

## AUSTRALIAN NAVAL ANNIVERSARIES AND COMMEMORATIONS - 2019

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During the last four years the Royal Australian Navy has been commemorating significant 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in connection with the centenary of the First World War. It was a war that saw many Australian seamen leave their homeland in late 1914 and not return until mid 1919 following the end of hostilities and the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet.

During that time, RAN warships played an important part in contributing to a victory that was largely realised through the effective use of sea power. Starved of vital resources by the Allied maritime blockade and following the failure of the 1918 Spring Offensive the Central Powers were limited to their reserves of diminishing internal resources for their survival. That, coupled with a rapidly deteriorating domestic situation, fuelled by shortages of food, inevitably compelled Germany to enter peace negotiations culminating in the signing of the Armistice in November 1918.

While it remains important to mark the anniversaries of World War I there are numerous other important events that punctuate more than 100 years of Australian Naval history. A number of significant anniversaries will fall this year and, as history reminds us, there are lessons to be learned by acquainting ourselves with each of them.

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

**28 January 1919.** On this day the first cases of Spanish Influenza were detected among Service men and women returning to Australia following the end of World War 1. The flu pandemic would claim more than 11,500 Australian lives and see the implementation of a rigorous maritime quarantine enforced to reduce the impact on our nation. With the re-emergence of measles in Australia earlier this year it is a timely reminder of the dangers and ease by which disease can be spread and the importance of quarantine measures. Learn more about the outbreak of Spanish Flu at:

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

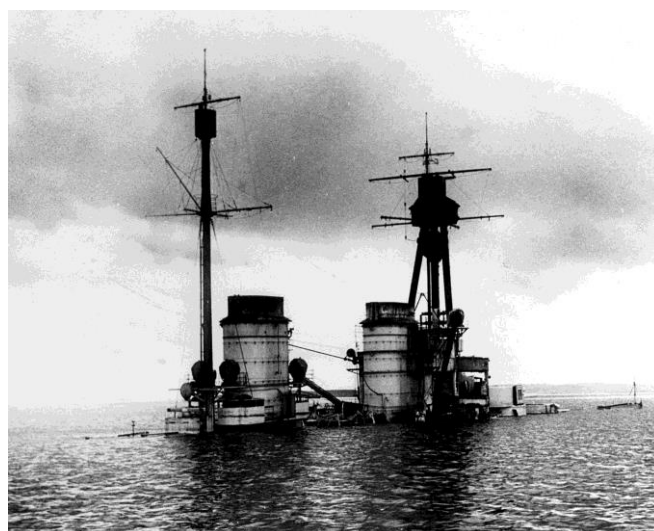
**23 April 1919.** HMAS *Australia* (I) sailed from Portsmouth bound for Australia following war service in the Northern Hemisphere. She arrived in Fremantle on 28 May for a four day visit and as the ship prepared to leave, some 80 ratings assembled on the quarterdeck requesting that the sailing be delayed so that they could repay the hospitality of generous locals. The men's request was conveyed to the commanding officer, Captain Claude Cumberlege, RN, who indicated that delay was impossible; the group dispersed, muttering their displeasure. When the order was given to 'let go aft', a report came to the bridge that the stokers on watch had left the boiler rooms. The

incident spread no further, but some time passed before the ship could sail. After an internal investigation, twelve men were arrested and charged with mutiny including Leading Seaman D Rudd, DSM. The full weight of naval discipline was brought down upon the 12 and five of that number, including Rudd, were found guilty and sentenced to two years gaol and dismissal from the service. A public outcry in support of the men saw them released on 20 December 1919. Learn more about this incident and LS Rudd at:

<http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/leading-seaman-dalmorton-joseph-owendale-rudd>

21 June 1919 – Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter ordered the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet that had been interned at Scapa Flow following the cessation of World War I hostilities. Of the 74 vessels at anchor, 52 were sunk in a final act of defiance by the Germans just days before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Many of the vessels were later raised by an enterprising engineer named Ernest Cox.

<https://www.submerged.co.uk/reading-room-bought-a-navy/>



*The upper works of the German battlecruiser Hindenburg following her scuttling in Scapa Flow in 1919.*

28 June 1919 – The Treaty of Versailles was signed officially bringing to an end the First World War. Lieutenant Commander JG Latham, RAN, as assistant to the Minister for the Navy, Sir Joseph Cook, was to play an important part in proceedings. For his services abroad stretching over fifteen months, he received £300 and in 1920 was appointed CMG. Learn more about this interesting naval personality at:

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/latham-sir-john-greig-7104>

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries & Events

11 February 1944 – HMA Ships *Launceston* and *Ipswich* in company with HMIS *Jumna* were escorting convoy JC36 from Colombo to Calcutta when the Japanese submarine *RO-110* attacked, crippling the SS *Asphalion*. A search by *Launceston* located the submarine and an attack by her 'saw much oil rise to the surface'. Subsequent attacks by *Jumna* and *Ipswich* were also mounted and the submarine was later confirmed sunk that evening. The contribution of the RANs corvettes during World War II was both varied and significant earning them the mantle 'maids of all work'.

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

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

6 April – On this day in 1944 the River Class frigate HMAS *Diamantina* was launched at the Walker's Yard, Maryborough, Queensland. *Diamantina* enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the RAN before decommissioning on 29 February 1980. She has since been restored to her wartime configuration and is on permanent display at the Queensland Maritime Museum.

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

14 April 1944 - Lieutenant Maxwell Henry Shean, RAN, in command of the midget submarine *X-24* conducted a solo raid on an important floating dock in Bergen Harbour, Norway, codenamed Operation GUIDANCE. *X-24* was towed to the drop-off point by HMS *Sceptre*, commanded by another Australian, Lieutenant (later Vice Admiral, Sir) Ian McIntosh RN. The final approach required *X-24* to negotiate a passage of some 40 nautical miles through patrolled waterways protected by two minefields and torpedo nets. After successfully entering the busy basin, Shean and his crew set 24-hour time-delayed charges on their target and made their way back out to the rendezvous with *Sceptre*. Upon their return to Scotland they discovered that poor intelligence and incorrect charts had led them so set their charges on an enemy ammunition ship, which was destroyed, instead of the floating dock. This did not, however, diminish *X-24's* remarkable feat. The attack was deemed a success and Shean was awarded a DSO for his leadership.

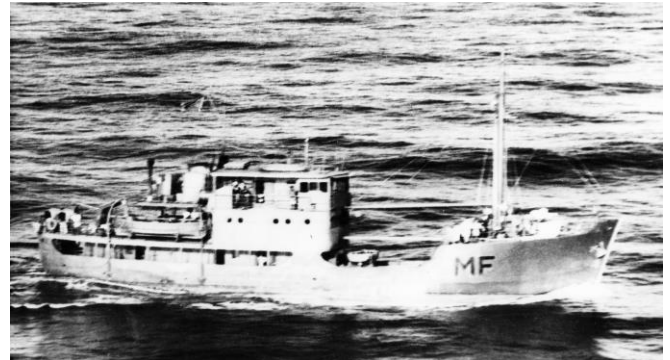
6 June 1944 – D-Day. Allied forces began landing on the beaches at Normandy, France. Under the auspices of Operation NEPTUNE were 1,213 warships, 2,490 landing/assault ships and another 1,656 craft used for ferry services. Though no Australian warships were present on D-Day, the RAN was represented by hundreds of officers and men serving in RN ships of all types ranging from cruisers to X-craft midget submarines.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-operation-neptune-d-day-6-june-1944>

20 June 1944 – The RAN stores carrier HMAS *Matafele* disappeared while en-route from Townsville to Milne Bay. No trace of her ship's company of 24 RAN and 13 Melanesian personnel was found and her loss was attributed to foundering in heavy weather. The

disappearance of the ship highlights the ever present perils of service at sea.

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



*The ill-fated Matafele in her wartime paint scheme with her distinctive recognition letters on her bows.*

13 July – On this day in 1944, Task Force 74 (TF.74), comprising HMA Ships *Australia* (II) (Captain E.F.V. Dechaineux, DSC, RAN), *Shropshire* (Captain H.A. Showers, ADC, RAN), *Arunta* (I) (Commander A.E. Buchanan, RAN) and *Warramunga* (I) (Commander N.A. Mackinnon, RAN), and US Ships *Ammen* and *Bache*, arrived in the Aitape area, New Guinea, to provide naval gunfire support to the American Aitape Task Force which had come under attack by a Japanese force estimated to be two divisions in strength. From 14 to 25 July, TF.74 conducted daily bombardments. The Japanese attack was eventually repelled on 9 August 1944.

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

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

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

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

6 August – On this day in 1944, the frigate HMS *Loch Killin*, under the command of Australian Lieutenant Commander Stanley Darling, RANVR, successfully attacked *U-736* when the German submarine was detected operating in the Bay of Biscay. Darling was later awarded his second Distinguished Service Cross for the action.

13 August – One of the many RAN Fairmile motor launches, ML 430, was destroyed in a friendly fire incident with her sister ship ML 819. Both ships were operating in close company in restricted visibility in waters off New Guinea while prosecuting an enemy submarine contact. Fortunately the crew of the stricken ML suffered no casualties and all were recovered by ML 819. The incident serves as a reminder that confusion, uncertainty and a lack of situational awareness are three key ingredients that contribute to the ever present 'Fog of War'.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/ml-819>



12 September – On this day in 1944, an unmarked Japanese prisoner of war transport, *Rakuyo Maru*, was torpedoed by the American submarine, USS *Sealion*. *Rakuyo Maru* was carrying 1,317 POWs, 716 of whom were Australian. Amongst them was Stoker Charles Pethebridge, a survivor of the sinking of HMAS *Perth* (I) (Captain H.M.L. Waller, DSO\*, RAN) in 1942. Pethebridge survived the initial submarine attack finding himself aboard a raft along with a small number of other survivors. He left the raft on several occasions to go to the assistance of others in the water that were not strong enough to save themselves. Exhaustion eventually overcame Pethebridge and he disappeared from the raft during the night. He was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal in Bronze for saving life at sea. Pethebridge House at HMAS *Cerberus* is named in his honour. Of the 1,317 POWs aboard *Rakuyo Maru*, 1,159 were lost.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/charles-pethebridge>

11 September – The ill-fated Operation RIMAU, Z Special Force operatives left Fremantle in the Royal Navy submarine HMS *Porpoise*. The small joint force set out to repeat the success of Operation JAYWICK attacking enemy ships in Singapore Harbour. The operation was compromised and all operatives were killed in action or taken prisoner and executed shortly before the war's end. To learn more about the heroism of those involved visit:

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

15 September – On this day in 1944, Allied forces successfully assaulted the Japanese held Indonesian island of Morotai. HMA Ships *Australia* (II), *Shropshire* *Warramunga* (I) & *Arunta* (I) provided naval gunfire support on both Morotai and the neighbouring island of Halmahera, while the Australian Landing Ships Infantry, HMA Ships *Kanimbla* (I) and *Manoora* (I) landed troops ashore on Morotai. During World War II the RAN quickly established an amphibious capability that fought predominantly alongside US forces throughout the island hopping campaign.

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 September – On this day in 1944, Lieutenant Leon Verdi Goldsworthy, GM, RANVR, was awarded the George Cross “for gallantry and undaunted devotion to duty” in rendering safe German mines during World War II. Goldsworthy had already been awarded the George Medal in April and later, in January 1945, was awarded

the Distinguished Service Cross making this remarkable man the RAN's most decorated officer of the war.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/lieutenant-commander-leon-verdi-goldsworthy>

18 October – The RAN corvette HMAS *Geelong* was sunk following a collision with the US tanker *York*, at night in waters off the north coast of New Guinea. None of *Geelong's* crew was killed and all were recovered by the *York* and taken back to New Guinea.

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

21 October – On the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1944, the heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia* (II) was hit by a Japanese suicide aircraft in the opening stages of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. 30 members of *Australia's* crew were killed including Captain EFV Dechaineux. A further 64 were wounded including Commodore JA Collins. Other RAN ships present during the Leyte Gulf action included HMA ships, *Arunta* (I), *Gascoyne*, *Kanimbla* (I), *Manoora* (I), *Shropshire*, *Warramunga* (I) and *Westralia* (I).

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



*Damage suffered by HMAS Australia (II) after being struck by a Japanese aircraft in October 1944.*

25 October – HMAS Ships *Shropshire* and *Arunta* participated in the Battle of Surigao Strait resulting in the destruction of a significant number of Japanese warships notably, for the RAN, the battleship *Yamashiro* which *Shropshire* is credited with hitting with a number of 8-inch salvos and which *Arunta* attacked with torpedos.

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

#### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries & Events

3 January – On this day in 1969, Sub-Lieutenant Anthony Huelin, RAN, of the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHfV) was killed when the Iroquois helicopter he was piloting struck power lines near Saigon in poor weather. Also killed were Huelin's three-man American flight crew. Huelin was the fourth of five members of the RANHfV to lose their lives in the conflict in Vietnam.





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

9 January – On this day in 1969, the *Perth* class (modified *Charles F Adams* class) destroyer, HMAS *Perth* (II) (Captain DW Leach, RAN), began a week-long program of naval gunfire support missions during which she fired her 5000<sup>th</sup> round of her deployment to Vietnam. In 56 daytime missions and 73 night-time missions, *Perth* destroyed or damaged 86 bunkers, 184 structures, 28 sampans, one 20-foot cargo vessel, four junks, four bridges, three trucks and three artillery sites.

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

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

10 January 1969 – The last Royal Navy submarine based in Australia, HMS *Trump*, departed Sydney. Since the late 1940s the Royal Navy had maintained a submarine presence in Australia to assist the RAN with training in anti-submarine warfare. The creation of a Royal Australian Navy Submarine Squadron saw the *Oberon* Class submarines take over this role and expand in capability to meet a variety of other strategic aims.

15 January – On this day in 1969, clearance divers, Chief Petty Officer BW Wilson and Able Seaman RH Spicer, participated in an operation in Viet Cong controlled territory on the Ca Mau Peninsula, Vietnam. Over the course of six hours along a three mile stretch of river, the divers were members of two teams which destroyed 65 bunkers and 13 other structures while coming under sniper fire on four occasions.

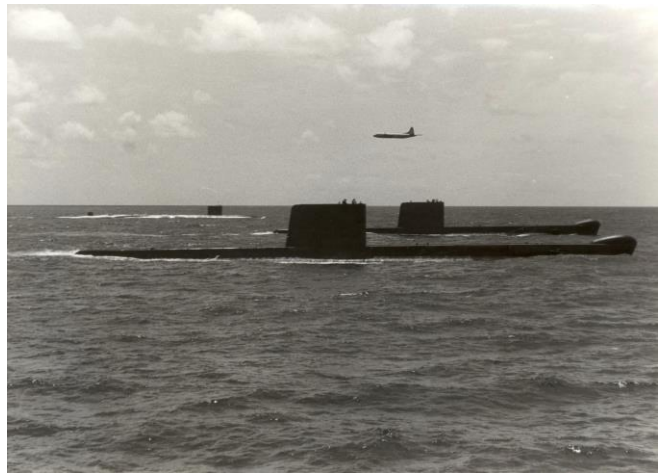
<http://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/naval-operations-vietnam>

2 February – On this day in 1969 Sub Lieutenants Mike Perrot and Bob Kyle of the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam performed a daring rescue of fellow aviators Sub Lieutenants Bill Symons and Tom Supple whose helicopter had been shot down by enemy gunfire. The crew of the downed aircraft defended themselves with the Huey's M60 machine gun and small arms during a running battle with enemy ground troops as they were chased across paddy fields and through scrub. Perrot and Kyle successfully manoeuvred their aircraft through increasing ground fire to reach and rescue their fellow flyers. Both were mentioned in dispatches for their bravery under fire.

20 March – On this day in 1969 the guided missile destroyer HMAS *Brisbane* (II) (Captain A.A. Willis, RAN) sailed from Sydney on her first deployment to South Vietnam. She returned to Sydney the following October having steamed 40,465 miles and having fired 7,891 rounds while serving on the 'gun line'.

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

18 April - The *Oberon* Class submarine, HMAS *Ovens* commissioned at Greenock, Scotland in 1969. *Ovens* served in the RAN for some 26 years before decommissioning on 1 December 1995.



*HMA Submarines Oxley and Ovens in company with USS Pasadena. The Oberon class submarines provided valuable service to the RAN for more than three decades.*

23 May – Shortly after 0100 on 23 May 1969 in Vung Tau Harbour, Vietnam, sentries aboard USS *Hickman County* reported seeing swimmers in the water off the De Long Pier. Chief Petty Officer A.V. Rashleigh, who was in temporary command of RAN Clearance Diving Team 3, arrived at the pier with Able Seamen M.H. Ey and J.L. Garrett at 0145 by which time one swimmer had been captured and an object discovered between the pier and a merchant vessel alongside. Garrett entered the water in spite of the presence of enemy swimmers and found a metal container some 12 feet below the water. Whilst he was out of the water reporting his discovery to Rashleigh, a small explosion was heard beneath them. Garrett re-entered the water and found that the device had actuated but its main charge, 40lbs of C4 explosive, had not detonated. Another Viet-Cong sapper was captured later in the morning as the team searched for evidence of more mines. Garrett was mentioned in despatches for his actions while Rashleigh was awarded the British Empire Medal for his leadership.

31 May – During an air-mobile operation south-west of Long Binh, in Dinh Tuong Province, South Vietnam, Leading Aircrewman Noel Shipp, an Iroquois helicopter door gunner with the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam, exposed himself to intense enemy fire while extracting elements of a South Vietnamese infantry regiment. As his gunship laid down suppression fire it was hit and consequently crashed. Shipp was seen to continue firing his weapon at the enemy until the moment of the aircraft's impact. In recognition of Shipp's heroism a recruit school division at the RAN's premier training establishment, HMAS *Cerberus*, was named in his honour in 2013.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/leading-air-crewman-noel-erwin-shipp>

3 June 1969 – On this date the RAN pauses to remember those killed when HMAS *Melbourne* (II), collided with the American destroyer USS *Frank E Evans* whilst participating in the SEATO Exercise SEA SPIRIT. At the time of the collision *Melbourne* was conducting night flying exercises when *Evans* crossed her bows and was cut in two. 74 US sailors lost their lives in *Evans*.

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



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[http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-June-13-1969.pdf](http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-June-13-1969.pdf)

[http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy\\_News-June-27-1969.pdf](http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-June-27-1969.pdf)

3 August 1969, the *Perth* class guided missile destroyer, HMAS *Brisbane* (II) (Captain A.A. Willis, RAN), arrived off Vung Tau to provide naval gunfire support for units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy province. There she bombarded bunkers and storage areas along the coast of the Long Hai Hills at a range of 21,000 yards, expending 147 rounds of ammunition.

3 October – On this day in 1969, the *Daring* class destroyer, HMAS *Vendetta* (II) (Commander EE Johnston, RAN), fired her first rounds of the Vietnam War engaging enemy rocket sites and troop staging areas from an anchorage in Da Nang. Over the course of seven hours, she engaged 34 targets expending 128 rounds of ammunition.



*Commander EE Johnston's careful management of Vendetta's six 4.5-inch guns ensured he always had at least one turret available to fire at short notice.*

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

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

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries & Events

25 July 1994 - The first ADF personnel were deployed on OPERATION TAMAR to provide support to the United Nations Mission in Rwanda. The operation concluded on 8 March 1996. Eleven RAN Medical personnel were deployed during this operation.

4-21 October 1994 - OPERATION LAGOON – HMA ships *Success*, *Tobruk* (II) with three embarked Sea King helicopters and members of Clearance Diving Team 1 deployed to Bougainville as part of the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force (SPPKF). During an overflight of Bougainville one Sea King was struck by two rounds from small arms fire. Fortunately there were no casualties.

29 December 1994 - HMAS *Darwin* sailed from HMAS *Stirling* to rescue Isabelle Autessier, a lone sailor participating in a solo around the world yacht race, whose yacht *Ecurial* was disabled some 900 miles south of Adelaide. A Sea Hawk helicopter from 816 Squadron was embarked on 30 December and Autessier was rescued on 1 January 1995.

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

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia's involvement in the intervention in East Timor. In 1999 Australia led a peace enforcement operation in East Timor that dwarfed all its previous peacekeeping efforts. In response to post-independence violence in East Timor the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1264 on 15 September 1999, allowing international forces to take all necessary actions to restore peace and security in East Timor following pro-independence elections.

The ADF took the lead in this operation forming a coalition that became known as the International Force East Timor (INTERFET). The RAN's contribution included major fleet units, minor war vessels, hydrographic units, clearance diving teams, Fleet Air Arm assets and personnel attached to the headquarters in Dili. The operation was executed under the auspices of Operation STABILISE with the insertion into East Timor beginning on 20 September.

<http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/working-papers-strength-through-diversity>



*HMAS Brunei unloading military equipment and supplies in East Timor. The RAN's LCHs played an important role throughout the INTERFET operation particularly during the wet season when many roads across the country were impassable.*



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