**HISTORY OF T.S. VOYAGER I956 - I998**

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After World War II the existing Navy League (UK) Branches in Australia formed a loose coalition and sought assistance from the Royal Australian Navy regarding support for their Australian Sea Cadet Corps (ASCC). The Commonwealth Naval Board declined to negotiate with a London-based organisation (formed in Australia from about 1900). Rear Admiral Showers RAN Ret'd worked hard and in 1950 the Navy League of Australia (NLA) formerly came into being by the formation of an Australian Company, Limited by Guarantee. This made them an autonomous Australian organisation, governed by a Federal Council comprising member representatives, where existing, in each State and Territory of the Commonwealth. The new Navy League of Australia assumed control of the previously existing Australian Sea Cadet Corps (ASCC) that had operated under the NL(UK) groups in Australia. The new NLA State Divisions (and Branches) corresponded to the States and Territories. The League was now able to negotiate a joint partnership with the Royal Australian Navy. This resulted in the formation of a Sea Cadet Council (SCC), comprising representatives of Navy and Navy League representatives, to oversee the national activities of the ASCC. Australia's Naval Defence Act (Navy, Army and Air Force were separate Departments of State and had their own rules and regulations) allowed only limited, but valuable, assistance to the Navy League ASCC by the Navy including provision of uniforms and assuming responsibility for training and supply of some training equipment. The Navy League was responsible for everything else including accommodation, drill halls and administration.   
Early on in the life of this Australian Navy League a new Australian Sea Cadet Corps (ASCC) Training Ship (TS) Voyager was established in I956. It was known as the Police Cadet unit as its officers and Instructors, apart from being ex naval personnel, were members of the Victoria Police force. The unit was the youngest of six units in Victoria, at the time, until TS Latrobe was formed some time later. The first Commanding Officer was Lieut. David McKinlay (ex RN). The Executive Officer was Sub.Lieut.Ray Applebee. They were supported by Instructors PO.Carpenter and PO.Trevor Jordan. The age of the first cadets ranged from I4 to I6 years. Most were local boys but several came from outlying areas east of Melbourne. Parades were held mid week in the Albert Park boat shed which was shared with TS Melbourne which held its parades on the Friday night. In I957 a request for Instructors with naval experience saw the introduction of three additional instructors who were officially appointed as such in I958. They were:- PO. Erie Todd (ex. M.N.) PO. Alan Willcocks (Ex.RANVR.) PO. Donald McNicol (Ex.RAN.) As the complement of the ships company reached the specified quota of 30 cadets it was decided and arranged to shify T.S.Voyager to the disused premises of the old State school in Pascoe St., Williamstown. The unit then began to establish its identity and become known as the Willimastown Police Cadet Unit, still being the youngest unit in the Victorian section of the Australian Sea Cadet Corps. Shortly after this the Christening if the Unit took place with the march past in Divisions. With the Royal Australian Naval Reserve band in attendance it quite an impressive display considering the unit had only been in existence for such a short period. The Ceremony was attended by the Chief Cominissioner of Police Major General Selwyn Porter DSO. CBE. ED with Rear Admiral Wilfred H. Harrington as the reviewing officer. Sub Lieut.Ray Applebee led the march past with the Divisions led by the Instructors and the Guard-Commander, PO. Trevor Jordan. In late 1958 the unit began to flex its muscles and was again transferred, this time to an existing site at the old Navy boat shed in Nelson Place Williamstown. This proved to be an ideal set up for the cadets as it had a naval atmosphere and being on the foreshore afforded the cadets with immediate and ample sea training and boat handling. Parades were changed from mid-week to a Friday night and subsequently arrangements were made for the cadets to camp overnight and go sailing on the Saturday. The cadets had a skiff and two sea worthy whalers which were maintained in excellent condition. Ceremonial duties were carried out on such occasions as Anzac Day and the annual Navy Week Seafarers service at St.Pauls Cathedral. In conjunction with TS Melbourne the cadets marched through the centre of Swanston St. Melbourne. Also with cadets from other units, led by P.O. Wiillcocks and PO. Jock Lacey who had recently joined the unit, the cadets marched on to Government House to form a guard of honour for Her Majesty the Queen Mother on her visit to Melbourne. The cadets quickly settled in at their new depot and set about erecting a quarter deck, ships office, a canteen and kitchen together with an office for the CO. and a well constructed armoury. The armoury was lined with metal and secured with a padlocked cyclone gate. The rifle rack was obtained from the Shrine Guard office at Government House, courtesy of the Police Department. The .303 rifles were chained through the trigger guards after the bolts were removed and placed in the ship's safe. The cadets had not long been in their new headquarters when one Saturday they affected the rescue of occupants from an overturned yacht. With CO. Lieut. McKinlay as coswain in the whaler they returned and successfully towed the yacht to Blunts slipway. A number of camps were held the first being on private property at Rye beach. Tents were erected for approx. 25 cadets. The large yard was converted to a makeshift parade ground with a flag pole and mast erected at the western end. The cadets formed parts of ship and divisions were held. Most of the cooking was done by the cadets under the supervision of the CO's wife Rose McKinlay and the owners of the property who so generously accommodated the cadets. A highlight of this camp was a voyage undertaken by 10 cadets in a whaler with the CO. Lieut.McKinlay as coxswain. The whaler left Williamstown shortly after day break with the cadets pulling on the oars across Port Phillip Bay to Rye Beach arriving at approx. 2I00. Some concern was felt by the shore party at Rye due to the late arrival however fears were dispelled once P.O. Willcocks established contact by use of the Aldis lamp and morse signals thus guiding the vessel to a safe anchorage. This was quite a feat for the young lads many of whom had sore hands the next morning. Not long after the CO saw fit to resign and Ray Applebee was promoted to Sub.Lieut. and became the new commanding officer. A parents committee was formed and became very active raising money for such things as a stove for the kitchen and linoleum for the floor. Notable members of this committee were Mr. Bochenek, Mr Frank Zamit, Mr Smythe, Mr Alex Jones and his wife, Joyce, Mr and Mrs Dave Harris and Mrs Isobel Robinson. Together with other parents they performed sterling service over a number of years. It was decided the unit should have a power boat to accompany cadets for safety reasons whilst sailing in the bay. Two boats were on offer and it was decided to purchase a craft suitable to handle rough weather rather than one built for speed. The CO.Sub Lieut Applebee, in company with PO. Willcocks, travelled to Balnarring and arranged the purchase of a small power boat approx. 18ft. which had been used for fishing purposes. This was done with the aid of the parents committee which had raised the sum of $800 being the purchase price. This vessel is still in use and over the years has been well maintained. At a later stage it was completely overhauled and a new diesel engine fitted courtesy of the Williamstown dockyard personnel. It was about this time the unit lost the services of one of its cadet petty officers. PO.Peter Taube was destined to become an appointed Instructor with the Unit. Apart from being a good drill Instructor he possessed leadership qualities and was a very good coxswain. He unfortunately met with a motor bike accident and lost a leg. Even so he was employed at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard for quite some time after. Early in I961 the Unit was inspected by the Chief Commissioner of Police Major General Selwyn Porter. He was taken out in the newly acquired power boat to view the cadets under sail in the bay. The cadets had become very efficient in handling their whalers under sail and on one occasion in heavy weather attained a speed of I2 knots making it hard for the power boat to keep up doing its maximum of 9 knots. Several cadets later undertook an interchange trip to New Zealand one being cadet PO. Les Turner who later joined the Victoria Police and subsequently at a later stage became commanding officer of T.S.Voyager. On the I3th. Nov.I96I Alan Willcocks was promoted to CPO. and shortly after with cadet PO. Alan Grubb and 5 cadets sailed in the old sloop HMAS Swan from Adelaide to Sydney. It was full of rust but they said her engines were as good as the day they were installed and could still reach her maximum speed of 16 knots. This was a forerunner of many other trips afforded to the Cadets. 1962 saw many changes take place within the Unit. Due mainly to work commitments Petty Officers Jordan, Carpenter and Todd resigned. This depleted the instructional staff somewhat, however this was quickly rectified with the official appointment of CPO Jock Lacey (ex gunnery), appointed Sub.Lieut. later on. In addition the Unit saw influx of honourary instructors emerging from the Naval Dockyard Police, namely:- CPO Dave Campbell (later to become the Officer-in-Charge of Dockyard Police at Garden Island). CPO Charles Fellows CPO Alan Brown (ex yeoman of signals) CPO Frank Canfield - later appointed Executive Officer of the Unit. The aforesaid personnel proved to be a boon to the Unit especially CPO Campbell who was a past master at handling whalers under sail and seamanship. All subsequent guards were instructed by Sub.Lieut. Lacey. A further change then took place with the resignation of Lieut. Applebee as CO due to work commitments. CPO Alan Willcocks then became the new Commanding Officer and was promoted to Sub-Lieut. on 1st Nov.1962, with CPO Canfield as his Executive Officer. A further appointment was that of Sub.Lieut. Joseph Dows (ex M.N.). He later became CO for a short period as a Lieutenant and later on promotion to Lieut.-Commander became the training officer for the Victoria Division for a number of years. He was awarded the Order of Australia for his services to youth having previously conducted the training school for youngsters at Kew in the art of traffic control and featured on the radio in the talk programmes when attached to the Police public relations department. A new addition by way of a bofor gun was obtained and mounted on the foreshore overlooking the bay and a new quarter deck was constructed by the CO with the assistance of Mr Maurice Grey an honorary assistant. One of the best camps undertaken was at Snapper Island, Sydney home of TS Sydney. The CO and Ex Officer together with a large number of cadets took part and found the CO of TS Sydney, CMDR Forsythe, a hard task master. A church service was then held at the newly constructed church at Watsons Bay overlooking the Heads. Of an evening the officers and Instructors would cross to Garden Island for hot showers. It is interesting to note that the CO of TS Sydney was formerly, in his younger days, a lighthorseman in the first world war as was the CO of TS Voyager who at the beginning of World War II specialised in signals and was attached to the 8th Light Horse Signals before joining the RANVR. A successful camp was held in the You Yangs, Victoria. Later approximately 18 cadets were taken for a trip on the ferry across the bay from Point Lonsdale to Sorrento. It was plain sailing, until the return trip when a violent storm blew in from the south. Large waves were encountered and problems arose due to the ferry not being able to berth at the normal jetty for fear of striking her bottom. The ferry then moved to another jetty where the water was deeper. One second the ferry was 6 feet above the jetty and then 6 feet below. Two instructors took the perilous leap ashore and with the CO and the Ex Officer the cadets were lifted bodily and thrown into the arms of the two instructors. All were disembarked without incident and the ferry went off to seek a safe anchorage. It was important for the cadets to get as much sea training as possible so it came about that a number of cadets accompanied the CO and XO to travel to Portland where they boarded the aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney for a weeks cruise in Bass Strait. Unlike the trip in HMAS Swan where sailing conditions were excellent except for a large swell in the Tasman Sea, Bass Strait decided to misbehave. The weather became extremely rough with many of the crew sea sick. With water coming over the flight deck forward the Captain decided to take shelter in the lee of King Island where she lay at anchor and rolled continuously for 4 days before returning to Portland. Conditions were so bad that damage control was piped for as parts of machinery were breaking loose below deck. Time spent during the day catching large coutta from the stern of the carrier, enough to feed the whole ships crew. Whilst at anchor an embarrassing incident took place during the Captains dinner in the wardroom. It was during the passing of the port ceremony when Lieut. Willcocks knocked over his glass and all and sundry were fascinated as the spilt port kept motion with the roll of the ship, running to one end of the table and returning via its original course. It was about this time that CPO Canfield was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant. On another occasion the cadets took to sea in a whaler and the power boat and on intercepting HMAS Vampire in the bay stormed aboard with the aid of scrambling nets. Later under the supervision of the CO and PO. Instructors they were given the privilege by the Captain to secure the vessel at her anchorage at North Wharf in the Yarra River. Just prior to this excursion the CO. with a small number of cadets were aboard HMAS Voyager during her working up trials experiencing the ship travelling at high speed and evolutions at 28 knots and also the firing of her forward guns. The CO got to know LCDR Macgregor (X0), Lieut. Dowling (boats officer), Lieut.Ross (RN.), Lieut. Hisbet (gunnery officer) and the coxswain CPO. Rogers all of whom were to lose their lives when HMAS Melbourne and Voyager collided at night off Jervis Bay. Cadets were privileged to participate in a day cruise in the bay, on the recent addition to the Navy, HMAS Swan, a much more powerful ship than the Swan of I939 vintage. Cadets attended launching ceremonies at the Williamstown Dockyard slip way. Camping overnight became a regular feature of cadet life at the depot enabling improved sailing time on a Saturday with cadet petty officers as coxswains, a task at which they had become quite professional. On such an occasion one whaler whilst in irons off Nelson pier was struck by the Bass Trader returning to port. The whaler was slightly damaged however the prompt action of Petty Officer W.Grodzki (later to become CO.) averted what could have resulted in a disaster. Blame was leveled at the cadets by the master of the Bass Trader through the Maritime Board. However a report by the CO., who promptly carried out an inquiry and investigation, resulted in the cadets being exonerated of any blame. It was evident the Bass Trader was on the wrong side of the channel whilst entering port, was exceeding the speed limit for such vessels entering port and had failed to take any evasive action or render assistance. A training course was run at Flinders for Cadet Commanding Officers in Australia. This included power boat handling, gunnery at West Head, drill and rifle and pistol practice on the range. A similar training course was run for cadets who participated in the whaler races. With the CO as coxswain using the current to the best advantage TS Voyager scooped the pool winning a total of three races. Two in succession without a breather. On 7th February 1968, PO Gordon Hanley (MN) was duly appointed as an instructor. He was later promoted to Sub.Lieut. and served the unit until 1993. He was given a ceremonial farewell dinner at the Depot with ex CO LCDR Alan Willcocks and Lieut. Les Turner and their wives in attendance. Improvements were constantly being made to the Depot premises. A proper bosun's store was created; a new kitchen built away from the drill hall; the old kitchen was made into a canteen. The original sail locker room used as a wardroom for a number of years was made into a petty officers mess through the installation of a large glass building as a new wardroom, courtesy of Lieut. Bows. In addition a ceiling was installed in the drill hall. Over the years all officers and Instructors at some time or another made some input into improving the depot for the benefit of the cadets. Many cadets on reaching the age limit went into the Navy, some into the Police Force and others the fire brigade. Several are still serving members in the Navy and have reached higher ranks due to their previous experience as cadets. Where possible the routine would be altered to allow the cadets some form of recreation. This occurred one Saturday when the CO. decided to take a party of some ten cadets on a fishing excursion in the bay. Setting out in the Navy work boat with the Greys diesel purring her along at a steady 5 knots and all armed to the teeth with bait and rods it promised to be a successful venture. A course was set due south and as the boat passed the location of the Gellibrand light it was struck by a monstrous wave. One second the boat was cruising serenely the next second it was virtually under water. Visibility forward as well as port and starboard was nil - just water everywhere. The CO. opened wide the throttle and the work boat surged ahead. The wave cascaded onto the after canopy and dispersed. Cadet L.S.Bocheneck who was sitting on the stern got drenched as the water cascaded over him. He was fortunate he did not get washed overboard. It was an unpromising beginning and as the day progressed it was disappointing as no fish were caught.   
TS Voyager, as part of the Navy League's ASCC, is now part of an organisation that had expanded from less than 500 cadets in 3 states in 1948/49 to 1700 in 1958 and 2500 in 1963.   
In the mid 1960s concerns by Navy arose about their support for the organisation because of escalating costs. The Navy League was also experiencing major problems in funding for buildings required for new Units and this was compounded by the geographical size of Australia and the vast distances over which administration of the ASCC had to be managed even though each State Division of the ASCC (Australian Sea Cadet Corps) virtually ran itself. In 1966 a small sub-committee of the Sea Cadet Council (SCC) was formed to advise on the future of the ASCC. There were only 3 members - the Director of Naval Reserves (DNR) who was chairman of the Council, the Federal President & Federal Vice-President of the Navy League. They travelled all over the country reviewing the ASCC with the result that they recommended the separation of the Navy League of Australia (NLA) and (ASCC) Sea Cadet organisations. The sub-committee recommended that the (ASCC) Sea Cadet Corps be made the responsibility of the Navy and brought into line with the Army's school cadets and the Air Training Corps, a recommendation accepted by the Naval Board and the Federal Council of the Navy League. Thus on 1st January 1973 the League transferred its 2500+ cadet members to the Navy's Naval Reserve Cadets (NRC). The Navy League's Australian Sea Cadet Corps (ASCC) was not disbanded entirely for an under 14 year old junior cadet system still operates successfully in Western Australia.   
A clause in the Naval Defence Act enabled the Naval Board to finance Naval Reserve Cadets - an underage section of the RANR which had not existed for some time. Rather than amend the Naval Defence Act, which was a lengthy process, it was decided to call Sea Cadets - Naval Reserve Cadets - although they were not part of the Reserve nor liable for service with the defence forces. A name change that was regretted by many in the Navy League.   
Early in I973 the sailing yacht the Winston Churchill arrived. This craft which had featured in many ocean races was of solid timber construction, mainly huon pine. The cadets relished the opportunity of maintaining the craft, re-caulking the deck etc. They were given the opportunity, on one occasion, of sailing her across the bay to Brighton. With Lieut. Applebee the Div. Training Officer in charge and the CO. at the helm she cruised along at about 4 knots.   
About this time Sub.Lieut. Canfield resigned as XO, and Petty Officers Alan Grubb and Gordon Hanley were promoted to the rank of sub. Lieutenant. Joseph Dows, the training officer, was promoted to Lieutenant and became the new Executive Officer. Sub.Lieut.Les Turner was the new training Officer.   
Following on the important change in command structure from 1st January 1973, when all 14-18 year old members of the Navy League's ASCC transferred to the Navy's NRC, an important and historic event took place at HMAS Lonsdale, Port Melbourne. TS Voyager having recently won the Colours as the best Unit in Victoria was granted the honour of receiving the new Naval Reserve Cadet ensign. It was an impressive parade with the cadets formed up on the parade ground with the Royal Australian Naval Reserve band in attendance. The Guard Commander was Sub.Lieut. Turner, the Flag Officer -Lieut. Dows and the reviewing officer Commodore Dacre Smythe A0 RAN who had just relinquished his appointment as Commodore Superintendent of Training (CST) at HMAS Cerberus to take up a new post as Naval Officer-in-Charge, Victoria (NOIC-Vic). The parade officer was LCDR Ray Applebee.   
It is interesting to note that the title NOIC Vic. had been transferred from CO of HMAS Lonsdale and that now the CO HMAS Cerberus no longer was termed CST.  
After Lieut. Dows received the ensign from Commodore Smythe the Unit marched passed before many guests and V.I.Ps including the Senior Officer of cadets CMDR Geoffrey Evans OBE and the CO. Lieut. Alan Willcocks.   
On the I2th. October I973 the CO. was promoted to Lieutenant-Commander, however shortly after he was obliged to tender his resignation due to work commitments and transport problems. He had previously resigned from the police force and taken up the position of superintendent of traffic and by laws with the City of Knox. The executive officer Lt. J. Dows became the new Commanding Officer with Sub Lieut.L.Turner his executive officer. Approx. 2 years later Lt. J.Dows resigned as CO. and became the new Divisional Training Office for the NRC Victoria Division and was promoted to Lieutenant Commander, a position he held for a number of years before eventually resigning. The new commanding officer for the Unit became Sub.Lieut.L.Turner who was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. During this change Sub.Lieut. Alan Grubb with I2 cadets sailed aboard the HMS Belfast from Melbourne to Sydney. The Belfast was a Southampton class cruiser armed with 6 inch guns and a survivor of World War II when her back was broken by a mine. She was able to make port and repaired with reinforcement and is now a museum based in England. This vessel was certainly a change from the destroyers and frigates which the cadets had been used, to sailing in on previous occasions.  
After this an important change took place with the resignation of the CO.Lt. Turner, also due to work commitments with the police force. The change was important in that TS Voyager lost its direct connection with the police force as Lt.Turner was the last policeman serving in the unit. It therefore no longer could be referred to as the Police Cadet Unit. Lt. Turner was originally a cadet and came up through the hawse pipe to become the commanding officer after having spent something like 35 years with the cadet corps.   
The new commanding officer Sub Lieut. Walter Grodzki, like Lt.Turner, was also an original cadet. He later rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander and served the Unit with distinction.   
It was during this era of change that female cadets joined the unit. Quickly and effectively the necessary alterations were carried out at the depot to provide for separate toilets and sleeping accommodation. The highlight of Grodzki's service was in I994 when the Unit was granted the Freedom of the City of Williamstown. Accompanied by other cadets from other Units an impressive parade was held in front of the Town Hall with the customary march past.   
Another addition to the instructional staff was the appointment of CPO Noel Baker. He had been with the Unit since 1998 and was later to play an important part in the future of the Unit.   
On 11th february 1994, LCDR Grodski resigned from the NRC. Lieut.Noel Baker was then appointed as the new Commanding Officer. His staff now consists of 3 Officers, 2 sub officers & 50 cadets. Lieut. Steven Shepherd Executive Officer Sub. Lieut. Ross Burns Training Officer Chief Petty Officer Anita Baker Stores Officer Petty Officer Lisa Foley Coxswain   
**Number of Cadets**: Male 37, Female 13   
Lieut. Baker was with TS Tamar for 5 years as a cadet before joining the RAN where he specialised in clearance diving for 6 years.   
TS Voyager is still a very vibrant unit with most cadets under 15 years of age. The Unit has a 22 seater Toyota coaster bus making the unit very mobile and able to participate in many functions. Very often the unit travels interstate by means of this bus. A good percentage of the cadets enter the Navy both at ADFA officer training as well as general entry at HMAS Cerberus. T.S.Voyager has always been a very competitive unit. This can be seen by the number of awards it has collected over the years from I956 to 1998.   
**AWARDS**:- The Colours:- 1963-1965-1969-1973-1978-1982-1983-1992-1993.  
**Other Awards**:- Most improved 1977 Best Guard:- 1979 - 1981 - 1985 - 1990 - 1991 and 1992   
**Number and type of craft at present in use**:- 3 x Corsairs, 1 x Bosun, 1 x 27ft. whaler, 1 x 21 ft. motor boat (couta built) 1 x 15ft. Aluminum rescue boat with 35 hp. outboard motor.   
The future of TS Voyager looks very promising and they are aiming for the most coveted award- best unit in Australia - which still eludes them.   
**Former Cadets who proved to be outstanding and excellent coxswains:**   
L.S. Bocheneck PO Peter Taube PO Rodney Smythe Sub Lieut. Alan Grubb LCDR Walter Grodski Former NRC -   
**TS Voyager Commanding Officers**: 1956 Lieut. Dave McKinlay LCDR Ray Applebee CFM LCDR Alan Willcocks CFM LCDR Joseph Dows AO CFM Lieut. Leslie Turner CFM LCDR Walter Grodski 1998 Lieut. Noel Baker   
(History by LCDR Alan Willcocks CFM NRC 1998)