believed less in these causes than they did in the men who led them.’ Leadership as an Art, James L. Stokesbury – Military Leadership In Pursuit of Excellence fifth edition edited by Robert L. Taylor and William E Rosenbach, Westview Press 2005.

24 Personal records of J Wheat PR MF 26 Australian War Memorial.

30 The AE2 and the Gallipoli Campaign’ by Dr Ian Hodges, J. 1980 ‘Damn the Dardanelles: The First World War Submarine Operations at the Dardenelles.’

31 24 Personal records of J Wheat PR MF 26 Australian War Memorial.

32 This need not be the sole prerequisite demanded in a successful military leader (and history provides us with a contrasting personality in the more bombastic figure of George S Patton) but there is doubt that in times of duress and emotional stress, Stoker would be my preferred model and mentor.

34 ‘The potential leader cannot demand the unswerving loyalty of his followers unless he is willing to return it. If he sees his men only as instruments to further his own career, he is not going to be very successful…….’ (These men) also believed in a cause which transcended themselves and their own desires or ambitions…….it is probable that their followers believed less in these causes than they did in the men who led them.’ Leadership as an Art, James L. Stokesbury – Military Leadership In Pursuit of Excellence fifth edition edited by Robert L. Taylor and William E Rosenbach, Westview Press 2005.

35 24 Personal records of J Wheat PR MF 26 Australian War Memorial.
AN EXPEDITION IN REGIME CHANGE: AUSTRALIA’S PARTY TO THE RALLIEMENT OF NEW CALEDONIA DURING WORLD WAR II

LT COL NICHOLAS FLOYD

“In case of a conflict between two great powers in the Pacific, their respective positions with regard to naval forces could perhaps be completely dependent upon whether France puts her ports at the disposal of one or the other of the belligerents”.

Kintomo Mushakoji, Japanese officer, 1924

“La France a perdu la bataille, mais la France n’a pas perdu la guerre”

General Charles de Gaulle, proclamation, 20 June 1940

Preface
France’s defeat in 1940 by the victorious advancing German armies precipitated the assumption of power by Marshal Pétain, the Great War hero and French national figure. With the transferral of the seat of government to Vichy, a relatively unknown yet passionate French general, Charles de Gaulle, defied the call to cooperate with Germany, and appealed to all French not under the ‘Nazi jackboot’ to continue the struggle.

Australia appears as a reluctant yet resigned participant in the ensuing drama that surrounded the Free French Coup de Force in New Caledonia in September 1940. Though little known - subject as it was to wartime censorship - this action was not only a small, albeit important step towards eventual victory for the Allies, but it also marks one of the earliest opportunities Australia had to exert its own diplomatic interests, and not merely act as an agent of the British Empire. The inklings of Australia’s eventual pursuit of its own international agenda can be seen in her dealings with this early wartime dilemma, and in the foreign policy decisions subsequent to the coup.

This paper examines the role of Australia as portent of the popular choice of government and a glimmering hope of autonomy for the colony of New Caledonia, and the effects on the conduct of the War in the Pacific brought about by this action.

Background
The French naval and military forces in New Caledonia were undoubtedly the enduring - and for the most part, the most publicly recognised - threat to Australian sovereignty and her interests in the Pacific during the colonial period. Without such a palpable, Damoclean presence, it is unlikely that British forces would have been tolerated - even welcomed - in Australia until 1870, and the clamour for sizeable, unified and effective defence forces that continued for the remainder of the 1800s would not have reached such levels as they did by the turn of the century.

The French in New Caledonia were mistaken in viewing the taunts and threats of a vocal minority in Australia as the harbingers of conflict. As Caledonian anticipation of an Australian invasion waxed, and French resources to counter such action waned, the decline of metropolitan France’s investment in the colony incontrovertibly hampered her development. Her penal colony continued to be a distasteful heritage - even after transportation ceased - and the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the New Hebrides (and thereby a safe egress from the New Caledonian archipelago in time of invasion) caused further doubt on Nouméa’s viability as a thriving colony. As British Imperial might eclipsed both French and Russian power projection in the 1890s, a fatalism of the impending loss of France’s possessions discouraged Paris’ augmentation of her colonial defences, and New Caledonia was no exception. Even so, local military efforts to optimise Nouméa’s abilities to repel...
attack remained strong until after the signing of the Entente Cordiale.

As it turned out, British, Dominion and French alliance during the Great War extinguished any foreseeable chance of conflict, and the shared battlefields of the Dardanelles, Palestine and the Western Front secured the mutual amity of these Coral Sea neighbours, despite the short-lived resurgence of Australian expansionism during the cession of ex-German Pacific possessions after the Great War. But as this new chapter in the relationship between Australia and New Caledonia developed, Australian disagreement with and deviation from British foreign policy towards Japan gave her a greater impetus to follow her own diplomatic agenda. Growing suspicions of British inability to effectively counter a two-ocean threat - even with the development of the much-vaunted Singapore bastion - finally galvanised Australian acceptance of self-reliance and precipitated a renewed focus on New Caledonia. Once again, the islands' strategic position to Australia was recognised, and fears of occupation by both Japan and Australia surfaced.

A PROLOGUE TO WAR

The maintenance of cordial relations between Australia and New Caledonia was now of mutual significance, and the conduct of official fleet visits such as that of the new Australian cruiser HMAS Canberra to Noura over 11-16 September 1931 were instrumental in the maintenance of such relations. A letter from Governor Guyon to the Ministre des Affaires Étrangères records the event, and contains transcripts of various speeches made by both Caledonian officials, and Australian Squadron Commander, Commodore L.S. Holbrook. The official welcome speech provides insight into the depth of official friendship, which had obviously progressed dramatically since before the War, with Guyon employing terms such as “Brothers in arms”, and “dear neighbours”, and expressing admiration for: “… your Navy, its traditions of honour, valiance, [sic] courtesy and genrosity, [sic] in time of war as in time of peace.”

With similar effusiveness, the welcome of the Australian officers to the Cercle Militaire in Nouméa by Lieutenant-Colonel Amalric, Commandant Supérieur des Troupes, directly addressed their countries' recent shared sacrifice:

[the] Sentiments of the French of the Pacific are particularly strong for their Australian neighbours ... and especially; a sentiment of admiration for the splendid Australian Youth who had come to fight, and mix their blood with ours on the battlefield: at Suez, at the Dardanelles, in Artois, on the Somme. Immortal glory to the Anzacs! Glory also to the valiant Sydney, and the Australian squadron which put a tragic end to the odyssey of the Emden, and freed the [Pacific] islands' populations of the menace of the raider! ... the British and French nations are united by a community of sentiments and interests; our Armies and our Navies are the vigilant guardians of the peace, this peace of the Entente Cordiale, founded on a friendship and a reciprocal trust ...

However, with the demise of British and Australian power - globally and regionally respectively - as reductions enforced by the League of Nations bit deep, the myth of invincibility of the British Empire went into serious decline. Australian - and French - suspicions of Japanese intentions grew, and the British Empire's Singapore strategy attracted considerable criticism, particularly from the Australian Army, and from the Australian Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Sir Percy Grant, who continually raised the spectre of Britain having to face multiple aggressors on two or more fronts.

Australia's investment in the development of Fortress Singapore had appealed to the proponents of the forward defence theories; Hong Kong was intended to hold out to an aggressor (implicitly Japan) for long enough, while the British Eastern Fleets assembled at Singapore, ready to repel an amphibious invasion that would be limited by the distance of its voyage from Japan.
An Expedition in Regime Change: Australia’s party to the Ralliement of New Caledonia during World War II

The officers and sailors of HMAS Adelaide on parade with French troops and onlookers, at a ‘Prise d’Armes’ in front of the Quartier-Générale, Noumea, September 1940.

In memory of shared previous sacrifice: Australia pays respects ‘Aux Morts’ [to the dead] at the Great War Memorial, Noumea, September 1940.

...The ship’s company of HMAS Adelaide march through Noumea, September 1940.

French colonial and naval power d’outre-mer.10 In the Pacific, the overseas French territories of les Etablissements français d’Océanie (now French Polynesia), New Caledonia and the Anglo-French joint-administered “condominium” in the New Hebrides, faced the dilemma of choosing between the respective validities of Vichy and Free France. Indo-China’s decision to retain loyalty to the Pétainist Government was swift and prudent - given nearby Japan’s predicted actions in the coming months - but for the isolated island colonies, the choice was less clear.

In New Caledonia, declaring for Vichy was agonised over by the recently installed yet already alienated Governor, Georges Pélicier. New Caledonia was becoming more heavily reliant upon Japanese trade in nickel, and her links with Germany promised a valuable conduit with a market that was cut off from virtually all other nickel sources for its critical armaments industry.11 Japan herself was dependent upon this nickel source, and also for her iron. Since 1935, Japan had sizeably increased her ore shipments from New Caledonia, and by 1938 was importing 3,596,000 tonnes of trade from New Caledonia, and in 1939 imported 24,000 tonnes of iron ore.12 Such trade benefits were neither matched nor guaranteed by the British, through her Dominions. France’s continued policies of large trade tariffs on trade with Australia and others ensured New Caledonia’s reliance upon metropolitan France,13 though the uncertainty of Vichy shipping’s future status with the Allies cast doubt on this source. While imports from Australia amounted to over five times that of Japan, French analysts had realised as early as 1934 the importance of trade to Japan. They assessed that when Japan:

How War Came to the Pacific

The redemption of New Caledonia by de Gaulle’s Free France in September 1940 appears a somewhat insignificant side-issue within the frame of the first tumultuous years of the Second World War. Yet, as with the outcomes of each of Britain’s scrambling attempts to win over - or at least, neutralise - French overseas possessions prior to their being subsumed by the collaborationist Vichy government, the implications of a Gaullist New Caledonia were indeed important, albeit indirectly, to the Allied war effort. As well, common to all of the early Anglo-Free French operations, the reactions of the local French populace greatly influenced both the action taken, and the eventual outcome.

After the fall of France on 22 June 1940, Britain and the fledgling Free French administration embarked on a desperate bid to annex or neutralise northern neighbour were themselves hampered by her participation in the Singapore strategy, and also her vehement White Australia Policy.8 It was a shortfall not lost on the French observers of the day:

“It is evident that the Commonwealth [of Australia] continues to live and evolve in the orbit of the British Empire from a political viewpoint. The unity of race within the Empire, and the loyalty of Australians to the Crown permits no doubt of it.”

The reactions of the French South-East Asian colonies should not have been a surprise, however, had attention been given to contemporary analyses such as that of the French strategist Rear-Admiral Castex. He foresaw that France could not defend Indochina against the Japanese, and considered that French interests in the Pacific were so small as to warrant the disposal of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides to Australia or New Zealand, to whose mercy they were at anyway.7 For the time being, territorial speculation aside however, Australian attempts to make the best of relations with her powerful northern neighbour were themselves hampered by her participation in the Singapore strategy, and also her vehement White Australia Policy.8 It was a shortfall not lost on the French observers of the day:
been consulted, she will not hesitate to act and will do so - and this is to be feared - abiding by her treaties or not." Japan had an option to ensure this was not feared - abiding by her treaties or to act and will do so - and this is to be feared. A contact between the two was nevertheless discouraged by their European masters - erstwhile and current.

Such were the factors facing the Caledonians regarding the colony’s political future as they related to Australia, and for Pélicier, the balance favoured siding with Vichy. However, the Caledonians, and in particular the broussards (the bushmen and farmers of the Interior of the Grand Terre) believed that, patriotic honour aside, their aspirations for autonomy would be probably better served by de Gaulle. In a vain attempt at compromise, the Governor opted secretly to condone allegiance to Vichy, but tell the locals that the colony was for Free France. This short-lived attempt at fence-sitting was doomed to fail, and the hapless Governor was deposed on 28 August, and replaced by the ageing local Army Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Denis.

There is dispute as to whether Australia jumped or was pushed into her minor, yet pivotal role in New Caledonia’s ralliement. Menzies’ Government was cognisant of the issues related above. The then Minister for External Affairs, Sir John McEwen, asserts that he and his Department had battled with Cabinet’s inertia and indecision to pre-emptively act against the pro-Vichy Government in Nouméa, particularly in light of Japan’s actions in Indo-China.

According to John Lawrey - assistant to the Australian Government Representative in New Caledonia from December 1940 to 1943 - however, the Australian Government was reluctant to act against an outpost of Vichy France, which was by this stage an implicitly ally of Germany and thus Japan. At the same time, Australia was mindful of Britain’s exhortations toemasculate or redeem all French possessions on the Gaullist’s behalf. The Anglo-Free French plan was to transfer - by overt naval presence - a suitable pro-de Gaulle French official, and depose the Vichy administration, at the bequest of the Gaullist populace. However, as part of the British Empire’s global naval coverage, the Australian Naval Station was obliged to carry out such British Admiralty directives in this area of the Pacific. A conflict of interest was emerging, and Australia’s hesitation to act as an unquestioning agent provocateur for Britain can plausibly be viewed as the beginnings or even the catalyst for increasing divergence between British and Australian foreign policy and war aims, as the War continued.

Meanwhile, by 21 July, the French in the New Hebrides had declared themselves for Free France, and by doing so had provided both a moral precedent and a personage suitable to replace Pélicier. Following his leadership in the declaration of the New Hebrides for Free France, Henri Sautot, the French resident Commissioner of the New Hebrides, had distinguished himself as a candidate for the task. Australian misgivings over such a coup de force stemmed also from doubts surrounding the confusing reports as to the real balance of local opinion to such an action, by an increasingly agitated population. The British High Commissioner for the
Western Pacific, Sir Harry Luke, made only infrequent visits to Nouméa; until Australia’s decision to establish an official Representative to New Caledonia in B.C. Ballard, the benefit of regular, lucid analyses of the local situation was denied to both Britain and Australia (the US had a consul in Nouméa, Harry MacVitty, but his potential as a source was overlooked).

On the balance of presented evidence, it is more probable that it was as a result of pressure from Britain that Australia eventually accepted the task. As a contingency though, Captain Harry Showers - commander of HMAS Adelaide - had been already directed to Vila, ostensibly to search for the German raider Orion before the decision was finally taken by Canberra. Adelaide had been chosen as the only ship in the area capable of outgunning the Vichy French sloop Dumont d’Urville, which since August 23 had been at anchor in Nouméa harbour, providing moral and implicit military support to Pélicier’s shaky authority. A transmission from its commander, Toussainte de Quievrecourt, implies a secondary role that reflects the continuing French fears of Australian annexation.

On 16 September Sautot, having agreed to the proposition - and having been officially recognised by de Gaulle as Governor-elect of New Caledonia - embarked for Nouméa. Broussard Gaullist sympathisers had assured that they would be able to depose the Governor by 19 September, and be waiting to receive Sautot. In deference to Franco-Australian relations, Showers embarked Sautot on the Norwegian tanker Norden, and escorted ship and human cargo, ready to provide firepower if required, but technically not yet engaged as a party to the coup.

The first minutes of entry into Nouméa harbour were undoubtedly the most tense of the entire action, as confirmation could not be made that Commandant Denis had been deposed. With the guns of the town’s shore battery and those of Dumont d’Urville trained upon him, Showers decided he could not risk Norden further, transhipped Sautot to Adelaide, and steamed directly into the lion’s mouth.

The battery’s garrison, having been ordered to fire by a panicked Denis, revolted, and ran up the flag of the Cross of Lorraine. De Quievrecourt remained steadfast, despite being fully aware that Adelaide could easily overwhelm his ship. With typical French élan, and in the absence of direction by radio from mainland France whether to fight or surrender, de Quievrecourt elected an even more risky course; to remain in Nouméa as a sovereign Vichy ship in order to broker expatriation of Vichy supporters to Indo-China. At 12.30 pm, when the Gaullists finally consolidated their position, Sautot was picked up by motor launch after a pre-arranged signal, and delivered to the crowds of now-Free French at the dock.

Local reaction to Sautot’s eventual arrival was enthusiastic to the point of embarrassment. Australia’s role, though appreciated to varying degrees by the community, was inasmuch overawed by the ralliement itself, and the general relief on all sides that it had been bloodless. Sautot, however, summarised his personal appreciation thus:

“… to Captain Showers, to his officers and ratings of the cruiser Adelaide, without the support of which the ralliement to General de Gaulle no doubt would not have succeeded. Their professionalism was equalled only by their human compassion, because they were very judicious in avoiding a bloody and futile struggle with the Vichy..."
gunboat *Dumont d’Urville* and the coastal forts of Nouméa.\(^{33}\)

Showers remained until 5 October, when the rumours of the *Dumont d’Urville*’s sister ship - the *Amiral Charner* - arriving for a counter-coup were finally quashed, and the pro-Vichy citizens were aboard the steamer *Pierre Loti* bound for Saigon. De Quievrecourt was permitted to sail as well, under strict conditions, and the fledgling Gaullist regime turned to the prospect of preparing for war.\(^{34}\)

**Aftermath**

Australia had clearly acted in the best interests of the Caledonians. Many, including Sautot developed firm working relationships and friendship as ties between the two countries consolidated.\(^{35}\)

By 17 April 1941, Australia had conducted a provisional assessment of New Caledonia’s defence requirements, and in December inserted an independent rifle company to continue the reconnaissance and train the locals. It had recommended the immediate construction of three air bases and development of other infrastructure, and although preliminary survey of the sites was under way, bureaucratic inertia and misunderstanding somewhat hampered swift action.\(^{36}\)

Australia advocated a direct liaison with Sautot’s administration, but a Free French fear of irrevocably losing control of the colony, exacerbated by de Gaulle’s centralist methods, stifled this burgeoning autonomy. Despite having only the vaguest ideas of the local situation, de Gaulle refused to sanction direct official liaison between Sautot and the Menzies Government,\(^{37}\) and insisted that all decisions affecting New Caledonia’s military and economic preparedness be staffed through his HQ. He was supported by British diplomatic officials who were concerned about Australia’s inexperience in international dealings.\(^{38}\)

The question of financial accountability and reparation of Australia’s support to the colony concerned not only de Gaulle - which undoubtedly added weight to his decision - but Australia also. Acting Prime Minister Fadden’s correspondence on the matter demonstrates Australia’s deft handling of the issue, and debunks the allegation of “diplomatic inexperience.”\(^{39}\)

Nevertheless, fears of overt Australian influence precipitating bids for New Caledonian autonomy - or worse, Australian annexation - still existed in Free French HQ.\(^{40}\) Within a few months, however, French opinions regarding the Allies’ plans for the island, and regarding Australia became largely academic when, on 6 December 1941, the United States was plunged into the war. Her massive involvement in New Caledonia would essentially marginalise such relatively petty squabbles.

New Caledonia’s role became pivotal as the war in the Pacific progressed. It acted as a ferry-pilot staging base from mainland United States, and in March 1942 it became home to the American-Caledonian (sic. Americal) Division, which under the leadership of General A.M. Patch formed the backbone for many subsequent US offensive operations in the South Pacific.\(^{41}\) Sautot records a translated statement by Admiral Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Ocean Areas and Commander-in-
Chief Pacific Fleet, on the importance of New Caledonia:

"After the early success of the Japanese in the South Pacific, New Caledonia became a stronghold where the Americans regrouped their forces and from where the main offensives against the Solomons and Philippines were launched."42

Nouméa also served as the headquarters for Admiral Ghormley, then Admiral Halsey, as successive Commanders-in-Chief Pacific Fleet, South Pacific Area. From 1942 to the end of the war, especially for the Battles of Guadalcanal, Santa Cruz and Savo Is., Nouméa’s port and her airbases - started by the Australians and recently completed by the US - were critical for the back-loading of crippled ships, aircraft and men, and as a reinforcement and resupply node.43 By 1944 – 1945, Nouméa was the second biggest Pacific naval port (in tonnage) after San Francisco.44

**Conclusion**

Given the importance of the availability of New Caledonia to the Allies’ prosecution of the remainder of the war, it can be argued that the ralliement in New Caledonia was the most important of all of the French colonies. Had New Caledonia remained Vichy by the time Japan had entered the war, its potential role as forward base for Japanese operations would have undoubtedly changed the course, and possibly the outcome of the Pacific War.

Australian involvement in providing the Caledonians with a Free French government should not be understated. The Australian government’s dilemma of desire to stabilise the condition in New Caledonia, countered by its reluctance to interlope when interference may have precipitated overt Japanese action, is understandable. Additionally, overcoming the difficulties of undertaking such a detailed activity - when both British Foreign Office and the Free French Government refused to condone direct liaison between Australia and New Caledonia, in an attempt to discourage ideas of independence of policy from either - should be acknowledged as a significant step in Australia’s foreign policy maturity.

While playing a small part in the actual decision, the availability of HMAS Adelaide and her presence during the *coup de force* undoubtedly ensured its success. The actions of Captain Showers and his men during and after the ralliement were both courageous and astute. The political *impasses* and difficulties experienced in the ensuing months were no legacy of Showers, nor the Australian Army advisers and project teams who reconnoitred and remodelled New Caledonia’s defences. Australia’s novice status in international relations may have not helped a *rapprochement* between Canberra and de Gaulle’s government in exile, but it appears to have been more a function of Free French officials’ intractable suspicion that led to negative opinion of Australian involvement in New Caledonia. The Cross of Lorraine may indeed have been a hard cross to bear,46 but the strategic dividends for the Allies in securing New Caledonia for the remainder of the War were undoubtedly worth the ‘passion.’

As Australian perceptions of New Caledonia continue to evolve, ebb and surge, it is worthwhile then to consider the effect of this relationship on the evolution of Australia as a nation. From origins of enmity transitioning through distaste and intimidation, to alliance and finally to redemption, Australia’s neighbour across the Coral Sea has from its conception to WWII elicited emotive sentiment. From her Annexation in 1853 to its *ralliement* in 1940, New Caledonia’s presence remained an undeniable influence upon Australia. And, on reflection, New Caledonia’s geo-strategic significance to Australia’s north-eastern approaches and her recurrent role in Australian regional foreign policy remain unchanged even today.47

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Lieutenant Colonel Floyd has undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in History, and an interest across the humanities and the sciences - including his qualification as a French linguist. He also holds a Masters in Defence Studies Management from University of Canberra.
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2 “France has lost the battle, but France has not lost the War” de Gaulle, Gen C. quoted in Grandeur et Décadence du Gaulois dans le Pacific, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1949, p10.
3 It is asserted by a number of authors including Clark, that calls for a unified Australian defence force such as the Edwards report (see Clark, C.M.H. Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, pp 463-467) contributed towards Federation.
5 Des sentiments tout particuliers animent les Français du Pacifique pour leurs voisins d’Australie... et toujours vivace... un sentiment d’admiration pour la splendide jeunesse Australienne qui est venue combattre et miler son sang au nôtre sur les Champs de bataille: Suez, aux Dardanelles, en Artois, sur la Somme. Gloire immortelle aux Anzacs! Gloire aussi au vaillant Sydney de l’escadre australienne qui mit une fin tragique à l’odyssée de l’Emden, et libéra les populations des Îles de la menace du Corsaire! ... les nations britanniques et françaises sont unies par une communauté de sentiments et d’intérêts; nos armées et nos marines sont les gardiens vigilants de la paix, de ce paix que l’Entente Cordiale, fondée sur une amitié et une confiance réciproque... » ibid, p. 13.
8 Lawrey, Joc cit; Grey, loc cit.
10 Calvocresci, P. & Wint, G. Total War, Penguin Books Ltd, Middlesex England 1986
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24 Aldrich, R. France and the South Pacific since 1940, p 2; Sautot, H. op cit, pp 21-29, 38.


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28 Gill, H.G. op cit, pp 264, 265; Sautot, H. op cit, p 39. De Gaulle’s terms for the transfer are conveyed in ‘Message, Secretary Department of Navy to Secretary P.M’s Department, 13 September, 1940’ in DAFP, pp. 161-2.

29 Sautot, H. op cit, p 44; Gill, H.G. op cit, p 265. See also Salmon, M. op cit, p 59, and Burchett, W.G. op cit, pp 211 & 216, the latter reflecting the wartime censorship that could not allow mention of Adelaide’s participation, yet hints at local French approval of Australian involvement in the colony.


31 Burchett, W.G. op cit, p 212; Sautot, H. op cit, pp 44-46.

32 Thompson, V. & Adloff, R. op cit, p 268. Lawrey (Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific, p 16) describes how the ralliement itself mostly passed the Kanaks by, much less Australia’s involvement in it.

33 « ... au Captain Showers, à ses officiers et aux marins du Croiseur Adélaïde sans l’appui desquels le ralliement au Général de Gaulle n’aurait sans doute pas réussi. Leur maîtrise n’eût d’égal que leur souci d’humanité car ils ont vraiment tout fait pour éviter une lutte sanglante et inutile avec l’aviso vichyste Dumont d’Urville et les forts terrestres de Nouméa » Sautot, H. op cit, pp 178,179.

34 Burchett, W.G. op cit, p 214; Gill, G.H. op cit, p 266; Sautot, H. op cit, pp 54, 66-67.


36 Thompson V. & Adloff, R. op cit, p 269; Lawrey, J. Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific, pp 55-57, 66, 91; Aldrich, R. France and the South Pacific since 1940, p 16.

37 Lawrey, J. Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific, p 61.

38 Ibid, p 62.

39 ‘AA816 Department of Defence Co-ordination (1939-42) 19/311/10’ in Lawrey, J. Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific, p 68.


41 Aldrich, R. France and the South Pacific since 1940, p 17; Lawrey, J. Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific, pp 83, 93-94; Daly, H. ‘Les Américaines en Nouvelle Caledonie No 17, 10975 SEHNC, passim quoted in Dornoy, M. op cit, p 34.

42 « Après les succès japonais du début dans le Pacifique sud, la Nouvelle-calédonie constitue un bastion où se regroupent toutes les forces américaines et d’où partirent les grandes offensives sur les Salomons et les Philippines » Sautot, H. op cit, pp 17-18.

43 Lawrey, J. Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific, pp 115-121.

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Those They Left Behind
The Forgotten Naval Men of Sydney

BY MARK FLEMING

The History of Australia as a modern nation is forever entwined with the men of the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy helped found, feed, protect and govern the infant colony. Most of these men went home or off to other stations and duties. But some did not. Many through accident or disease died on active duty and were buried in and around Sydney, in the RN and RAN sections of Rookwood Necropolis, but more rest outside the official naval plots. As their ships moved to other duties and they faded from the minds of the local population, the graves of these men were left untended and forgotten, until now.

Who is responsible for these scattered graves? It seems that no one really knows. Certainly my enquiries of the Royal Navy drew a blank and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for graves of those killed from the First World War but not sailors from the 1800’s. A project is currently underway to locate and catalogue the graves. It is then hoped that moves to at least stop any further decay can be made and perhaps the more notable monuments could be restored and maintained. To place this burden upon the RAN in these times of tight fiscal policy would be unrealistic and unfair, so who then should pay the bill? In the meantime the graves crumble and decay.

It is outside the author’s abilities to catalogue all the naval deaths and locate the grave sites. To date there are the graves of over 200 men in the project’s database. Among them are men from the Australian Division of the East Indies Station (forerunner of the Australian Station), the Australian Station and NSW Naval Brigade; also men from visiting ships such as the famous HMS Beagle. While serving in Australian waters three Senior Officers were to pass away; Captain James Everard Home 1, Senior Officer of the Australian Division of the East Indies Squadron in 1853, and two Commodores Commanding the Australia Station: Rochford Maguire 2 in 1857 and James Goodenough 3 in 1875. The graves of both Home and Rochford are in need of repair, especially that of Captain Home.

The earliest known locatable RN burial in Australia reaches back in time to the voyage of Lieutenant James Cook with the internment of Forby Sutherland on the 1st of May 1770 at Kurnell. His grave or the approximate location of it is marked by a stone marker and flagpole. It is interesting to wonder how many of those who live, work or drive through the Sutherland Shire knows after whom it was named. Perhaps Sutherland is the best known of “those they left behind”, but also the most forgotten. At the very least Forby’s grave is not one that we need to watch over as the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service care for it.

While there would have been naval deaths between Sutherland’s and that of three men from the HMS Bathurst in 1822, locations for them have not, to date, been uncovered. Three seamen: William Anderson, Thomas Robinson and James McMurty died on 18 August 1822 and were buried in the old Devonshire Street Burial Ground. They were removed to Bunnerong (now Botany Cemetery) when Devonshire...
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The Forgotten Naval Men of Sydney

Street was redeveloped for Central Railway Station. Their headstone transcribed between 1969-1970 reads (sic) “William Anderson, Thomas Robinson and James McMurty Seamen of HM Sloop “Bathurst”, drowned by the upsetting of a boat on the 18th August 1822. Stone erected by a Lieut, of the “Bathurst” who was upset with them.”

Lieutenant Phillip Parker King 5 (son of Captain Philip Gidley King, RN, Governor NSW 28 Sept 1800 to 12 Aug 1806) was in the Bathurst at this time and one wonders if ‘a lieut’ was King, and if it was he that was ‘upset’ with them? This headstone was lost when Bunnerong was redeveloped in the 1970s.

One of the aspects of naval life many of us forget is the young age of the midshipmen and ships’ boys. The youngest recorded death is of Midshipman Rowland Mainwaring’ – another grave removed from Devonshire Street to Bunnerong and lost –. “Mr Rowland Mainwaring. Midshipman, son of Capt. MAINWARING R.N, died on board H.M. Ship “Warspite” in Sydney Cove 27th October 1826 aged 15 years.” I cannot help but wonder what became of the ships’ boys who must have died on station, and why no record survives of any of them.

The redevelopment of Bunnerong Cemetery robbed us of some interesting headstones; among them that of “William BLITT, Capt of the Forecastle of H.M. Ship “Conway” died 4th July 1838, aged 43 years” Butts shares his grave with James Aylng “seaman died 5th October 1838 aged 25 years.” In 1841 HMS Beagle under the command of Captain Fitzroy called at Sydney with Charles Darwin aboard. They left behind “William BLEKSLY, seaman on H.M. Ship “BEAGLE”, died 22 June 1841 aged 28 years 1 month & 15 days. Erected by his shipmates.” Bleksley was just another sailor but today we look back and the association with the Beagle and Darwin means something.

Bleksley would have known Charles Darwin at least by sight if nothing else, and he was on a voyage the results of which would shake man’s beliefs.

Camperdown Cemetery has many memorials of naval interest. It is the resting place of those drowned in 1857 when the immigrant vessel Dunbar ran into South Head and sank. The RAN for many years held ceremonies in remembrance of this event. There are many headstones where a faint naval crown or fouled anchor can be made out but that is all; wind and rain has worn much of the sandstone away as one of the photos which accompanies this article shows. Captain James Everard Home, Commanding Officer of HMS Calliope 7 and Senior Officer of the Australian Division of the East Indies Station (forerunner to the Australia Station) died on 1 Nov 1853 8 and was buried at Camperdown. Home’s grave is very worn and the inscription very hard to read. Unfortunately Home’s grave is in a tomb style and the inscriptions on this type of grave tend to weather badly. Commodore Rochford McGuire is named upon the memorial to the crew of HMS Challenger. The inscription indicates that he died on the Australia Station but it is unclear exactly where he died and is buried. Further research on this is continuing – it would appear the marker has been moved.

The very heavily carved and ornate headstone of William Ward Harvey RN is still in reasonable condition but the inscription is hard to read. While Camperdown Cemetery is a rich source of naval graves, it also has been redeveloped. The park in which it sits was once the entire cemetery. Now all that remains is the section enclosed by the walls around of St Stephen’s Anglican Church. Some of the headstones displaced have been relocated around the inside of the walls. These are hard to get at and caution should be exercised in the cemetery as there many discarded syringes. Once access to the burial records for this location are obtained its naval links can be fully explored.
Rookwood Necropolis has official RN and RAN sections. These are well maintained but have suffered from mindless vandalism at times, as can be seen from the repairs done to the headstones. Many more graves of naval interest lay outside these official enclosures. Among the more interesting and oldest graves at Rookwood are those of three sailors from HMS Brisk: John Connor - Carpenters Crew; James Crossey - Gun Room Servant, and Michael Day - Ordinary Seaman. These are all in the old Catholic Section. The sandstone headstone has worn with time and the inscription is all but lost. As Catholics were in the minority in the RN at this time, it is interesting to note that care was taken to bury them according to their faith.

Men from other ships rest in Rookwood, such as Edward Sadler and George Hatton from the NSW Naval Brigade and a very interesting grave erected by the Naval Brigade for Mary Anne Murray “Wife of W. A. Murray. Died at the Paddington Rifle Range. Erected by Volunteer & Naval Brigade to mark the esteem in which she was held by them” The story behind this is still to be discovered. Another Naval Brigade grave, this time in the old RN section, is that of E R Connor, which especially mentions his service with the China Contingent. Ships named include those of the Auxiliary Squadron, Karrakatta, Katomba, Ringarooma & Boomerang, Fantome, Nelson, Encounter, Wolverene – decommissioned in Sydney to became the NSW Government training ship for boys – and Tingira. There are also two small and not very well known RAN vessels: the yacht HMAS Franklin and the captured German vessel HMAS Luba. There are many more ships mentioned.

There are some very interesting combinations of service mentioned such as George Blair, who died 3 July 1919, and who is remembered upon a headstone on a family plot as follows: “Son of Henry & Jessie Blair. Former of Naval Bridging Train & late of Aust. Flying Corps. A.I.F. (An ANZAC)”. A much later grave from 1976 is that of Peter Noonan who died 12 Jan 1976 at 95 years of age; his headstone records he served with both the RN and 1st AIF.

If you are aware of any old naval graves, the author would very much appreciate any information you have, especially if the grave is endangered by its age, location or vandalism. Should you wish to know more about the Forgotten Naval Men of Sydney the author is happy to share his research with you. He can be contacted by email on <mflemi13@accsoft.com.au> Please type "naval graves project" on the subject line.

Above: Garret Cotter d 12 May 1896 Aged 26 –HMS Orlando

Mark Fleming served in the RAN and the Naval Reserve Cadets in the 1980’s & 90’s. He has worked at the ANZAC Memorial, Hyde Park NSW. His interest in Naval Graves grew from finding many while researching his family history.

(Endnotes)
1 Captain Sir James Everard Home C.B. F.R.S. (1798-1853) – 2nd Baronet Home of Wells Manor, Hants
2 Commodore Rochford Mcguire (? – 1867)
3 Commodore Sir James Graham Goodenough C.B. C.M.G. (1830-1875)
4 Sydney Burial Ground 1819-1901, Keith A Johnson & Malcolm R Sainty, Sydney 2001 – Appendix 3, #568
5 Rear Admiral of the Blue Phillip Parker King (1791-1856), buried St Mary Magdalene Church, Magdalene St, St Mary’s NSW
7 Not the Calliope of Apia fame
8 The Australia Station, John Bach, Sydney 1986, Appendix 3
On Wednesday 7 February 2007 Fred Ross was in Sydney surrounded by friends and family as he was farewelled after 47 years distinguished service in two navies. The following week he was to begin his retirement with his beloved fiancée Jane in the beautiful countryside of New Zealand’s South Island. He died suddenly and painlessly on Saturday night, in the company of good friends and with Jane at his side. Fred was one RAN officer who had never needed a nickname. One simply had to mention ‘Fred’ and everyone not only knew who was being referred to, but also had their own story to tell.

Fredrick John Ross was born on 22 July 1946 in Blackpool, Lancashire, the first son of Fred Ross senior and Sarah Buckley. Fred’s father’s background is unclear, but he may have spent time in the infamous German prisoner of war camp at Colditz. In any case, after the war he became a chef at the Cliffs Hotel, Blackpool. Sarah was a singer with the well respected Hallé Orchestra. A second son, George was born in 1947. At four, Fred’s mother passed away and with their father unable to cope, the two boys were sent to Dr Barnados Childrens Home in Stony Hill Road, Blackpool.

Life in Barnado’s was harsh with strict discipline, but it gave Fred a good start in the world. At the age of seven he began naval cadet training at Barnardo’s Parkstone Sea Training School and subsequently joined HMS Ganges as a boy seaman. He adapted readily to life in the Royal Navy, experiencing active service on a T on class minesweeper during the Indonesian Confrontation. Fred later became a submariner, serving as the Chief of an SSBN. After receiving his commission in the mid-1970s, he spent time in both Iran and Oman. Fred’s career was never dull. While acting as CO of an Omani patrol craft he intercepted a dhow off Aden carrying three drugged European girls bound for Zanzibar. No doubt thankful for their rescue, the girls were flown back home. Later, Fred successfully completed the Principal Warfare Officer course and specialised in anti-submarine warfare.

Fred first came to Australia as an exchange officer in 1979. He cut an imposing figure and was always impeccably groomed. Exuding an affable air of style, confidence and absolute professionalism, he made himself right at home. His first ship, HMAS Yarra, was trialling the new Mulloka sonar, and Fred became an expert on the system. He went on to postings at the AIO Team Trainer at HMAS Watson, and later to HMAS Perth. Always happy to pass on his knowledge to the less-experienced, Fred had already become well known for his unique capacity for instruction, guidance and mentoring. In October 1983 he switched uniforms and joined the RAN. Fred had applied to transfer soon after starting his time in Yarra, and later said that the lack of prejudice the RAN displayed towards ex-lower deck officers greatly influenced his decision.

Fred subsequently ranged far and wide with positions in the ASW School and RAN Surface Warfare School at Watson, Fleet/Maritime Headquarters, the ADF Warfare Centre at Williamtown, the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (Land) and the Amphibious and Afloat Support FEG. He retired from the PNF in July 2001 while on the staff of the Commander Australian Amphibious Forces, and immediately began a Continuous Full Time Service contract as a member of the RANR. For the next five years he acted as the lead coalition planner in the Deployable Joint
Fred was the consummate warfare planner and his hard won experience saved lives. In 2002-03, for example, he was the Plans Officer on the RAN Task Group Commander’s staff during Operations SLIPPER, BASTILLE and FALCONER. During the pre-war planning, Fred championed the need for the conduct of regular riverine patrols along the Khawr Abd Allah waterway between Kuwait and Iraq. He was adamant that the waterway must be kept under constant scrutiny. At a planning meeting onboard the aircraft carrier USS Constellation, the need for patrols was questioned by a senior USN admiral. Fred stunned the assembled audience by recounting his own experiences of riverine operations during Confrontation forty years before. In particular he recalled an incident when a sailor standing next to him had been shot because river security had not been maintained. Backed up by Fred’s maturity and wealth of knowledge, that was good enough for the admiral and riverine patrols were made part of the Coalition plan. During the first days of the Iraq War these patrols captured a suicide boat and discovered weapons caches, observation posts and mines on the river and surrounds. Throughout this hectic and critical period, Fred was OIC of the forward command team embarked in the patrol boat USS Chinook. Fred excelled in this type of front-line role, and it clearly demonstrated the trust in which he was held by the command.

Fred’s great strength (and perhaps weakness) was that he always carried his heart on his sleeve. His willingness to engage in a heated discussion could at times exasperate his co-workers, but it allowed for complex plans to be refined and his commanders always knew that in Fred they had a trustworthy sounding board. Fred also made his mark on Allied and Coalition forces in other ways. His self-confidence, robust sense of humour and inexhaustible supply of stories, made him a natural networker. This greatly enhanced his value as a staff officer although on occasion providing a challenge for the more strait-laced. The daily operations brief to the combined staff in the Gulf would always begin with one of Fred’s jokes. It was a valuable morale booster for the RAN-USN audience, but at times required a red card from the CTG before the punch line could be delivered.

Fred’s flamboyance likewise made him a legend in the Australian Army, for whom he was their favourite sailor. His well coiffed mane, anchored firmly for whom he was their favourite sailor. His well coiffed mane, anchored firmly on his weathered bollard, was the first feature many troops would see as they hit the beach at Sabina Point, in the Shoalwater Bay training area. He soon became known as the ‘Mayor of Sabina Point’. During one well-remembered amphibious exercise Fred was called upon to provide a briefing to a large assembly of Army officers. The quality and enthusiasm of Fred’s briefing was undiminished by his appearance in pirate dress (complete with beard, eye patch and parrot). The shocked brigadier in charge was later reported to have been warming up for a serious rocket before being swayed by the strongly positive response of the audience.

Fred’s distinguished naval service was recognised in the 2004 Australia Day Honour’s List with the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia. He remained a willing volunteer and a thorough naval professional right to the end of his career. In July 2006 he was again operationally deployed, this time serving on the staff of the Australian commander of Coalition Task Force 158, overseeing maritime operations in the northern Persian Gulf. Fred’s previous Gulf experience and his wide understanding of the customs of the participants meant that he remained a key team member. In addition to acting as liaison officer with the Kuwaiti Navy, he was responsible for facilitating combined security operations employing Kuwaiti, Iraqi and Coalition forces. During that deployment, while onboard the cruiser, USS Philippine Sea, Fred and his many friends celebrated his 60th and last birthday.

In all things Fred was energetic, and if asked to do something he would get on and do it without further ado. Never one to sit still for very long, he was planning his most recent operation right up to the moment of his untimely passing. His plans to move to New Zealand with his fiancée Jane were well advanced. Fred’s memorial service was held at the Garden Island Naval Chapel on 16 February, and it was clear to all from Jane’s moving tribute that a true love story had been tragically cut short.

Fred had always been extremely proud to be a member of the RAN and he held the traditions and ethos of the Service in the highest regard. He will long be remembered for a contribution to the Navy and the broader ADF that was both full of character and of outstanding value. He is survived by his fiancée, Jane Maupin Yates, his brother, Michael, and his three children, Marina, Cameron and Sophia.

By Dr David Stevens

Many of Fred’s former colleagues have helped to write this short obituary. I am particularly thankful to CDRE Brian Robertson, CDRE Peter Jones and CMDR Lachlan King.
ANCORS Aweigh!
A revitalised maritime research centre commences operation.

BY LEE CORDNER

On 1 March 2007 the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) replaces the Centre for Maritime Policy (CMP). Many Australian Naval Institute members will be aware of CMP’s long and close association with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Established in 1994 at the University of Wollongong, with Commodore (later Professor) Sam Bateman at the helm, CMP became a national and regional intellectual centre for maritime matters. Professor Martin Tsamenyi succeeded as Director in July 1999 and CMP moved into the Faculty of Law. Professor Bateman continues his involvement as a Professorial Fellow. Over more than a decade the Centre has built a strong reputation for research and advisory services. Of particular note also has been the delivery of education and training services to the RAN and other national and regional organisations. However the world has moved on.

WHY CHANGE?
Global events and economic development in recent years have dictated an increased emphasis on security and natural resource management. World communications, including transportation, have rapidly expanded and pressures on natural resources have increased. Nowhere has this been more profoundly evident than in the maritime sphere where international, national, commercial and non-government interests frequently converge demanding a heightened need for effective mechanisms to facilitate interaction, cooperation, security and sustainable management of marine resources, protection of the maritime environment and use of the sea.

A survey of key clients conducted by the University of Wollongong in early 2006 confirmed the need for high quality maritime knowledge services in Australia and the region. Decision makers in public and private sector organisations require authoritative advice on and forward-looking research into increasingly complex maritime matters. While a small number of academic institutes in Europe and North America seek to offer comprehensive, multi-disciplinary maritime academic services there is a capability gap in the Indian Ocean and western Pacific Rim. ANCORS is intended to fill the gap and meet this emerging demand, as an Australian national centre of excellence, with a capacity to serve the region and beyond. Priority is given to the western Pacific, Indian and Southern Ocean areas in order to provide comprehensive maritime knowledge services to regional countries, agencies and clients, while recognising that the nature of the maritime agenda requires a global as well as a regional approach.

WHAT’S NEW?
Within the University of Wollongong a new Oceans and Transnational Security Research Strength has been formed comprising ANCORS and the recently created Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention. ANCORS places increased emphasis on oceans governance, maritime security and marine resource management and together the centres offer complementary capabilities of particular relevance to national and international security.

ANCORS offers core strengths important to Navy leaders and policy makers: oceans governance, law and policy; maritime strategy and maritime security law including regulation and enforcement; international fisheries law and policy; and the delimitation of maritime boundaries. Capacity building capabilities include the provision of education and training in maritime security and strategy, international fisheries law and policy, maritime boundary delimitation, regulation of shipping, ecosystem based management and multiple use management of marine resources.

ANCORS has developed a research agenda with three broad and interrelated programmes designed to encompass contemporary and future maritime matters. The three research programmes are:
1. Oceans Law and Governance,
2. Maritime Strategy and Security, and

ANCORS is guided by an Advisory Board with members being prominent persons drawn from government,
Lee Cordner is a Principal Research Fellow at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS). He joined the RAN as a Junior Recruit and served at sea and ashore for over 30 years. He commanded HMA Ships Betano, Bass, Sydney and Adelaide. He was a member of the Tomorrow’s Navy Team and in 1999 became the inaugural Director General Navy Strategic Policy and Futures in the re-vamped Navy Headquarters. He resigned from full-time naval service in 2001 and was appointed Managing Director of Future Directions International Pty Ltd, a Perth-based strategic think-tank. He joined the University of Wollongong in 2006.

ANCORS core academic staff has been increased and the list of fellows and associates is being reviewed and expanded where warranted. This will enable a broader range of more responsive research, education and advisory services to be offered.

**Ongoing Programmes**

The Centre has recently entered into a new multi-year contract to deliver Navy single-service education to Command and Staff College students. This arrangement will ensure continuation of the much enjoyed law of the sea and maritime strategy components of the course. Importantly, it will continue to present the opportunity for Navy students to gain a Graduate Certificate and the popular option of completing a Masters degree part-time.

The Centre has long enjoyed a close relationship with the Sea Power Centre – Australia and this will continue along with Navy short course and international course arrangements with Defence. ANCORS expanded capabilities means that improved research and advisory services will be available to assist Navy and other Defence clients.

**Concluding Remarks**

Oceans governance and maritime security are becoming increasingly important and complex. ANCORS provides an exciting development in the intellectual capability available to assist those with maritime interests in Australia and the region. The University of Wollongong’s relationship with the RAN and regional Navies is long and beneficial, and one that will be enhanced with the launch of the revitalised research centre. For more information about ANCORS see <www.ancors.uow.edu.au>

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Australia’s Secret War
Chapter II

BY HAL G.P. COLEBATCH

In April, 1942, that is to say at a period of extreme danger for Australia, with Singapore fallen, Timor occupied save for the area held by the Australian guerrillas, and the situation in New Guinea desperate, the Melbourne Argus published a cartoon of two watersiders lounging beside a dockside warehouse as soldiers loaded a ship, one remarking: “Grand boys, aren’t they - not only do they fight for us, but they do our bit as well!”

Mr Ashley W. Coleman (No. T31059) served first in the Army with the 6th Garrison Battalion from November, 1941, and then enlisted in the Navy (No. H2281) in September, 1942. He served in the south-west Pacific area in HMAS Townsville, a Bathurst-class corvette-minesweeper, as an Able Seaman. Mr Coleman gave a detailed account of the front-line services going short of food and other supplies from Australia because of waterfront strikes. A major Australian warship out of food was forced to go “fishing” with depth-charges to feed the crew. He also gave details of a fight between RAN sailors and watersiders at Newcastle.

“The strikes were severe enough, a “war crime”, without the pillering of presents from home to the men at the front, also Comforts Fund gear, Salvation Army goods etc. ...

“All Australian [servicemen were] aware of the above, including in particular Australian servicemen serving overseas. Many servicemen overseas were not aware (at the time) of why a particular shipment did not arrive on time, or for six or eight weeks later. Unfortunately some would not be lucky enough to see anything arrive.

“The Labor Government of the time proved its unworthiness to handle a wartime crisis of this nature, so, as usual, it became a matter of too little, too late. Americans would quickly take the initiative, march in and load their own ships. There were threats of Australian servicemen following America’s lead, but these did not go far enough to solve the problem.

“I served as a seaman in the corvette HMAS Townville on her return in January, 1943, from her station in Darwin ... On the east coast in 1943 and early 1944 Townsville and other corvettes escorted convoys which often came under submarine attack. Many ships were lost, many men died ... others can imagine the shock of reaching harbour to read: “Wharfies on Strike Again.”

“What amazed me was that the [list of] men’s lives lost was printed once and then forgotten. The “Wharfies Still on Strike” and so on went on and on, week after week. Coal-miners let all know they were not forgotten, and hit the headlines frequently enough.

“While we, as a crew, in that particular time - 1943 to early 1944 - did not suffer from hunger or lack of other supplies, we could not understand a country at war being held to ransom by the few.

“You would hear remarks like: “They’ll be back at work soon.”

““What makes you say that?”
Australia’s Secret War – Chapter II

“‘You can’t pilfer cargo if you’re not handling any.’

1944 saw HMAS Townsville performing her patrol, convoy duties and other tasks in New Guinea, New Britain and the Halmahera area. Problems began to arise ... delays from supply ships with food rations and other equipment, which we naturally presumed were caused by waterfront strikes at home in Australia. When supplies arrived there would always be one or two on the ship who would complain that their parcels or presents were interfered with or did not arrive at all.

“On one occasion on returning from Moratai to Hollandia, we were practically all out of food. Weeks before we had left on that trip (we had no luck “fishing” with depth-charges). We fully expected a supply-ship to be discharged in harbour, but no. instead we received a signal to fuel and proceed on patrol duty for seven days on the outer perimeter of the area.

“The crew were somewhat stunned, but were reassured it was a good cause, for submarines had attacked the harbour with torpedoes the night before we arrived ...

“One day before arrival back in Hollandia, the crew were informed there would be a lunch-time inspection, for members to air any complaints they might have regarding their food or lack of it. Sure enough, off-duty members of the crew were seated, a plate before them, with a one-square-inch piece of very thinly-sliced meat stuck in the middle - this is the whole truth! - the meat was no thicker than the normal thinly-sliced ham we see in shopping markets. Alongside the plate was half a small scone. This was our main meal for the day.

“We sat there “at attention” till the First Lieutenant and Coxswain Petty Officer J. E. MacDonnell (later the well-known author of naval stories) and a Leading Hand filed past slowly enquiring “Any complaints?” I really believe we were all meant to complain so some action could be taken. Crew members turned back to their plates after the First Lieutenant had gone on, and I noticed my “scran oppo”, Able Seaman Terry Randall, peering at my plate, a grin starting to form on his face. “What’s wrong?” I asked. “Why, or how, did you get a larger portion than us?” he answered. I glanced down at my “dinner” and there on one side was a maggot. Another “meal” I missed on.

“Army and Air Force personnel must surely have suffered as much as, or more so, than those on Naval ships ... 1

This account of shortages links with another matter. I have made it a general policy not to quote unnamed sources here. However one such, a former Naval Reserve Officer with a distinguished record and later a very prominent businessman, who asked that his name not be given, said that Australian warships leaving combat areas in New Guinea and the Islands had to turn over their unexpended supplies, including ammunition, to the ships replacing them because the supply situation was so bad. They had then to proceed back to Australia with empty guns and magazines, through waters in which the enemy was still active. Mr Coleman said that this had in fact happened in his experience more than once. The Officer said that on one occasion, in a major Australian warship which had been de-ammunitioned, he was on watch on a passage back to Australia when he saw a Japanese torpedo-boat. All he could to was pretend that he had not seen it and hope it would be scared off by the warship’s appearance. If he betrayed that he had seen it, or taken any evasive action without firing on it, the enemy would have realised that the Australian ship was helpless and at its mercy.

I mentioned to Mr Coleman that one of the naval novels by J. E. MacDonnell (the Coxswain Petty Officer in the corvette HMAS Townsville, later a commissioned Officer, and Australia’s most successful and best-known Naval novelist), there was a scene in a pub in which off-duty...
sailors were attacked by Communist dock-workers, and asked him if he knew of any incidents on which this might be based. He replied:

“I contacted an old shipmate and we both agreed that this did happen in a waterside hotel in Newcastle. We did not tie up alongside in Newcastle much, and only did on this occasion on account of the strike …

“It was Townsville’s crew, or part of it. I was not in the hotel at the time. I can remember though the locals were not allowed in by the strikers, who were making nasty remarks, until one of Townsville’s crew called then “a load of gutless bastards.” Then they were attacked by the strikers who did not get it all their own way. I believe the sailor Jim Brodie, a large man with a heavy punch, inspired the sailors … MacDonnell was our Coxswain at the time, respected by all who knew him … It was ironic that later Newcastle was shelled from the sea by a submarine.”

Mr A. L. (“Chubby”) Rose, (No. WX5328) a former staff-sergeant in “A” Company, 2/28 Battalion, supplied the following account of Australian soldiers running out of ammunition in battle because of a wharf strike:

“The afternoon of 21 October, 1943, two of our companies were cut off at a small flat-topped hill named Katika in New Guinea. As Company Quartermaster Sergeant of “A” company I had taken a small party of men from Scarlet Beach to resupply the lads. We were escorted by an armed party with Owen Guns.

“On our way back we were ambushed by the Japs and one of our NCOs was killed. We returned to the hill and had to stay that night. The Japs attacked several times. My brother was shot in the mouth but was able to walk back with us next day. We had orders to go easy with the ammo that we had as the wharfies at Sydney were refusing to load any on the ships. The lads were using hundreds of rounds of small arms ammo and stores were running low.

“You can imagine what we would have done to the wharfies had we been given the chance - the Japs would have been second priority. It would be interesting to know what the government did about these strikes as we were not the only ones to be put in a situation like that.”

Sir Charles Court, AK, KCMG, OBE, served in the infantry in the islands, rising from Private to Lieutenant-Colonel (later Colonel). As Minister for Industrial Development and later Premier of Western Australia in the 1960s and 1970s he was largely responsible for the development of WA’s massive iron-ore industries and is generally acknowledged to be one of Australia’s greatest architects of development. Interviewed in July, 2001, he said strikes on Australian wharves had been a “constant background” to everything the troops did.

In 1945 he had been aboard the troop-carrier Katoomba when the firemen went on strike during a storm and refused to tend the furnaces. The ship drifted helplessly before the storm for several days and might have sunk. The Master, Captain Snowball (who the present writer met as Captain of the Kanimbla post-war), took disciplinary action, and got the firemen working again. When the ship eventually reached Torakina in Bougainville an order was received from the Government that the disciplinary action be rescinded. Sir Charles commented:

“Obviously the crew had got a message back to their union in Australia and without consulting the Captain about the incident and the circumstances, which were quite serious, the instruction was given by the Government. I know the Captain was very unhappy but there was nothing he could do about it.”

Sir Charles continued:

“Another incident which also involved the Katoomba resulted from the installation by our Army engineers of a system which could supply water efficiently to ships at Torakina. Large quantities of water had previously not been readily available to ships at this port.

“Our Engineers knew of the problems which ships experienced without such an installation, although there was abundant water of suitable quality available. Previously ships that needed to replenish their water had had to sail a long way to the nearest port with the required facilities.

“The Captain of the Katoomba was delighted to see the water replenishment installation and planned accordingly for the return to Australia, only to be advised by the crew that they objected to the changes of plan. It transpired that their objection was that would lose access to the American PX store at the port where water was normally replenished - there was so such store in Bougainville at that time.

“One does not need a very vivid imagination to know why they wanted to have access to a PX store.

“It seems beyond belief, but our captain then had to agree to sail to the other port though he was able at Torakina to take on all the water he needed for the journey back to Australia. The agreement reached was that the crew would have a day at the other location to do their shopping and then they would resume their journey back to Australia. This involved an extra 500 miles of unnecessary steaming.”

Hal G.P. Colebatch has an MA in History/Politics and a PhD in Political Science and is the author of several books as well as many articles in The Australian, Quadrant, The American Spectator etc. His book Blair’s Britain was chosen as a Book of the Year in the London Spectator. His latest book is Steadfast Knight: a life of Sir Hal Colebatch (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, WA). This is an extract from his unpublished book Australia’s Secret War.

(Endnotes)
1 Letter, 26 May, 1996.
2 One of MacDonnell’s fictional heroes is named Jim Brady, also a large man with a heavy punch.
Business 2 Battlespace

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THE 2007 ‘KING-HALL’ NAVAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

‘Communications dominate war; broadly considered, they are the most important single element in strategy, political or military.’

- Captain A.T. Mahan, USN, 1900.

‘The object of naval warfare is the control of communications, and not, as in land warfare, the conquest of territory.’

- Sir Julian Corbett, 1911.

‘Sea communication has opened up the whole world, and has played the greatest of all parts in spreading both knowledge and civilisation.’

- Captain W.H.C.S. Thring, CBE, RAN, 1928.

The fifth biennial ‘King-Hall’ Navy History Conference will be held in Canberra on 26-27 July 2007. The conference will be organised by the Sea Power Centre – Australia with assistance from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy. The King-Hall Conference has become a significant event in the national and international sea power communities for its wide-ranging discussion of topical naval historical and maritime strategic issues. The conference is open to the public, and previous events have attracted a wide range of naval historians, academics and retired and serving military personnel, as well as interested lay people from Australia and overseas.

Theme
The broad theme of the 2007 conference is ‘The Dominance of Communications in Maritime Operations.’ Its aim is to analyse the influence of communications on the application of sea power in the broadest possible sense. The content will thus deal with both information and transport, and encompass issues ranging from the strategic importance of sea lines of communication through to the tactical use of communications in war and peace. Maritime historians and strategists have long been conscious of the fundamental links between oceanic communications, naval strength and national achievement. In today’s globalised economy the importance of such links is magnified but not always appreciated by policy makers and outside analysts. Practitioners of sea power have likewise been aware that developments in strategy and tactics are closely related to the prevailing state of communications technology. But although navies are routinely at the forefront of the revolution in information management, seamless interoperability remains an elusive goal, and the extent to which force networking may have changed traditional naval roles remains unclear.

By examining how the different elements of maritime communications have evolved and why perceptions have changed, this conference will use the past, not only as a subject of interest in itself, but as a guide to the future conduct of planning and operations.

Program
Various distinguished speakers from Australia and overseas will appear at the conference. The final program is expected to cover the shifting demands facing both national and combined international sea power, together with case studies of command, control, communications and intelligence taken from the ancient world through to the 21st century. Gathered together, these papers will offer new insights into the future face of maritime strategy, the changing nature of global connections, and the continuing nexus between communications and command at sea.

Format of presentations
Presentations at the conference are expected to last 30-40 minutes followed by time for questions. A draft of the paper must be provided in electronic form at least one week prior to the event. To be eligible for publication final papers must be submitted by September 2007.

Publication
Selected papers will be published in a collected volume. The format will be similar to previous productions of the Sea Power Centre–Australia including: The Face of Naval Battle (Allen & Unwin, 2003); The Navy and the Nation (Allen & Unwin, 2005); and Sea Power Ashore and in the Air (forthcoming).

More information
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Port Ash Update
BY CMDR MAL WISE OAM, RAN, WITH LCDR STEVE MCCRACKEN RAN

I have taken over the helm of this “corner” from CDRE Griggs and my aim is to provide a brief article for each edition of Headmark. I hope that they will not all be my own as there are many differing views on shiphandling and we all have very different experiences which are of interest and value to others. I encourage readers to submit articles to me via e-mail or post for inclusion in this section of the journal. To get the ball rolling I thought it would be valuable, given current developments, to provide an update on the Australian Ship Handling Centre (“Port Ash”) at Raymond Terrace. Port Ash was first introduced to readers in an earlier version of the Journal by then CAPT Griggs, and the “manned model” facility has matured significantly over the past five years. Here is the current state of affairs: CMDR Mal Wise

For the Mariner, shiphandling is their bread and butter. It is an art that takes much practice. In time, when you think you have mastered the art, something happens to remind you that there is still more to learn. It can be a somewhat daunting prospect; One person trying to orchestrate everything correctly, to move thousands of tonnes around without damaging anything or anyone, to place the ship exactly where it has to go. This is where the mariner appreciates Port Ash.

At the Australian Shiphandling Centre, “Port Ash”, the art of shiphandling is theorised, demonstrated and experienced all in one 1/25th scale models. It is these models into which you climb, to hone your skills. Now in operation for over five yrs the models allow students the freedom of learning by experience, trying by feel and seeing for themselves the effects so well documented in print (in BR 45). This makes Port Ash a unique training facility and an invaluable addition to electronic simulators that cannot provide all the visual clues that are so vital to the aspiring shiphandler.

Port Ash is the realisation of a dream by Captain Clifford Beazley MNI to try and better convey the principles of shiphandling that he has learnt over nearly thirty years as a pilot. The facility (one of only five in the world), brings together his passions for seafaring and model making. The shiphandling instruction is conducted by experienced personnel, all professionals in their field of expertise, who have been or are Master Mariners, Pilots or Tug Masters. This wealth of experience, coupled with the ability of the models to accurately demonstrate all the necessary principles of shiphandling, helps to make Port Ash the excellent resource that it has become.

In brief, Port Ash consists of two 1/25th scale models of merchant ships (Handymax and Panamax size) supported by up to six scale model remote control tugs. The vessels are of substantial size and when in full swing accommodate a pilot, helmsman, two tug-masters and a facilitator. There is also room for additional observers if required. In combination with scale remote control tugs, the models can be used for all aspects of harbour manoeuvring. The models have bow and stern thrusters, a working anchor and suitable connection points for the tugs. Activities can be recorded for future reference and all communications (except to the helmsman) are via radio which enhances realism. The models are operated on a purpose built dam with carefully graded depths to produce shallow water effects and realistic under-keel clearances (UKC). Many transit markers on the banks assist in measuring your progress and fixing your position. Electric outboard motors can be used to generate currents of up to about two (scale) knots.

At the scale, everything happens five times faster than in real life (the square root of the scale). This takes some getting used to but certainly makes you think more quickly. The challenge here is the wind, as five kts of real wind represents 25 kts of scale wind. The great advantage however is that a berthing evolution that would take 1 hour in a ship, takes 12 minutes in the model and so a great deal of ship handling can be achieved in a day. Whilst at Port Ash, there is almost no end to what can be demonstrated from a shiphandling perspective. Principles such as bank effect, pivot point and shallow water effect are easily demonstrated. Berthings and
unberthings, with and without tugs, in still water or in currents can all be done realistically.

In 2003, as a result of a number of shiphandling related incidents in the Fleet, Commander Australian Naval Systems Command (CANSC) directed Training Authority – Maritime Warfare (TA-MW) and the Master Attendant (MA) to conduct a review of RAN shiphandling training, and shiphandling facilities available in Australia. As a result of this review, Port Ash was identified as the most suitable facility to address the shiphandling training needs of the RAN at the time. The key advantages of the facility are that it provides realistic training in a safe and controlled environment at reasonable cost (particularly when compared to the cost of shiphandling incidents). It is also relatively close to Sydney and therefore easily accessible. This resulted in the identification of funding by CANSC to support the use of Port Ash for four weeks per year. These five-day blocks were allocated to the Major Fleet Unit Commanding Officer Designate Courses (two per year) and the Long and Advanced Navigation courses (one each per year). While the effects of this training are difficult to measure, the feedback from participants has been unanimously positive. The introduction of Port Ash into the RAN’s training curriculum recognises the excellence of the training provided at the facility. The exposure gained will hopefully arm all Seaman Officers with greater knowledge and improved skills for their careers as shiphandlers.

Currently, Port Ash is predominantly used to provide training to MFU Navigators, Executive Officers and Commanding Officers. It does, however, provide excellent training for Officers of the Watch who are expected to handle ships for various evolutions with only limited exposure to practical shiphandling. Late in 2006, HMAS Ballarat undertook three days of training at Port Ash with the focus on two groups. The first, consisting of the Executive Officer and Warfare Officers, focused on berthing and tug work. The second, consisting of Officers of the Watch and trainees, focused on manoeuvring, anchoring and hydrodynamic effects such as interaction and shallow water effect. HMAS Sydney utilised the facility the week after HMAS Ballarat and HMAS Success has also used it. In addition to the excellent shiphandling skills it develops, Port Ash is most enjoyable and provides motivational training for young Seaman Officers.

To date, the drawback with Port Ash for the RAN has been the lack of a model that more closely simulates the behaviour of a warship. The two existing models are both large merchant ships with single, right hand turning, fixed-pitch propellers. The smaller of the two is a scale model of HMAS Sirius with the larger one.
being a scale model of a much larger PANAMAX vessel. This however is about to change. In 2006 the Navy, through TA-MW approved funding to support the production of a model that would more closely represent the FFH and warships in general. Now well underway, she is scheduled for launch in April or May. With finer lines, the vessel has a “plug and play” methodology with options for up to 3 screws and up to three rudders. This should allow close simulation of the FFH, HMAS Success, the LPA and the future Air Warfare Destroyer. While scale controllable pitch propellers will not be fitted (maybe a challenge for DSTO?) the opportunity to practice twin screw ship handling of a vessel with a similar block coefficient and power to weight ratio to a warship will greatly improve the fidelity of RAN training at Port Ash. The opportunity for realistic twin screw shiphandling for RAN Bridge Teams at all levels of experience is at hand. Keep an eye out in Navy News for photos of the launch and availability of the vessel for training in the very near future.

In shiphandling, the old adage that “nothing beats the real thing” remains true, but when the consequences of things going wrong are so great, the benefit of 1/25th-scale model and the associated time-savings make Port Ash an outstanding training facility. Only two hours drive north of Sydney, Port Ash is readily available to any Sydney based unit, and the launch of the Navy’s latest [model] warship, due in May 2007, will add a further dimension of realism to the training. There does however remain much secrecy surrounding her name...

For more on Port Ash visit their website at <www.portash.com.au>
Often described as the “father of the Fleet Air Arm”, Admiral Sir Victor Smith had a lengthy and distinguished career in the Royal Australian Navy, and an exciting time too: he was shot down twice and sunk twice and carried out many a hair-raising attack on his country’s enemies. Eventually known in conversation throughout the force as “VAT Smith”, he went into aviation at a time when its future was unclear, but his commitment to the new technology was unswerving and rewarded when he was chosen to play a key role in planning a new direction for the RAN after WWII.

He oversaw many changes within the Navy, not least of which was the acquisition of aircraft carriers and the transition from propeller to jet aircraft. One of the first RAN members to be promoted to full Admiral, he was well known for his dedication to those serving with him and for his abilities as a great “man-manager” through his 49 years in uniform.

Victor Alfred Trumper Smith was born on 9 May 1913 in Chatswood, a suburb of Sydney. By his own account, he had a happy childhood. His parents – George and Una Smith – were ‘middle-class’ as he later described it, and his father worked for a pastoral company all his life. ‘VAT Smith’ was a keen member of the local Cub pack; a member of a church choir for four years, and a player of both tennis and rugby. Although Victor Trumper, a famous cricketer of the age, was an uncle VAT Smith did not shine at this game. The young boy also learned the piano, and strangely enough this translated to playing the bass drum in a Cub drum and fife band.

Smith’s interest in the navy was probably sparked, as he recalled it, by a Lieutenant Commander who occasionally visited the Cub pack to teach knots and splices and sometimes to give a talk on Navy life. Later Smith sought further information on the Navy, this leading to inquiries being made about passing the entrance exam for the RAN College at Jervis Bay. After a year of coaching, he took the exam, and passed, joining the intake of 1927.

His memories of the College are mixed. He thought the education was excellent, but disliked the system of ‘fagging’ for other cadets – which basically meant the first year students acting as servants for the third years, and the second years acting as servants for the fourth years. Senior cadets could beat more junior cadets, too. But Smith’s overall time was happy, and he was impressed by the officers and masters, in particular Commander Fogarty Fegen, the Executive Officer. (Fegen won a posthumous VC in WWII, commanding the coincidentally named Jervis Bay, taking on the far-superior Admiral Scheer in sole defence of a convoy.) Apart from being a very pleasant personality who entertained groups of cadets to his wife’s afternoon teas, Fegen also coached Smith in rugby.

In his last year at the College, the Jervis Bay site was closed down and the training of officers moved to HMAS Cerberus on the Mornington Peninsula. Australia was going through the time of the Depression, and cost-cutting drove the closure. VAT Smith graduated satisfactorily at the end of 1930, and was presented with a silver cigarette case in recognition of the achievement of having become a Cadet-Captain.

The newly graduated midshipmen were each posted, for more learning, to one of the ships of the fleet. They were now given a more realistic role: being placed in charge of a cutter, participating in a signal drill, or engaging as an assistant in the firing of the ship’s weapons systems. Smith was posted to the cruiser HMAS Canberra. The ship visited Tasmania, Suva in Fiji, New Zealand and many Australian ports during his time on board. His personal report of this time described him as “…of the stolid, slow type, whose personal bearing and appearance, although not yet up to standard, has improved considerably in the ship.”
In May 1932 the five midshipmen left of the 1927 entry – the others having had to leave the Service because of Defence cuts – travelled on the liner Oranto to the Mediterranean to join HMS London, the flagship of the RN’s first cruiser squadron. This was a wider and more useful experience of Navy life, and it was while attached to London that Smith managed to undertake a two week air course on board the carrier HMS Glorious. The experience ‘awakened an interest in me towards the Fleet Air Arm’ as he put it, and although soon embarked on board a destroyer for more courses, he began to look at aircraft and ships in a new light.4 In August 1933 he sat his Sub-Lieutenant’s seamanship board, and passing it, left the midshipman’s white tabs behind.

Further training followed at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich in a variety of academic subjects. Smith played Rugby with enthusiasm, and while finding learning French rather frustrating, enjoyed the training, the impressive buildings and time off exploring London. (Indeed Greenwich is the home of architectural masterpieces by Inigo Jones; Sir Christopher Wren, and Sir James Thornhill.) He remembered later being somewhat poor, with expensive uniforms and a sword having to be purchased from his pay.

A gunnery course followed, and then Smith returned to Australia to join HMAS Canberra once again, this time in a more exalted position as ‘Sub’ of the Gunroom – the senior officer of the midshipmen’s mess. In early 1936 he joined HMAS Australia in the Mediterranean and soon was promoted to lieutenant. His interest in aviation was soon resumed with successful application to undertake an Observer’s course. This was to be held in Britain, and commenced in 1937 for seven months of flying at RAF Lee-on-Solent. The duties of an observer were manifold, and ranged through navigation to radio operation – and later radar – and even bomb aiming, all depending on the type of aircraft. Upon successful completion Smith was posted to HMS Glorious, the carrier which had awakened his interest in flying. Flying was conducted mainly in the Swordfish biplane, which Smith seems to have held in some affection – he observed that it could have ‘several cylinders’ of its engine shot out and still be under power. (The model’s successful attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto in November 1940 certainly advertised the new possibilities of carrier-based aircraft.) Smith was a busy officer: as well as several ship duties he was also ‘Fleet water polo officer’, and spent some time ashore pursuing the sport. Although these were happy times, Smith later remembered there was some considerable uneasiness, discussed by many, about the deteriorating international situation from 1937 onwards.

In August 1939 Smith was posted off Glorious to undertake a meteorological course - a fortunate appointment, as the carrier was sunk early in the war in controversial circumstances, and with heavy loss of life.5 However by the time he reached Britain in early September the embryonic conflict was changing matters rapidly – he arrived on the day6 war was declared - and instead of the course and the planned return to Australia he found himself posted to the carrier HMS Ark Royal. The ship was soon at sea in the South Atlantic participating in the search for the Graf Spee – the search ending in that ship’s scuttling after the Battle of the River Plate.

Back in Britain 821 Squadron, taking Smith with it, moved to Naval Air Station Hatston in the Orkneys and undertook anti-submarine patrols. Information was soon acquired that the German battlecruiser Scharnhorst and an accompanying force of ships were moving south down the Norwegian coast. 821 Squadron was ordered to the attack. Six long range Swordfish were deployed under Smith’s command and after a flight across the North Sea found their target. They carried out torpedo attacks but no hits were recorded, although two of the aircraft were lost. Smith later recorded it as ‘a frightening experience….you are in some respects a sitting duck’ when moving into torpedo aiming range and unable to change course because you were also in the ships’ gun range.7 One of his personal reports of the time noted ‘He has plenty of fighting spirit…’ and this was confirmed a while later when – along with the senior pilot – he was awarded...
a Mention in Despatches for ‘bravery when attacking German Battle Cruiser Scharnhorst’.8

In August 1940, after a successful application to join a fighter squadron, Smith was transferred to 807 Squadron near Winchester. After a time in HMS Pegasus, the Squadron embarked with the two seater fighter Fairey Fulmars on board HMS Furious. They proceeded to Gibraltar, where they transferred to Ark Royal. Smith recorded that it was around this time he contracted malaria, which he endured for several years.

In May 1941 Smith’s aircraft attacked a flight of enemy bombers and was severely damaged in the process. The aircraft had to be ditched and Smith and pilot Lieutenant Nigel Hallett spent some time in the water. Hallett was badly shocked by the crash and began to lose heart, saying he did not think he could go on for much longer.9 Smith rallied him and some time later they were picked up by the destroyer Cossack. Smith later noted that the destroyer’s sailors mistook them for Italians owing to their suntans, leading to a few moments of potential hostility. Hallett later maintained that Smith had saved his life – typically Smith did not mention this aspect of the crash in his later biography.

This episode was probably enough excitement for Smith for a while, for he does not mention in his biography the hunt for the German battleship Bismarck which was taking place at the end of May 1941. He went to sea as part of the hunt on board Ark Royal, but later noted that the weather was too rough for the fighter squadrons to operate.10 Peter Howson, later an Australian Federal Minister, who served with him at the time, is of the opinion that this incident caused VAT to realise the importance of an air component for the RAN at a time when very few others shared those views. Howson, an RNVR pilot from 1940 until 1946, later emigrated to Australia and transferred to the RAN. He was a Member of Parliament from 1955 to 1972; Minister for Air for four years, and sometimes Acting Minister for the Navy. His maiden speech in Parliament stressed the importance of naval aviation. Throughout his career he kept in touch with VAT, and watched the thoughtful forward thinking that developed on Ark Royal transform him into ‘the expert in airpower in the RAN in the 1950s and 1960s, and certainly an inspiration to the Naval Board to spend money on a Fleet Air Arm’.11

A month later Smith was shot down a second time, this time after he and pilot Lieutenant Commander Sholto-Douglas were again attacking enemy bombers. Once more the pair were rescued. In November Smith was on board Ark Royal when it was torpedoed. Smith recorded that ‘there was nothing dramatic about leaving the Ark, a destroyer came along side and getting aboard was no problem’.12 At the end of the year he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for service in 807 Squadron; the citation reading ‘…for outstanding zeal, patience and cheerfulness and for setting an example of wholehearted devotion to duty.’13

Once back in Britain with the rest of the Ark Royal survivors, VAT Smith was invited to become the senior observer of the reformed 825 Squadron, which he had to declare as Australia House had passed along instructions for him to return to Australia. Smith noted later that 13 out of that Squadron’s 18 aircr ew were killed shortly afterwards in an attack on Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen.

Arriving back in Australia in February 1942, Smith recorded surprise at the conditions and attitudes he found at home. 1941 and the beginnings of 1942 had been a bad year for Australia – the attacks on Pearl Harbor had brought Japan into the war and the war closer; HMAS Sydney had been sunk in the duel with Kormoran; Singapore had fallen, HMAS Perth had been lost in the Battle of the Java Sea, and HMAS Yarra shortly afterwards. Yet here were plentiful supplies; no blackout, and an attitude of ‘business as usual’.

Posted to HMAS Australia, but from there attached to the cruiser USS Chicago as liaison officer, Smith found much to interest him in the way the Americans did business. He was then sent to be observer for Canberra’s aircraft and experienced the attack on Sydney Harbour by three Japanese midget submarines at the end of May, with the submarines torpedoing HMAS Kuttabul, killing 21 sailors and generally causing a night of mayhem and mistakes. Canberra, anchored in darkness, was not a target.

Canberra was then deployed to the Pacific and was soon in action, culminating in the Battle of Savo Island. This action saw units of the American and Australian navies surprised at night by a Japanese squadron. American radar-equipped ‘picket’ ships did not see the oncoming enemy, and the attack was both a complete surprise and a
ADM Sir Victor Alfred Trumper Smith, AC, KBE, CB, DSC, RAN

Total victory for the Japanese. Smith's ship was annihilated; as one account put it: 'In only two minutes, Canberra without firing a shot, had been reduced to a burning hulk.'14 Although not sinking immediately, the cruiser was a total loss. It was Smith's second sinking but he was reticent about in his later autobiographical account, saying he had 'nothing to add to the many accounts which have been written'.15

On 14 September 1942 Smith was appointed to HMAS Assault in Port Stephens on the central coast of NSW. This newly commissioned shore establishment was where beach landing techniques were taught – specifically the 'commando training' of 120 sailors who were being readied for covert assault techniques in jungle warfare. Smith was not involved with the highly rigorous training; he later commented that he had a 'rather idyllic existence' there instead, involved in the administrative side of the establishment.16

From here he travelled to Britain to become part of the ship's company for HMAS Shropshire, the replacement cruiser for Canberra. Lieutenant Bryan Castles, later to become an RAN Admiral himself, met Smith for the first time during this appointment, and was struck by his 'search for knowledge'. This was shown in his willingness to always listen to others and learn from their experiences. Castles later further commented that: 'Al's understanding of and dedication to his fellow officers and men and to the RAN was an outstanding feature, the like of which I never experienced again my service career.'17

Smith's appointment to Shropshire was short-lived. The removal of her aircraft facilities meant there was no requirement for an Observer. A request to join the aircraft carrier HMS Tracker was successful, and as an Acting Lieutenant Commander, Smith joined her on 21 July 1943 as Operations Officer. The carrier's main role was as an Atlantic convoy escort and many patrols were deployed from her deck in search of U-boats. Early 1944 saw her deployed on the run to Murmansk. Flying conditions were extremely taxing with ice often forming on the flight deck, and indeed on the ship's railings. The ship's company saw little of land ice however: they were not even allowed to disembark for exercise at Murmansk.18 Nevertheless the aircraft were involved in sinking two U-boats and shooting down six enemy aircraft.19 VAT Smith was noted during this time as being an effective communicator: '…the door of his office, which he hardly ever left, was always open and he ensured aircrew were kept fully up to date…'20 His personal report suggested that he was a ‘…most zealous, conscientious and capable air staff officer. Most loyal and intrepid, he is always a strong influence…’

Early in 1944 Smith was sent to work on the plan for D-Day, Operation Overlord, and the air components of the landings. He moved ashore into France once the huge amphibious assault had been made and planned Channel shipping protection. In September he moved back to Britain to begin studies for shore facilities required in Australia for the move to the Pacific of RN units. The Normandy appointment was also an opportunity for which Smith recorded he was always thankful - the opportunity to meet, court and marry Miss Nanette Suzanne Harrison, an ex-WAAF member who was now working in a solicitor's office. Upon hearing of an imminent posting to Australia the two were married at five days notice.

In November 1944 Smith returned to Australia via a two-day flight aboard an Air Force Lancaster.21 He was asked to begin plans for a two-carrier force for Australia after the war. In late 1945 he was despatched to Britain to fill gaps in the draft plan. He was able to meet up with his new wife once more. The planning in Britain took over a year and resulted in the formation of an air planning staff for Navy Office under the direction of a Captain. Smith formed the fourth member of this office together with officers with Engineering and Supply backgrounds. This was a time of much infighting between the RAAF and the Navy as to which should operate various elements of any maritime aviation. However, VAT Smith was a crucial linchpin; one of his personal reports noted that ‘…he had a happy knack of persuading the R.A.A.F and R.A.N to give help freely and willingly’.22

In late 1947 Smith became Air Staff Officer on the staff of the Naval Liaison Officer in London and in December was promoted to Commander. He carried out work with the Diplomatic (Red Cross) Conference in Geneva which drew special comment in his personal report as being of note to the Australian Ambassador in Paris.

The commissioning of the aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney took place in 1948, and a son – Michael - was born to the Smith family in the following year. On 9 January 1950 VAT Smith joined her as Executive Officer. A little while later the Carrier Air Group was landed on board, and the officers all met Smith over an informal drink. Later that day he introduced the entire 35 members of the Group to the Captain, ‘…virtually name an rank perfect’ - an impressive feat of memory that showed what a man-manager he really was.23 However, his personal report of the time noted his lack of experience in the role; an interesting contrast to the report of 18 months later, which commented that he had performed ‘…the onerous and difficult duties of an Executive Officer of an aircraft carrier with complete success…a thoroughly good seaman with high personal, moral and professional standards’.24

The ship sailed to Britain in the middle of the year to embark two additional squadrons and in September...
1951 proceeded to Korea as part of the United Nations operations there in the war against North Korea and its backers. Three squadrons were embarked on the carrier, which Smith records made her somewhat crowded. ‘Lofty’ Watson, a sailor on board, remembers:

VAT Smith, the best Commander under whom I ever shipped... ran just about everything, except things to do with flight deck operations... being vitally interested in the condition of the ship and anything to do with seamanlike operations. He was not a Commander who wandered about with a telescope under his arm looking important (the normal role of a RN ship’s commander). He never yelled at crew members, just suggested things should be done THIS way, and get on with it. His Daily Orders always were, to me, based on commonsense...

He later compared Smith’s management abilities on board Sydney with later experiences:

...when I was in the commissioning crew for the loan carrier Vengeance I soon realised it WASN’T the Sydney, and some further years later when I was Chief Radio Electrician in the commissioning crew for the new carrier Melbourne and did 3 years on her, I knew for sure that having VAT for a ship’s Commander had been a privilege.25

Bryan Castles, who had served with Smith in 1942, was teamed up with him again in Sydney. He later recalled:

This posting was the opportunity to experience ‘AF’ at his best (and) his ability to bring this ship to its peak of efficiency and at the same time create a very happy ship’s company.... He had the extraordinary know-how and outstanding ability to achieve his responsibility.26

Colin Price agreed. Then on board as part of the aircraft maintenance teams, Price had known Smith from time they had served together in the United Kingdom. Although Lady Smith remarks that VAT Smith would never have used the Australian universal greeting in this way, Price relates:

“I generally spoke to him if I encountered him on his forays throughout the ship. Some days he replied ‘G’day Chief’, another time it would be ‘G’day Price’, and on rare occasions a grunt. I gauged his degree of stress by his reply. I had great admiration for him.”27

While in Korea the aircraft carrier managed to survive Typhoon Ruth, more than just a normal storm. Alan Zammit, on board at the time, recalled that the ship had been ordered to leave harbour along with all other large warships to try to ride out the oncoming storm: It was a night of terror. ... Once clear of the sheltered harbour, the 19500 ton aircraft carrier began to roll like a pig in mud, in a brown sea with torrential rain beating down on the crew working on the flight deck.... By late afternoon the typhoon was getting worse. To prevent damage, speed was reduced to two knots... At this time the wind was circulating in an anti clockwise movement at about 130 kilometres. Visibility was down to the length of the ship. The air was filled with spray and foam and the sea was almost totally covered with soap suds. At about 1700 hours (5 PM), the ‘Skimmer’, a fast 16 foot motor boat also known as the ‘Jolly Boat’, which was stowed just below flight deck level, 36 feet above the water line, was washed over the side by a wave close on 45 foot high. This was followed 45 minutes later by a fork lift truck also going over the side from the flight deck. An hour later, our starboard 36 foot Cutter, stowed inboard on the weather deck was smashed to pieces by a huge wave...

Down below, in the machinery spaces the stokers were working in up to one foot of sea water. In the Hangar, a two ton power plant almost broke loose and the Naval Airmen risked their lives in lashing it to the bulkhead... a number of fires broke out caused by sea water getting into the electrical equipment and we heard the pipe - FIRE - FIRE - FIRE - time and time again.... The Executive Officer, Commander ‘Vat’... worked for 36 hours without a break, directing damage control, fire and working parties.28

Smith may well have done the ship another service. He apparently mentioned to Captain Harries that some of Sydney’s bow plating had been damaged in 1950 by steaming directly into heavy seas while deployed off the United Kingdom. Harries consequently took the sea very fine off the starboard bow.29

Upon return to Australia the ship’s company - together with those of Tobruk and Murchison - were accorded a march through Sydney, with Smith leading the parade.30 On 25 April 1952 Smith was appointed to Albatross II – in the western suburbs of Sydney - to prepare it to be a naval air station; the establishment soon becoming HMAS Nirimba. The CO commented on Smith’s performance later: ‘...entirely to my satisfaction. This officer has considerable knowledge, ability, power of application and capacity for getting things done’.31 Smith went on to become Executive Officer of Nirimba until 21 July 1953. This period saw the transition of Nirimba from ex-airfield, hostel and combined RAAF/RAN establishment to an Aircraft Repair Yard and its commissioning in April 1953 – a very busy period and one that would have seen Smith in the thick of things.32 Indeed, he was more than happy to take an active role.

Colin Price, then the Chief Instructor at the School of Aircraft Maintenance, remembered a Gannet aircraft which was the centre of some attention as its pilot had retracted its wheels while...
ADM Sir Victor Alfred Trumper Smith, AC, KBE, CB, DSC, RAN

readying it for a take-off. Price had decided to hoist the aircraft up with a crane and get a tracked salvage platform underneath it when VAT Smith arrived in a car. He got out and walked across and suggested that Price try lowering the undercarriage with the hand pump instead. This worked, and as Price later recorded, Smith ‘…walked back to his car with a triumphant grin on his face.’ At the end of the year, on 6 December, the Smiths’ second son – Mark – was born.35

With promotion to Captain, the next appointment was as Director of Air Warfare Organisation and Training. A decision was being made at this time to cut the two proposed carrier air groups to one, and to make a number of modifications to the new carrier Melbourne before she was commissioned into the RAN: the flight deck was to be angled; a mirror landing system was to be fitted as well as a steam catapult and internal modifications. Verge was loaned to the RAN in the interim, and Melbourne commissioned in 1955. It appears that the angled flight deck was Smith’s proposal: he wrote a paper which pointed out the savings to be made with the much lower crash rate an angled deck would bring. The Chief of Naval Staff was enthusiastic, and the proposal was approved.36

On appointment to HMAS Quadrant, Smith was now Captain (F) of the First Frigate Squadron, otherwise known in the Navy as FOX 1. Taking up the post on 28 June 1955, he confessed later to some trepidation at leaving the world of aviation after sixteen years and taking up ship-handling, anti-submarine warfare and so on after such a long break. This was borne out in criticism contained in one of his reports, with comments noting ‘My only concern is his poor showing at ship handling…He tends to take unnecessary risks.’ Nevertheless, Quadrant was awarded the Duke of Gloucester Cup38 at the end of the year, singling her out as a highly efficient ship. The same year saw the birth of Smith’s third son Piers. The Captain transferred to HMAS Queenborough on 10 April 1956, and that ship too won the same Cup at the end of the year, with Smith later commenting it was ‘very good fortune.’39

It was ‘very satisfying’ in the next appointment to return to HMAS Albatross, Smith recorded, as he had so much to do with the planning of Nowra as the base for RN aircraft 12 years earlier.40 The feelings Smith had for this part of NSW were made stronger over the next three years, as he was invited frequently to open many and various functions. Some of this concerned heated local politics: the local Shoalhaven Council had been recently dismissed by the NSW Government, and Smith was performing functions that once were the province of local councillors. However, he and his wife were popular figures in the area, and the Navy was warmly embraced by the local population.41

Smith went to some trouble to improve morale within the base. Gardening was undertaken by all of the staff, on Friday afternoon after lunch. A goldfish pond was built, and VAT offered fish from the wardroom’s pond to stock it - the four donated were subsequently named Victor, Alfred, Trumper and Smith.42 A visit in 1959 by Rear Admiral DH Harries drew the deserved comment that the establishment was ‘a shining example of the Service at its best.’ Another view of ‘VAT’ during this time is one remembered by Commissioner of NSW Fire Brigades ID MacDougall, AC: ‘...as Captain, NAS Nowra, he took the time to counsel a brash young Acting Sub Lieutenant (me) on some aspect of my performance. ‘The entirely deserved kick was delivered in private and gently. I never forgot his wise words and kindness.’43 Bruce Ziegler, later a Commander in the RAN, remembers VAT Smith as ‘...a gentleman and a scholar – admired by all who served under him, and the rest of others near him.’44

The RAN College returned to Jervis Bay in this period, having been moved to HMAS Cerberus in 1930 as a result of the Depression. The buildings of the establishment were being used as a series of profitable hotels, and there was some resentment towards the Navy’s return from those employed there. However, by the end of 1957 the move was complete, with Smith noting it was ‘a happy day for me personally when the College returned to Jervis Bay.’45

1960 saw Smith enrolled in the Imperial Defence College in the United Kingdom for the one year ‘staff course.’ He noted that mixing with other naval officers from many nations made for a ‘course of excellent value.’ But even more satisfying was to return to sea in 1961 in command of HMAS Melbourne, the aircraft carrier. Although he had only 18 months in command, the short time was tempered by the knowledge he was to be promoted to Rear Admiral. Overseas voyages to Hong Kong and Japan were a challenging part of the appointment, with Smith noting that: ‘If anyone wants the testing experience of remaining on full alert throughout the entire night, then taking an aircraft carrier at night through the Shimonoseki Strait is worth trying.’46 Those who served under him on board were complimentary about his operations with the ship: ‘...according to many aircrew who served with him, ‘Captain Smith, and only one or two others, operated Melbourne as an aircraft carrier as often as he could’.’47

On 6 July 1962 Smith was appointed as Second Naval Member of the Australian Naval Board and Chief of Personnel. He was awarded the CBE the following year. The naval brief noted: ‘...he is reported as being a successful staff officer, an above average leader and an able, intrepid observer....(an)
exceptionally strong sense of duty and attributes of leadership, determination, integrity and reliability.

10 February 1964 saw the collision of Melbourne and Voyager, the biggest peacetime loss of life the RAN has ever suffered. 82 men were killed, and careers wrecked in the ensuing inquiries. Smith was not involved with the investigations, but the incident left an indelible memory in the mind of all Australian naval personnel.

In 1965 VAT Smith was involved in a reshuffle of the Board positions, with the result that he became Fourth Naval Member, and in charge of Supply – in those days conducted through the separate civilian directorates of Naval and Air Stores, Victualling and Armament Supply. Smith amalgamated them to a degree after some study into organisations that came under one Director General of Supply.

In 1966, on 30 January, Smith was appointed Flag Officer Commanding Her Majesty's Australian Fleet. He was able to go to sea once more, and was soon exercising with an American carrier group off the NSW coast. This was followed by deployment north to Singapore and other ports for exercise. Early in the following year Smith was made Second Naval Member and Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, with an announcement being made in November of that year that he would serve for three years from April 1968 as Vice Admiral and First Naval Member.

Several matters were pressing during Smith's term. The first was the ongoing Vietnam war to which Australia was committed. Smith decided to visit Vietnam personally and was able to view the work of the Naval Helicopter Flight – an unusual role for naval personnel but one they fulfilled to the maxum of their motto: 'Get the bloody job done.' He also visited the Clearance Diving Teams on operation there and later commented that he felt 'proud to be in the same service' as these two unique naval efforts in this difficult war. In 1969 he was made a KBE – a knight commander in the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and knighted by the Governor General.

While on Smith's staff during this period, Bryan Castles was in a position ‘...to witness him at the top level. He remembers that Smith was a 'good listener'; possessed the ability to quietly probe for information that he needed from any useful source, and communicated well. During social occasions, however, Smith often felt not too enamoured of the occasion, and after necessary formalities would quietly disappear, with instructions to his Staff Captain to 'carry on'.

On 23 November 1970 Smith relinquished command of the Navy to Rear Admiral Peek, and became Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and full Admiral. After 43 years he was no longer concerned directly with the Navy but rather the armed forces as a whole, as the equivalent of what later would be called 'CDF' – or Chief of the Defence Force. The new appointment saw much negotiation with overseas forces and governments, in particular those of Britain and the United States. Rear Admiral Neil McDonald noted that VAT Smith: ‘...realised that the politicians had to be kept on side...he played straight down the line and did his best for those under him.' As an aside, the Smiths had an interesting aspect of one trip to Europe: they had a private audience with the Pope, then Paul VI, when visiting Rome with the then-Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard.

The Prime Minister of much of that time, Gough Whitlam, later noted: "We knew Admiral Smith well. He was a very decent person, competent and shrewd..."

In his retirement the Admiral became patron of the ACT Rugby Union League, continuing an association with the sport he had retained since boyhood. He played tennis into his 70s. He was chairman of the ACT Birthright Movement, which supported fatherless families. In 1986, on 5 October, the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the RAN, he opened the Naval Historical Society's Museum in Building 31 of the Garden Island establishment in Sydney.

In 1992, after much persuasion, VAT Smith penned a short version of his life - A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith. In its foreword, General Sir Peter Gratton, AC, OBE, Chief of the Defence Force, summed up the author: ‘...a man of rare distinction and ability, modest and underspoken, yet with a commanding presence and manner, a warm personality and a
keen sense of humour.

He suffered a ‘long and traumatic illness’ in the later years of his life. 60 As a result, he died on 10 July 1998, aged 85. 61 Accolades followed in quantity, and for others’ . 63 And Commander PD Jones, RAN, then writing from the frigate HMAS Melbourne, suggested: ‘...he simply represents an illustration of the finest leader and friend that any person may encounter and cherish.... his legend survives as a model for all who wish to strive for integrity, professional excellence and above all, an accomplished life.’ 64

On 12 May 2002, a memorial plaque to him was dedicated in the chapel of HMAS Creswell, in Jervis Bay, and a poster encapsulating his life was displayed within the RAN College’s Historical Collection. It includes some of VAT Smith’s most-loved quotations, and some of them give a little more insight into one of Australia’s most sterling naval leaders:

‘Second to None’ – as he was affectionately known

‘There should be loyalty up and loyalty down’

‘Things should be shipshape at all times’

‘Manners maketh the Man’

‘Punctuality is the Quality of Kings’ and

several verses from Kipling’s poem ‘If’ 65

Tom Lewis is the editor of Headmark.

This is one (abbreviated) of ten chapters of research he has conducted on some of the leaders of the RAN.

Endnotes

1 Biographical detail in this chapter is largely drawn from Sir Victor Smith’s own autobiography: Smith, Sir Victor. A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith, Canberra: Australian Naval Institute, 1992.
3 Letter from Lady Smith to the author. 20 March 2003.
4 A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith. (19)
5 Glorious and her two attendant destroyers were sunk very quickly by two German warships in 1940 off Norway. The carrier did not have one aircraft flying in the normal precautionary Combat Air Patrol, and the three ships were surprised and quickly overwhelmed, with the majority of their ships’ companies lost - testimony to the Glorious’ Captain’s contemptuous opinion for naval aviation. John Winton’s Carrier Glorious provides an excellent study into this tragedy.
6 Letter from Lady Smith to the author. 11 June 2002.
7 A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith. (31)
9 Winton, John. Obituary of Admiral Sir Victor Smith. The Daily Telegraph. (British newspaper) 30 July 1998. (Article was not by-lined, but was noted as being the work of naval historian John Winton’s in a letter to Lady Smith from Captain Edmund ‘Splash’ Carver, which was forwarded to the author by Lady Smith.)
11 Interview with Peter Howson. 10 January 2002.
12 A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith. (34)
15 A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith. (37)
31 ‘A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith’. (47)
33 Dr Sam Bateman, a retired Commodore of the RAN, advises however that the aircraft was: ‘...more probably a Firefly. Gannets did not arrive in Australia until with the Melbourne in 1956. Although conceivably one might have been shipped out earlier for training purposes, I don’t think they were even in operational service in the RN in 1953’. Conversation with the author. July 2002.
38 Robert Purves advises that the Cup was named after Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, third son of George V, who was Governor-General 1945–47.
39 ‘A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith’. (48)
40 ‘A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith’. (48)
44 Photograph of granting of knighthood ceremony. In the possession of Lady Smith.
47 Lady Smith, note to author, May 2002.
49 Discussions with a former senior flag officer of the RAN. However, according to Lady Smith, she has been told that her husband was one of the few people not intimidated by TANGE. Letter to the author. March 2003.
51 Coulthard-Clark, Chris. ‘A leader in times of war and peace.’ The Australian. 29 July 1998. (10)
52 Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly. Extract from Hansard: ‘Death of Admiral Sir Victor Smith’ (1324) (Courtesy Lady Smith)
53 Coulthard-Clark, Chris. ‘A leader in times of war and peace.’ The Australian. 29 July 1998. (10)
56 Coulthard-Clark, Chris. ‘A leader in times of war and peace.’ The Australian. 29 July 1998. (10)
57 Coulthard-Clark, Chris. ‘A leader in times of war and peace.’ The Australian. 29 July 1998. (10)
60 Poster of Sir Victor Alfred Trumper Smith, courtesy of Lady Smith.

Journal of the Australian Naval Institute
Near the end of what had been a busy Navy Day in Melbourne, as seen by Kevin Dunne/Fleetline

A view of the new fleet tanker HMAS Sirius, as depicted through the lens of photographer Chris Sattler
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On 1 June 1918 a Sopwith Camel from the light cruiser HMAS Sydney destroyed a German fixed-wing aircraft in combat, the first time that a ship-launched aircraft had achieved such a feat. The Camel’s pilot, Lieutenant A.C. Sharwood, RAF, was awarded a Mention-in-Despatches, but some credit must also go to the foresight of Sydney’s commanding officer, Captain J.S. Dumaresq, RN. Dumaresq, who was born in Australia, had long advocated the use of aircraft from light cruisers to counter German aerial reconnaissance; a case strengthened when Sydney was forced to fight an inconclusive duel with the Zeppelin L43 in May 1917. During her next refit Dumaresq arranged for Sydney to receive a rotating flying-off platform. Successful trials were carried out in December 1917, with the Camel becoming airborne after a 14 feet run. Dumaresq pushed for a permanent aircraft and by June 1918 four ships in Sydney’s Squadron (including HMAS Melbourne) each had a machine. Sharwood’s victory came during an anti-minelaying sweep into the Heligoland Bight by elements of the Grand Fleet. Three German seaplanes passed over the cruisers and dropped several bombs on the main body astern. By the time the enemy had returned overhead both Sydney and Melbourne had their aircraft in the air. Melbourne’s Camel lost sight of her quarry, but Sharwood caught up with his and sent it into a ‘spinning nose-dive’. While following it down he was ‘bounced’ by another enemy aircraft, which he engaged until his guns jammed. Sharwood broke off the action and with Sydney now over 70 miles away ditched near a British destroyer. Sharwood returned to Sydney and later became the Senior Naval Flying Officer of the Cruiser Squadron. This photo is one of a series taken on board Sydney a month after the action.
The Battle of Anzac Ridge
by Peter Williams
Australian Military History
Publications, 221 pp., $45.00

The thoroughly researched publication of The Battle of Anzac Ridge may do more than any other book to convince you that the whole concept of Gallipoli, usually viewed as a defeat for Australia, was in fact a victory, at least as far as its first day went.

It’s an interesting concept. What would we get if we asked a multitude of Australians to describe Gallipoli in one or two words? Would it be “defeat”, or “a mess”, or similar phrases. I suspect it would be so. The image has been shaped by films such as Peter Weir’s 1981 production Gallipoli, and the TV series 1915. In this image, our plucky, tough boys struggle ashore, to get shelled to bits by Johnny Turk. There they sit for several months, unsupported by the pernicious British, making fruitless attacks until the gallant Aussies (and their Kiwi pals) go home. And despite all of this sacrifice, it has been said by some works that Gallipoli had no influence on the course of the war.

That is the popular image. Author Peter Williams has taken the first day of the Gallipoli campaign and advanced some startling counter-claims. The first is that the failure of the Anzac units to seize the far side of the peninsula eight kilometres away did not matter too much. WWI was full of such variants on an original plan, and good generalship and intelligence work reacted well to the situation at hand.

Second, the claims that the old argument of “being landed in the wrong place” does not matter – anywhere along a varied strip of land in that area satisfied the situation. Williams also quite rightly points out the considerable success of the Gallipoli landings – a nighttime attack against modern artillery and quick firing weapons – and contrasts it with the miserable catalogue of even WWII amphibious assaults by much more experienced and better trained forces. The combined Aussie and Kiwi force did very well indeed for “enthusiastic amateurs”. The author outlines just how well the combined Allied force did against a very capable Turkish enemy – a fact that is often overlooked, perhaps in the search for scapegoats for the eventual defeat. The writer gives credit to both sides, and concludes the Anzacs did indeed “stand like regulars”.

He concludes his thesis by demonstrating that the requirement of the Anzacs was to make a feint which would draw down Turkish forces upon themselves – forces which critically could not be used elsewhere. Of course, if the Allied forces could improve on their situation, their ruse might develop into something more profitable.

Williams shows – through twelve chapters – the detail and the analysis to prove his claims. He arrives credibly to the conclusion that in all of the requirements laid down for the Anzacs they succeeded. Therefore this initial stage of the Gallipoli campaign was a victory, and should be regarded as such.

The work contains a quantity of social observations which lift it beyond the strategic analysis. And so we read of the story of Private Edgar Adams, who disappeared in a battle but whose note, inserted into a bottle and recovered from the sea, advised that he was a prisoner of war. But Adams was never seen again, either in POW records held by the Turks, or in battlefield recovery later. Or the author explains briefly but interestingly how wound records were often hurried and inaccurate, or indeed, the note that explains that a soldier died “of disease” often did not explain that it was the sort of disease that “no one wants to appear on their medical record”.

Altogether this results in a qualitative, careful, and comprehensive revision of the WWI landings. Well illustrated with what looks like several score of photographs, diagrams, and maps, the author has used these usefully to complement the text. This process works to a degree that what is a fairly complicated strategic and tactical situation is clearly understood by the reader. One tends to find in many publications that the pen-picture is so difficult to understand that whole sections of explanation are skipped. The Battle of Anzac Ridge therefore is doubly welcome in this regard.

Although this works looks like the product of university research, the prose reads more freely than the dry products one often finds emanating from academic halls.

The author, the dustjacket tells us, is working on a PhD thesis researching the Kokoda campaign. If that investigation manages to bring the same level of scholarly research to what might be also thought a foregone conclusion, then Australian military history is in for another revision as we have here. What a welcome work that will be too – as is this worthy production.

Tom Lewis is the author of four military history books.
The Cruel Legacy: The HMAS Voyager Tragedy

by Tom Frame


For someone of my generation to be invited to review this book is a particular challenge as I knew personally most of the players – I was on Admiral Harrington’s personal staff in the Melbourne in 1960-61 and was Duncan Stevens’ navigator in HMAS Quickmatch when that ship recommissioned in Williamstown in 1955. And in addition I knew well many of those who lost their lives in the Voyager, including the three midshipmen who had been under training with me in HMAS Swan in 1962.

The tragedy of the Melbourne-Voyager collision resulted in the charting of new waters not only for the Navy, but also for the legal profession and the political establishment. For the Navy the purpose of any inquiry, even today, is to ascertain what went wrong so that corrections in procedure or material deficiencies can be implemented. And where negligence on the part of any is considered a contributing factor this can be tested in a court of law, namely by court martial. For the legal profession its principal focus is to find the guilty party and bring him to justice; in the case of the two Royal Commissioners this was at times an unedifying process. Oversighting this process is the political establishment with all the colours of a political rainbow.

Tom Frame in his comprehensive overview of both the Royal Commissions has brought all the detail of these inquiries into focus with commendable clarity. Overriding the infighting to which these inquiries gave rise is the tragic loss of 82 lives, the survivors’ trauma, and the impact on families with perhaps as many as one thousand being affected either directly or indirectly. Those seeking retribution or blame of sorts for this tragedy at times overlooked the hurt being experienced by these people who stood by their men. Headline after headline that followed the collision for many years only added to their grief.

In the book Frame sets out very clearly the inter-reaction between all the players whether individuals such as Captain Robertson (C.O. HMAS Melbourne) and politicians or institutions such as the Naval Board and the Ministry. Much is revealing. Moreover it flows on to the present day when perceived deficiencies, particularly in high profile operations as well as aspects of personal administration, quickly become subject to Senate inquiries.

While we will never know precisely what happened on Voyager’s bridge on that fateful evening because the entire bridge crew lost heir lives in the collision. There were a number of positive outcomes. One in particular was the establishment of an RANR Legal Reserve panel which has enabled Navy to draw on some of the finest minds in the legal profession when required. Also the question of compensation was seen to be clearly inadequate as subsequent events showed: that inadequacy was reinforced by the later Blackhawk disaster. After many years the Services now have their own Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, albeit not entirely adequate but nevertheless a major advance on conditions of service for Defence Force personnel.

In many ways the Voyager Royal Commissions were watershed national inquiries, with the underlying motive to do the best for those involved. This did not always happen but within the political establishment there was an empathy for those that serve the nation at sea.

With today’s Navy as active as ever and involved in operations throughout the Indo-Pacific basin it is inevitable that accidents and mishaps even occasioning loss of life, as we have seen, will continue to occur, with the inevitable scrutiny from the political establishment and the press.

For those appointed to operational commands or senior administrative positions Tom Frame’s book is essential reading. For naval officers generally it is an excellent read and because it draws together information and opinions from many sources to provide a comprehensive insight into the whole tragic affair.

Reviewed by CDRE Harold Adams, RAN (Retd)


Norman Friedman first published his Guide to World Naval Weapon Systems in 1989. The first edition immediately established itself as a uniquely authoritative and accessible reference to a complex subject. Unlike many naval analysts, Norman Friedman possesses an understanding of technology derived from his academic work, culminating in a PhD in physics from Columbia University, which he matches with an ability to explain concepts and techniques to the unscientific. A reader who takes the time to work through the Guide will find that they have been exposed to a primer on naval operational concepts, as well as current and emerging maritime technology.

The size of the book has increased since that first edition, although not markedly since the second of 1991/92. More significantly, its balance has changed as additional space has been devoted to command, control and computers and Friedman has some important things to say in his foreword on the subject of network centric warfare (NCW) and what lies ahead. He has never been an enthusiast for stealth, having probably coined the aphorism that ‘the computer will always get through’ and in his introduction repeats his strictures to the effect that increases in computing power will allow progressively greater discrimination of weak signals, thus discounting much very expensive effort to reduce emissions and signatures. To be fair, Friedman is also the first to acknowledge that some attention to stealth and signature reduction pays substantial dividends – the question is how much is good enough and at what point resources should be devoted to other elements of fighting efficiency. He also makes some shrewd comments about the likely counters to NCW, most notably the increased potential of decoy techniques in an environment in which the actual numbers of projectiles available to combatants will diminish as the expected accuracy and lethality of individual rounds increase.

The book is accessible, being divided first according to major command, control, communication and sensor categories and then by major warfare areas, with subdivisions within each according to the country of origin. The opening sections include an introduction to maritime warfare and the relationship between technology and operational concepts that is useful in its own right, while there are also explanations of fundamental terms, system designations and national terminologies. It should come as no surprise that the key to acronyms and abbreviations takes up twelve pages.

The new edition also contains much more information on Russian weapons and sensors than its predecessors. Friedman acknowledges that much of the material that appeared in previous editions was, as with a great deal that emerged from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, inaccurate. The fact is, however, that for all Friedman’s care to emphasise that his book is based on open source, unclassified information and that detailed performance estimates are ‘typical’ rather than exact, his guesses are often much more accurate than others’ estimates. What is not wholly apparent from the text is the fact that Friedman has personally devoted great time and energy to sorting out the Russian wheat from the considerable chaff that has accompanied it. After more than a decade, a much clearer understanding has now emerged of the areas in which Soviet technology really was in the lead and where it was not.

Another shift in balance in World Naval Weapon Systems over the last two decades is of significance with, hardly surprising, both China and India taking up more space than before – a phenomenon equally apparent at contemporary international defence industrial expositions. It is likely to continue.

The book is nicely produced with a clear, albeit understandably small typeface and a good layout. Its text is well supported by photographs, with many contributions from the same collective of amateur enthusiasts who support the work of Jane’s Fighting Ships and Combat Fleets – more than one Australian among them.

World Naval Weapon Systems is, at $US 250, not cheap, but nevertheless worth the funding for professionals and certainly something which should be in the bookshelf of every naval analyst (a self powered, fully portable, read only, random access database has certain advantages over on-line systems). Furthermore, its appearance only every four or five years also constitutes a cycle that allows the $250 to be spread over a reasonable period. Recommended.

Review by James Goldrick.
Thinking of Making a Contribution?
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