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# THE NAVY

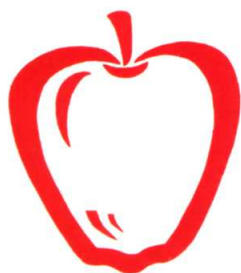
The Magazine of THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA



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# THE NAVY

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## OUR COVER PHOTO

*HMAS Adelaide leads three other fleet units into Sydney at the start of a celebration to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Fleet arrival in Port Jackson on 4 October 1913 (Photo - LSPH K. Degener)*

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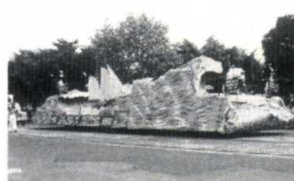
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HMAS NEWCASTLE

## The New HMAS Newcastle

*The Royal Australian Navy's newest Guided Missile Frigate (FFG) and its first to be named after the capital city of the Hunter, HMAS NEWCASTLE, arrived in Sydney for the first time on 3 December 1993 and then Newcastle, five days later.*

**C**ommanded by Commander Rowan Moffitt, the 4100 tonne frigate is the sixth and last FFG to join the RAN. Construction began in July 1989, the ship being launched at Williamstown, Victoria on 21 February 1992 by the Lady Mayoress of Newcastle, Mrs Margaret McNaughton. Builders, Transfield Pty Ltd, effectively completed the Australian Frigate Shipbuilding Contract with the delivery of NEWCASTLE on 20 October 1993.

Construction milestones achieved in 1993 included the docking tests, closing-up tanks, undocking, the initial light of the gas turbines, inspections, the integration of the combat system, dock trials and finally builder's trials in Bass Strait during August. During the following five weeks the ship was painted overall, before returning to sea for three days of acceptance trials, all of which were performed in satisfactory manner.

The new guided missile frigate was officially commissioned in her "nameport" on Saturday, 11 December in the presence of both naval and civil authorities. As part of a five day celebration to mark the event, the new FFG hosted special visits by



Commander Rowan Moffitt

the local community and school groups. The ship's main (No.1 deck) passage was christened "Hunter Street" by the Lord Mayor on Friday, 10 December and on Sunday, the frigate opened her gangways, for the ship's initial open day.

Highlight of the visit, was the official commissioning ceremony, conducted alongside the Throsby Wharf on Saturday. Guest of Honour was the Minister for Defence, The Right Honourable Senator Ray, who formally commissioned the ship.

### The Personnel

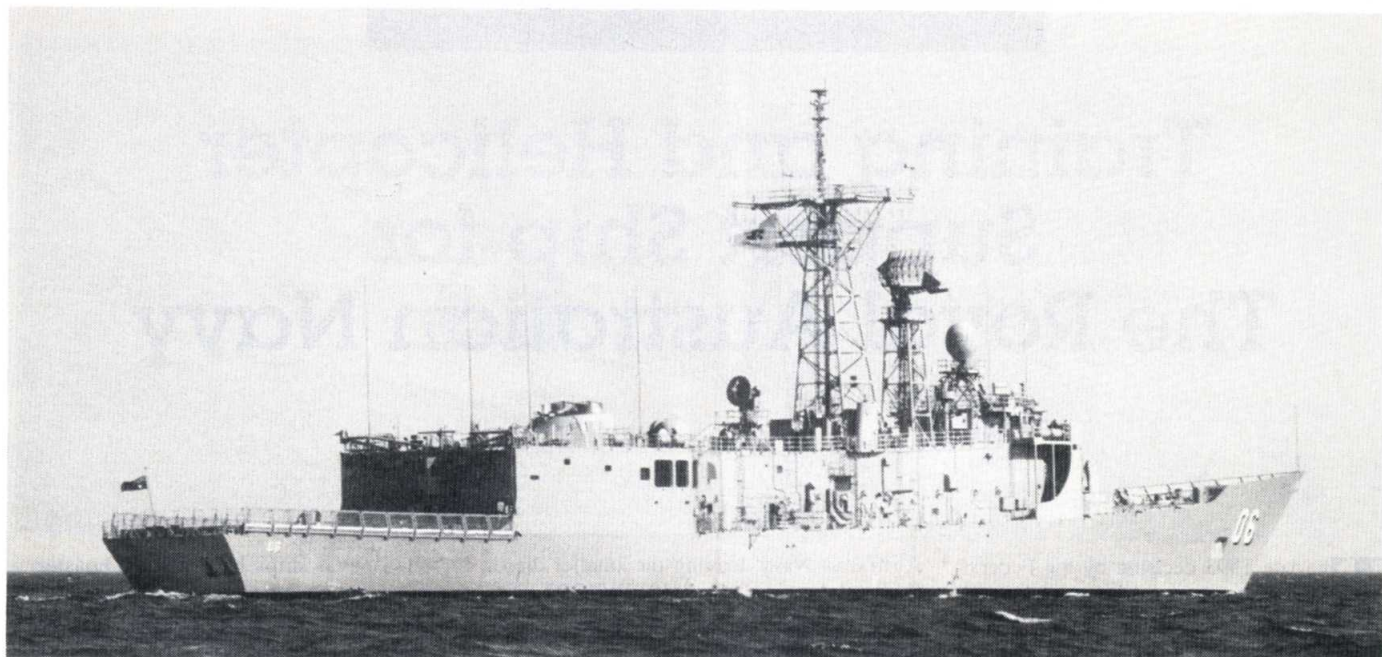
NEWCASTLE is manned by more than 180 officers and sailors and was designed as a multi-role task group escort for anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare.

### Armament

With all trials completed the ship will embark the Fleet Air Arm's new S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopter. Other weapons systems fitted include both Standard anti-air and Harpoon anti-ship missiles, a 76mm dual purpose gun, the Phalanx close-in-weapon-system and two triple torpedo tubes.



# The New HMAS Newcastle



NEWCASTLE prior to Commissioning

## Engineering

NEWCASTLE and her sisterships are the RAN's first warships to be powered by gas turbines for main propulsion, allowing the ship to be underway from cold in less than 45 minutes.

## Supply Department

For normal operations at sea NEWCASTLE supports 55 tonnes of naval stores. Divided into 19,740 line items, with an average of 3-4 of each, the ship carries 70,000 items of spares, from simple pens and paper to highly sophisticated electronic equipment.

On the catering front, NEWCASTLE is now required to provide 600 meals a day whilst in harbour and 800 per day at sea. The meal choices range from simple toasted sandwiches to the more complex Chateau Briand. Like all good food outlets, variety is the spice of life and aboard NEWCASTLE its no different, with a selection of 3-5

options each meal.

The foodstuffs are held in three refrigerated spaces and a large dry provision storeroom. All up, the foodstuffs weigh approximately 20 tonnes.

On the publications front, NEWCASTLE, carries more than 1800 publications, while the ship's canteen stocks a variety of items from chocolate to washing powder to soap and shampoo.

## Viewpoint

The regular column viewpoint has not been included in this edition of *The Navy* due to the illness of the Federal President and an earlier than normal Christmas deadline.

## Service Biography

### Commanding Officer Commander Rowan C. Moffitt RAN

Commander Moffitt was born and raised in Sydney, where he attended Trinity Grammar School. He joined the RAN College as a senior entrant in January 1974 and graduated in mid 1976. After completing the normal Seaman Officer training programme, he undertook bridge watchkeeping training in the Destroyer Escort HMAS TORRENS, qualifying in May 1979 and remaining in that ship for the following year as the Diving Officer and an Officer of the Watch.

As a junior Lieutenant, he stood by the lead ship of a new class of patrol boat, HMAS FREMANTLE, under construction at Brooke Marine Ltd, Lowestoft, UK. He served as the Navigating Officer from commissioning in February 1980 until the end of that year, then moved to Navy Office in Canberra for duties on the staff of the Director of Naval Officers' Postings. While in this posting, he served as the RAN Contingent Commander onboard HM Yacht

BRITANNIA during the visit to Australia of HM the Queen for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1981.

He returned to TORRENS as Navigator in mid 1982 before undertaking the Principal Warfare Officer course in England in 1983/84 and the RAN Long Navigation Course in Australia at the end of 1984, to qualify as a Navigation Sub-specialist Warfare Officer.

Thereafter, he served as Navigating Officer of the Guided Missile Destroyers BRISBANE and HOBART (1984-86), Staff Officer (Navigation) to the Commander of Australian Mine Warfare and Patrol Boat Forces (1986-88) and Commanding Officer of the Guided Missile Frigate HMAS ADELAIDE in modernisation (1988-89). On promotion to Commander in January 1989, he served as Executive Officer of HMAS BRISBANE (1989-90) then Navy Contingency Planner in the Headquarters, Australian Defence Force (1990-92) before undertaking the Joint Service Staff Course in late 1992. He is currently serving as the Commanding Officer of the Navy's newest warship, FFG06, NEWCASTLE.

Commander Moffitt and his wife Lou live in Canberra with their four year old son, Jack and two year old daughter Lilly. He is 38.



# Training and Helicopter Support Ship for The Royal Australian Navy

By R. ASKEY

**T**he late 1993 decision by the Federal Government to cancel the planned training and helicopter support ship now appears to have referred to a new construction ship only.

A Navy team was formed after the announcement to study other alternatives including a converted merchant ship or a second hand warship. The latter option seemed to be the most cost effective, with numerous and suitable helicopter capable vessels being withdrawn from service by the United States Navy.

The USN is currently in the process of decommissioning many of its amphibious ships, including helicopter carriers (LPHs), landing platform docks (LPDs) and tank landing ships (LSTs). Of the three types, both the LPHs and LPDs are steam driven and too manpower intensive for the Royal

Australian Navy, leaving the smaller diesel powered, but very capable NEWPORT class tank landing ship the best option for the training/helicopter support roles.

The inspection team returned to Australia, recommending the acquisition of the NEWPORT class tank landing ship as the best option, the LSTs inspected, all still well maintained. The type is both helicopter and over the beach capable (via landing craft and a prominent bow ramp) and includes space aboard for approximately 200 troops or a smaller number of trainees, if accommodation was modified for the longer term training ship role. Modifications to the ship would include the installation of a helicopter hanger, the existing landing area capable of both Sea Kings and Black Hawks. The purchase price of the ship is said to be \$10m.

US naval ships have always boasted a top reputation for overall condition, a state achieved via a constant maintenance programme during their years in service. This is an important factor to be considered, with the youngest of the LSTs now reaching twenty of their designed forty years afloat.

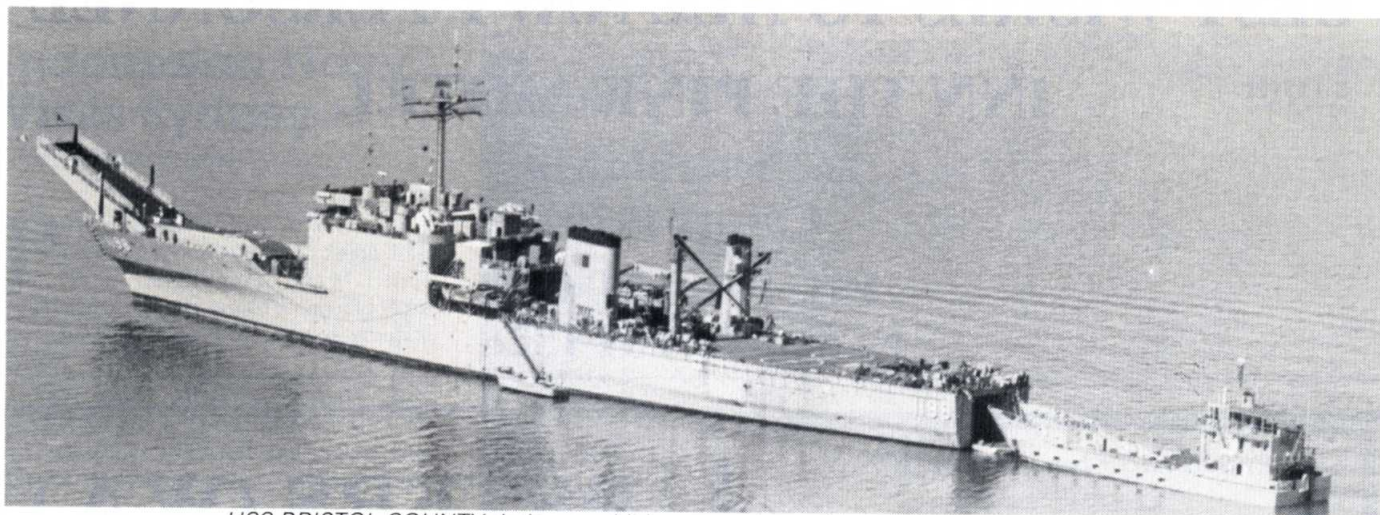
The final choice as to which ship may be procured to replace HMAS JERVIS BAY, will provide the RAN with a more versatile fleet unit, able to satisfy, training, amphibious, helicopter operations as well as the important civil community relief around Australia and the Pacific basin. Units of the Newport Class have been regular visitors to both the eastern and western shores of Australia for many years, forming part of larger Amphibious Groups for the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The RAN and Army are now preparing



*A Newport class tank landing ship. Note the bow configuration and passageway into the ship's superstructure leading aft to the helicopter deck.*





*USS BRISTOL COUNTY during amphibious exercises with an RAN heavy landing craft.*

proposals for the acquisition, with the second hand NEWPORT vessel the favoured option. A decision to acquire one or two LSTs was expected in December 1993.

The following data for the NEWPORT class is re-produced from Janes Fighting Ships;

**Displacement, tons:** 4975 light; 8450 full load.

**Dimensions, feet (metres):** 522.3 (hull) x 69.5 x 17.5 (aft) (159.2 x 21.2 x 5.3).

**Main Machinery:** 6 ARCO 16-251 diesels; 16 500 hp (12.3 MW) sustained; 2 shafts; cp props; bow thruster.

**Speed, knots:** 20. **Range, miles:** 2500 at 14 kts.

**Complement:** 257 (13 officers).

**Military lift:** 200 troops (20 officers); 500 tons vehicles; 3 LCVs and 1 LCPL on davits.

**Guns:** 4 USN 3 in (76mm)/50 (2 twin) Mk 33; 85° elevation; 50 rounds/minute to 12.8km (7nm); weight of shell 6kg. Local control only.

1 General Electric/General Dynamics 20mm Vulcan Phalanx Mk 15.

The hull form required to achieve 20 kts would not permit bow doors, thus these ships unload by a 112 ft ramp over their bow. The ramp is supported by twin derrick arms. A ramp just forward of the superstructure connects the lower tank deck with the main deck and a vehicle passage through the superstructure provides access to the parking area amidships. A stern gate to the tank deck permits unloading of amphibious tractors into the water, or unloading of other

vehicles into an LCU or on to a pier. Vehicle stowage covers 19,000 sq ft. Length over derrick arms is 562ft (171.3m); full load draught is 11.5 ft forward and 17.5 ft aft. Bow thruster fitted to hold position offshore while unloading amphibious tractors.

The ships operate with 20 knot amphibious squadrons to transport tanks, other heavy vehicles, engineering equipment, and supplies which cannot be readily landed by helicopters or landing craft. ESM equipment fitted in some. Fourteen of the class were involved in the war with Iraq in 1991. One deleted in early 1992, three more by mid 1993 and four in 1994.



*Port quarter view of USS CAYUGA. A helicopter is carried aft, with small landing craft amidships.*



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## Indonesian Navy Visits Sydney

(From Brian Alsop)

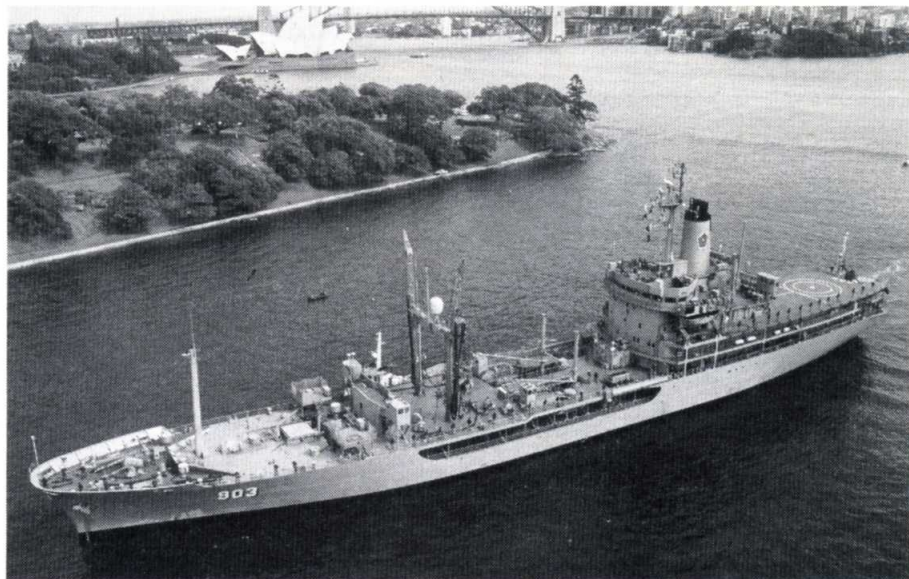
**P**ursuing the policy of reaching a greater rapport with our South East Asian neighbours, the Maritime Commander recently issued an invitation for the Indonesian Navy to send a task group to Sydney.

The three ships – frigate KRI MALAHAYATI, training ship KRI KI HAJAR DEWANTARA and tanker KRI ARUN – sailed from Surabaya on September 28th and transited via Cairns to arrive in Sydney on October 18th.

The Indonesian Ambassador to Australia, Mr Sabam Pandapotan SIAGIAN was welcomed aboard the ARUN by their Task Group Commander, Colonel Frits A.S. MANTIRI, and CO of the tanker, Colonel Indrus BAHRAIN.

After settling in, it was on with the activities organised by the host Service.

Forty-eight officers and sailors travelled to the East Australia Area Firefighting Facility near the Naval College on October 19. Royal Australian Navy instructors gave the visiting trainees a warm reception. They put on a sizzling course at the facility which has been used to train members of civilian fire brigades as well as many Australian ships' companies. The demonstrations and work out included door entries with a water wall and attack hose, open pit oil fires, fires of wood and other common combustible materials, and magnesium fires.



KRI ARUN (Photo - ABPH S. Peterson)

The following day, the visitors began training in other skills designed to save their lives – and their ship. Groups of 23 sailors visited the School of Survivability and Ship Safety and HMAS COUNTERSINK, the three-storey facility near Balmoral Beach, which stimulates three decks of a warship.

The noise and smoke from thunderflashes didn't deter them in their determination to prevent COUNTERSINK becoming 'COUNTERSUNK' – the same basic techniques of stopping leaks and shoring up battle damaged hull and bulkheads used by the Royal Navy in the Falklands War and, more recently, the US Navy which had two ships damaged in the Gulf War.

The visiting Indonesian contingent also made a gesture traditional for navies making major port visits: they offered assistance to a worthy welfare organisation in the city of the visit.

At the RAN's suggestion, they offered help to Sydney's Wayside Chapel, renowned for the help it has provided for decades to the sick, homeless and afflicted. The Chapel had just bought tins of paint for refurbishment of sections of their Potts Point facility and jumped at the opportunity for some help in stripping off the old and brushing on the new.

The visit to Sydney was the first by Indonesian warships since 1973 and only the fourth such visit to Australia since Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945.

Indonesian trainees also undertook a variety of other activities including diving, bridge simulator and mine warfare training. Bridge simulator training for junior officers was undertaken at HMAS WATSON, South Head with mine warfare training in both Sydney and adjacent waters.

During their Australian visit, an Indonesian Navy band made up of third year cadets from the Indonesian Naval Academy, entertained the public in Cairns, Sydney and Canberra to great acclaim from those who witnessed the performance. The band, preceded by a traditional Indonesian dragon and with bass drummers in wet suits wearing sharks heads, provided a colourful spectacle as it entertained lunchtime crowds.

The ships sailed from Sydney for home on Tuesday 26 October.



KRI KI HAJAR DEWANTARA (Photo - ABPH S. Peterson)





KRI MALAHAYATI (Photo - ABPH S. Peterson)

## New Senior Sailor Appointment for the Navy

**T**he Navy has named its senior sailor: he is Warrant Officer Paul Whittaker, a combat systems manager with 29 years service.

The new position of Warrant Officer of the Navy will be the most senior non-commissioned position in the Royal Australian Navy.

The position and rank, which equate to those of the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army and Warrant Officer of the RAAF, have been created to:

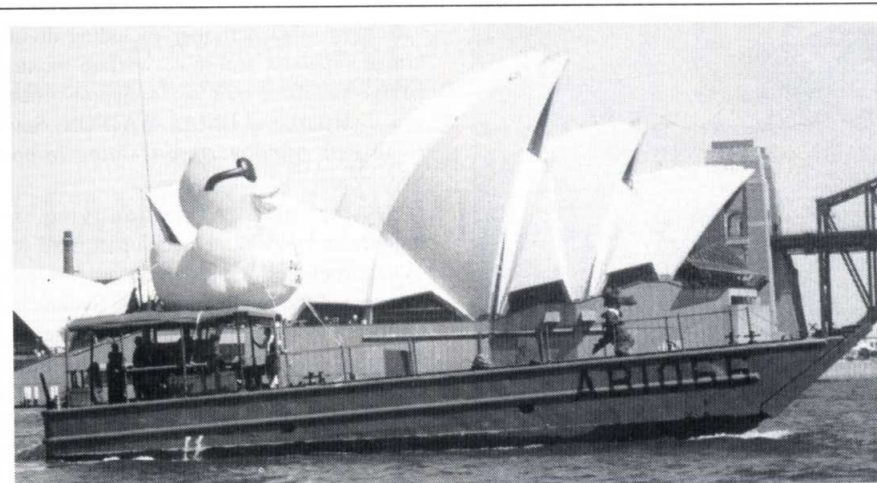
- Provide the Chief of Naval Staff with information on the feelings and concerns of sailors;
- Help maintain the high standards of

- discipline and morale of RAN sailors; and
- Advise the Chief of Naval Staff on matters affecting sailors.

WOCSM Whittaker was drawn from a total of 244 Warrant Officers in the RAN. Eligibility criteria including a minimum five years service in the rank meant that of these 64 were eligible, a number reduced to a short-list of six from which WOCSM Whittaker was chosen. He will assume the position in December.

Rank insignia will be similar to those of the RSM of the Army and Warrant Officer of the RAAF – basically the Australian coat-of-arms customarily denoting the rank of Warrant Officer with a distinguishing laurel wreath surround.

The Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral MacDougall, said the Warrant Officer of the Navy will work as a member of his personal staff.



An unusual sight on Sydney Harbour. An Army LCM 8 with giant "Yellow Duck" to help promote the Sunnyfield Association. (Photo - Brian Morisson)

## Navy's New Training Command Now Headed by Admiral

**T**he Navy's Melbourne-based Training Command is now headed by an Admiral.

The announcement of the new position and the promotion of the RAN Training Commander, Commodore Peter Briggs, to fill the position in the rank of Rear Admiral from November 1 follows the down-grading of the Submarine Project Director's position in Canberra from Rear Admiral to Commodore.

The Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Ray, said that he had approved the establishment of the position of Flag Officer Naval Training Command in the rank of Rear Admiral.

"The most senior Naval officer in Victoria is Rear Admiral Briggs based at HMAS CERBERUS (the major training establishment on Westernport Bay)", he said.

The Minister said the decision to upgrade the position of Training Commander to a level equal to that of the Sydney-based Maritime and Support Commanders reflects the implementation of the RAN's Repatriation of US Training (RUST) programme.

"Navy has a higher per capita training requirement than the other Services and spends significantly more on external training," he said. "During the last financial year, for example, naval expenditure on overseas training was three times that of the Air Force and four times greater than Army."

Senator Ray added that 25 courses on American-designed ships operated by the RAN were scheduled for relocation to Australia under the RUST programme and that the ANZAC Ship and Collins Class Submarine Projects alone would generate an extra 88 different courses.

"Training Command has about 1700 personnel, excluding trainees, across the country", he said.

"The management ability and leadership necessary to bring the New Submarine Project together was reflected in the appointment in 1986 of a Project Director at the level of Rear Admiral.

"Now, with the focus gradually shifting towards training, logistic support and the follow on infrastructure necessary for safe and efficient operation of the new submarines, it is time to underline the importance of the training organisation to make the new submarines, ANZAC ships other projects the operational success they should be – by upgrading of the Training Commander's position".



## Famous Sea Raids Honoured

(From Vic Jeffery)

**T**he northern West Australian town of Exmouth, home of the RAN's HAROLD E. HOLT Naval Communication Station, was the site of two moving 50th anniversary ceremonies recently, one an offshore remembrance ceremony, and the other a memorial dedication.

These activities honoured one of the most audacious and longest sea raids in naval history, launched from Exmouth Gulf in 1943, and an ill-fated follow-up raid launched from Garden Island, south of Fremantle in 1944. Today this island is the site of HMAS STIRLING, Fleet Base West.

Thursday, September 2 was the anniversary date with the ceremonies conducted to honour the 1943 top secret raid, code-named "Operation JAYWICK" and a follow-up raid, "Operation RIMAU".

The offshore remembrance service saw four large KAILIS Fisheries trawlers form a circle around a lone and empty camouflaged two-man canvas folboat moored a kilometre offshore in the approximate position from where MV KRAIT had sailed on the "JAYWICK" raid.

Crammed with former Z-force personnel, VIPs including Captain Crispin George, Co of H.E. Holt Naval Communication Station, Brigadier Terry Nolan, Head-Defence Centre Perth and the Officer Commanding RAAF Pearce, Air Commodore Neil Smith, and other invited guests, the trawlers were a mass of colour.

A veil of silence fell over the gathering as they watched the folboat, with folded paddles, and the sun's rays glinting on a prismatic compass lying with a wartime sketch map of the proposed attack plan resting on the bow.

The commencement of the ceremony was heralded with the lamenting sound of bagpipes playing the emotive "Road to the Isles", the favourite tune of the commanding officer, Major Ivan Lyon of "JAYWICK" who was later lost in leading the second raid, "RIMAU".

Naval Reserve chaplain Ray Hughes, gave a short but moving address before Captain George cast the first wreath upon the sparkling waters.

After a minute's silence, 23 bright yellow daffodils were cast on the water by former members and widows of deceased members of Australia's special forces who individually stepped forward, one for each member of the 23 man ill-fated follow-up "RIMAU" raid.

The final salute came from three RAAF PC-9 aircraft from RAAF Base Pearce led by Lieutenant Commander Mark Jerrett as they



*Naval Reserve Chaplain Ray Hughes during the offshore remembrance ceremony  
(Photo - Vic Jeffery)*

roared overhead in an arrowhead formation.

In the afternoon a large crowd of those who had attended the morning memorial service combined with townspeople and visitors for the dedication of The KRAIT Memorial in the heart of the town of Exmouth.

The memorial, a large rough hewn four tonne piece of grey granite with its bronze plaque is positioned near the Exmouth War Memorial as a permanent tribute by the people of Australia to the MV KRAIT and Operations "JAYWICK" and "RIMAU".

Capt George in his address said: "As we look at the stone itself, please note that it is rough and hard, thus symbolising the nature of our irregular forces.

"Much of the stone is underground and hidden from sight just as a considerable part of the story of special operations remains unrecorded and unseen.

"The stone comes from Garden Island and I am told, comes from the same origins as the memorial to special forces located there. For these reasons I believe it appropriately serves its purpose. I pray that it remains relevant. Lest we forget".

A catafalque party led by Lieutenant Andrew Nelson and consisting of two members of the Army's PILBARA Regt and RAN sailors, Leading Seamen Darren Harris and Peter Ingram from H.E. HOLT carried out their solemn duty with their arms reversed during the memorial unveiling and wreath laying.

The Krait memorial was unveiled by Mr Jack Sue, DCM, President of Z Special Unit Association, International.

The first of its kind in Australia, coupled with the naming of Exmouth streets after

those involved in "JAYWICK" and "RIMAU" is a fitting tribute to those men who were all young volunteers.

"Operation JAYWICK" was the attack on the Japanese occupied Singapore Harbour on September 26, 1943 which saw seven enemy merchant ships totalling 37,000 tonnes either sunk or badly damaged in the raid on the heavily fortified harbour.

Six army and navy personnel, using two-man canoes penetrated Singapore's Harbour defences and despite being narrowly missed by sweeping searchlights a couple of times, attached limpet mines to the enemy ships.

The sheer audacity of this attack which threw the Japanese into utter panic, and the fact that it had been considered that it had little chance of success is a glowing acknowledgement of the patience and sheer guts of these determined young men.

The raiders had been landed from their boat KRAIT at the island of Panjang, in the Rhio Archipelago some 40 kilometres south of Singapore. From there, they island-hopped sometimes making only a kilometre per night in the fierce currents, until they were in striking range of Singapore Harbour.

Masquerading as a local fishing boat and flying a Japanese flag, the 21.3 metre, 68 tonne former Japanese vessel which had been renamed KRAIT, had sailed from Exmouth Gulf on September 2 and safely returned to Australia some 47 days later after covering 9600 kilometres - mainly through enemy infested waters, finally arriving at Exmouth on October 19, still under a shroud of secrecy.

Led by the raid's mastermind Major Ivan Lyon of the British Gordon Highlanders who had seen his wife and child captured in the



fall of Singapore, he had vowed he would personally strike back at the Japanese invaders.

The successful raiding party of eight Royal Australian Navy, three Australian Army and two Royal Navy personnel had trained in Queensland before sailing from Cairns via Darwin to Exmouth where they prepared for the clandestine operation.

Having previously broken down offshore, MV KRAIT had sailed from Exmouth with temporary repairs to the coupling key of the intermediate propeller shaft after she had been repaired by US Navy personnel with the caution to nurse the ship as the repairs were only temporary. Understandably they were unaware that KRAIT was heading for Singapore – not Fremantle!

The highly successful "Operation JAYWICK" raid was followed up by a similar operation in 1944, code-named "RIMAU" launched by the Royal Navy submarine HMS PORPOISE from Careening Bay at Garden Island.

Although the second raid enjoyed some success, all 23 participants, including six from the original "JAYWICK" raid, were either killed in ensuing skirmishes around surrounding islands with the Japanese and those captured, executed at Singapore with the highest Japanese military honours only weeks before the war ended in 1945.

The names of these gallant young men are recorded on the Services Reconnaissance

Department memorial located within the precincts of HMAS STIRLING on Garden Island.

Former commando, Major Tom Hall, who provided the research for a book by Ms Lynette Ramsay Silver on the subject, presented a full-sized original attack plan of Operation "RIMAU" to Captain George of the Harold E. Holt Communications Station as a gift to the people of Australia to be kept in perpetuity in Exmouth.

Ms Leonie Horak, in recognition of her efforts to enshrine the memories of the "JAYWICK" and "RIMAU" raids accepted on behalf of the people of Western Australia, three Commando Crosses of Valour.

The first cross presented, which was

struck for the State of WA, is to remain in the town of Exmouth.

The other two, struck for the families of two "RIMAU" men – Sergeant David Gooley who was beheaded with nine comrades by the Japanese in Singapore on July 7, 1945, and Corporal Colin Craft, who died at sea while trying to escape in December, 1944, are to remain in Exmouth until such time as the families of these two soldiers choose to claim them.

A museum is to be established in the town of Exmouth to house a collection of historical artefacts and photographs relating to the MV KRAIT and the "JAYWICK" and "RIMAU" raids to ensure their links with this north west Australian town are never forgotten.

## MCM Exercise

Six units of the Royal Australian Navy's mine warfare force performed a formation departure from Sydney Harbour, on Monday 8 November, en route to northern Queensland for exercises with other elements of the RAN, RAAF, United States Navy and United States Air Force.

The formation departure towards Sydney Heads included four classes of vessels, including the catamaran minehunters RUSHCUTTER and SHOALWATER, auxiliary minesweepers BROLGA, KORAAGA and BANDICOOT plus the

leased trawler CAROLE-S.

All vessels are taking part in Exercise Dugong 93-2, designed to exercise the interoperability of the RAN and US units in mine countermeasures, aerial mine-laying and mine recovery. Other assets for Dugong include RAAF and USN Orion patrol aircraft, B-52 bombers of the USAF, RAN divers, drone boats and the landing craft, HMAS LABUAN.

The exercise was conducted off Townsville from 22 November to 10 December.

## French Frigate in Sydney

The French frigate FNS NIVOSE arrived in Sydney on 5 November 1993 at the start of a week long visit. Commissioned in October 1992, this was the ship's first visit to Sydney.

One of six new Floreal Class patrol frigates in the French Navy, NIVOSE is 93.5 metres long, displaces 2950 tons and carries a crew of 90. The ship is normally based in Noumea.

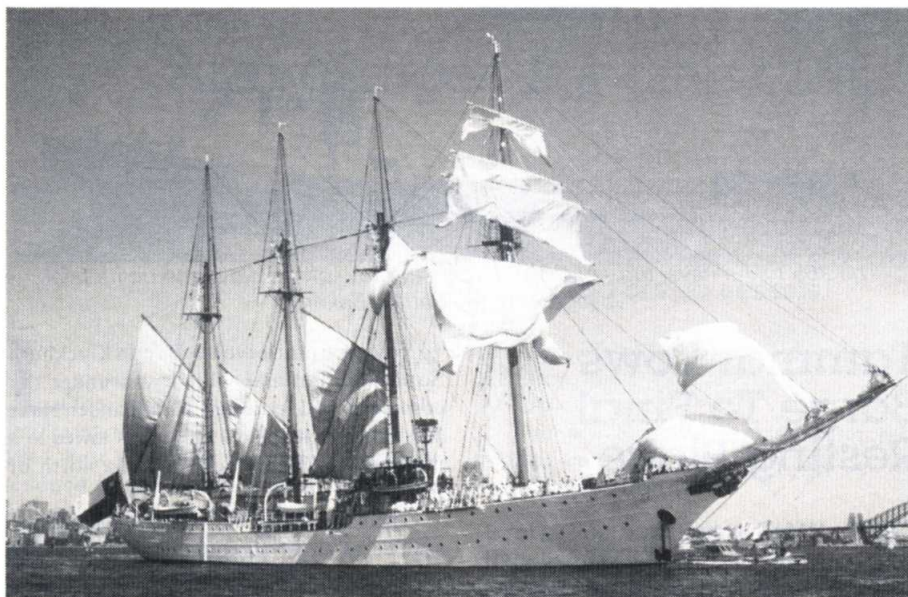
NIVOSE visited Sydney as part of the French contribution to the ceremonies surrounding the Entombment of the Unknown Soldier. French sailors provided an honour guard for the arrival of the Unknown Soldier at Mascot airport on Sunday, 7 November. Her Commanding Officer, Commander Estellon, took part in the ceremonial Entombment in Canberra on Thursday, 11 November.

The Executive Officer of NIVOSE later laid a wreath at the Cenotaph in Martin Place as part of Remembrance Day activities in memory of the Unknown Soldier.





## Esmeralda Visits Sydney

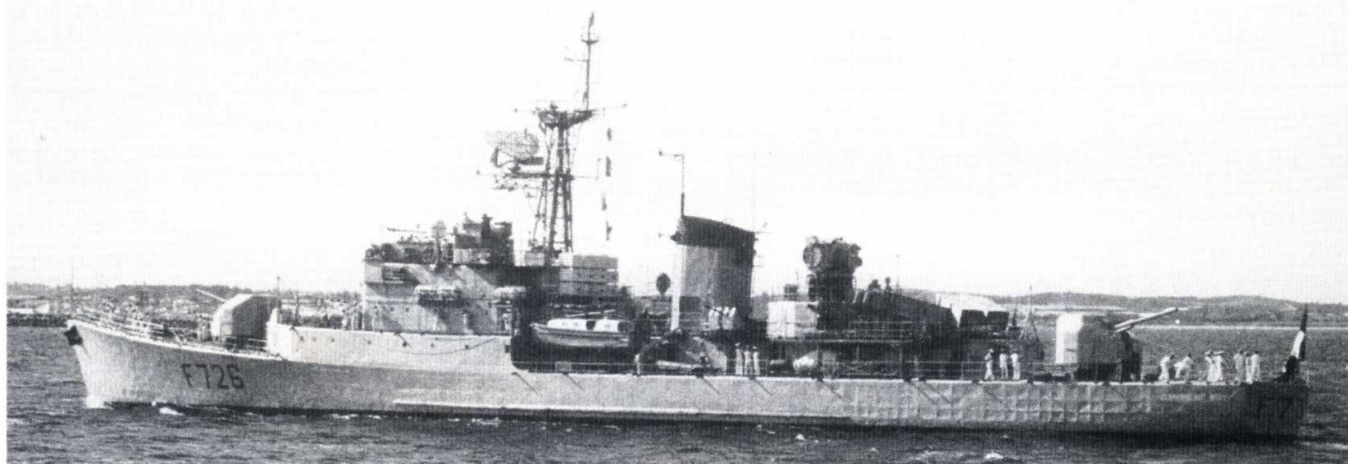


Chilean sail training ship *ESMERALDA*, Sailing from Sydney (Photo - Brian Morisson)

**T**he Chilean Navy's Sail Training Ship *ESMERALDA* arrived in Sydney on Monday 13 September as part of its 1993 training cruise around the Pacific having set sail from Valparaiso, Chile on 4 April.

One young officer of the Royal Australian Navy, Midshipman Jason West, originally of Nowra, NSW, joined the ship in Sydney for the return voyage to Chile via New Zealand and Easter Island departing Sydney on Friday 17 September. The ship completed her 26,013 nautical mile voyage at Valparaiso on 7 November 1993. She last visited Sydney in July 1991.

*ESMERALDA*, one of the largest and most magnificent sailing ships in the world, is a 113 metre 3,673 ton, four-masted brigantine schooner launched in 1953. She is commanded by Captain Felipe Howard. In addition to her crew and Chilean trainees, one midshipman each from France, USA, Japan, South Korea, South Africa, Israel, Honduras, China, Malaysia, Tonga, New Zealand and Australia are participating in the cruise.



The French veteran, *FNS COMMANDANT BORY* in Fremantle on 1 October. (Photo - Vic Jeffery)



French Naval Ship *VAR* arrives in Fremantle 1 October (Photo - Vic Jeffery)

## Keel Laying - First ANZAC

**T**he Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Ray, laid the keel for the first of 10 ANZAC ships to be completed for the Australian and New Zealand navies at Transfield's Williamstown shipyard in Melbourne on 5 November.

"The ANZAC ship is an exciting project, not only for its contribution to the Government's policy of Defence self-reliance, but also for the industrial and technical benefits it provides for Australia",



Senator Ray said.

"It demonstrates this government's commitment to Australian industry, and builds on the strong ties that already exist with Germany and our alliance partner, New Zealand".

The contract for the 10 ANZAC ships – eight for Australia and two for New Zealand – specified Australian and New Zealand industry participation, including offsets, equivalent to 80 per cent of the contract price.

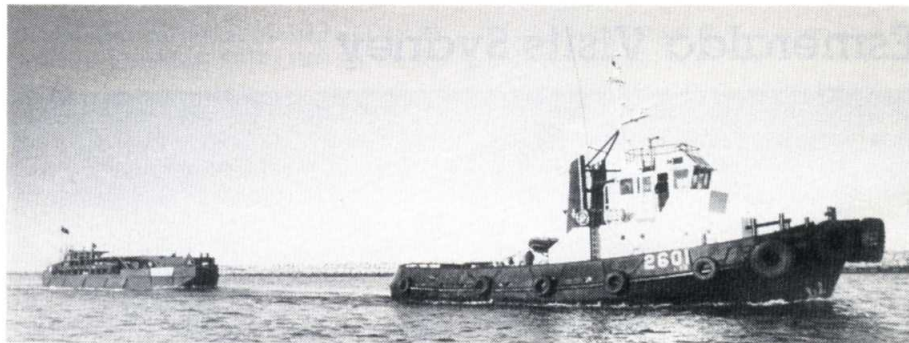
Minister Ray said, "It is a credit to all concerned that Williamstown shipyards is now an Australian model of effective workplace reform, capable of competing with the best shipyards in the world".

"The ANZAC ship is the largest ship building project undertaken in Australia since World War II".

"The value of this work to industry represents in today's terms around \$3.88 billion of which \$2.2 billion has already been committed, Senator Ray said.

The first of the ANZAC ships, to be commissioned in the RAN as HMAS ANZAC, is due to be launched in late 1994 and delivered early in 1996.

The remainder of the ships will be delivered at a rate of one ship per year.



*The 265 tonne naval tug TAMMAR begins the tow of the old barge on its final voyage. (Photo - Patrick Baker)*

## Tammar Tows Barge To Final Resting Place

**T**he HMAS Stirling-based medium naval tug Tammar recently assisted civil authorities in the towing and scuttling of a redundant barge off the West Australian coast.

Prior to its final voyage, Barge WH-301 which had been donated by WA businessman Mr Des Ceray, was cleaned and made seaworthy.

Towed from Jervoise Bay in Cockburn Sound by Tammar which was under the command of Lieutenant Commander Hans Van Der Zyden, the old barge was towed to a position off Two Rocks Marina north of Fremantle.

There the rusting old hulk was successfully scuttled as an advanced diving wreck for the use of recreational and tourist divers.

The project was a team effort involving the Royal Australian Navy, the Western Australian Maritime Museum, the Maritime Union of Australia, both Austral and International Shipyards, Stirling Marine and the Perth Diving Academy.



*HMAS Darwin after a recent missile launch (Photo - ABPH S. Peterson)*



# Australian Army Watercraft

## Part One

### Army Barges, Landing Craft & Lighters (AB)

By Brian Alsop

*At its peak in early 1945, the Australian Army Transportation Service (Royal Australian Engineers) operated over 1,900 watercraft ranging in size from dinghies and launches to 300 ton cargo vessels.*

**L**anding craft of six types were numerically the largest group among the various types of vessels employed, with 836 in service as of 1 July 1944. Post World War II, numbers of vessels retained in service reduced dramatically, with many built for the purpose craft laid up or sold off in addition to requisitioned vessel being returned to their owners.

Since the formation of the Australian Army's first dedicated water transport units during 1942, all Army vessels have been categorised into one of ten classifications depending on their design. These classifications are shown by a two letter prefix to the craft's Army number and today, as in 1942, are painted on the port and starboard bows. Prefixes and their classifications are as follows.

AB Army Barges, Lighters and Landing Craft.  
AD Army Power Dinghies.  
AF Army Ferries.  
AH Army Sea Ambulances.  
AK Army Ketches and Schooners.  
AL Army Luggers.  
AM Army Launches.

AS Army Trawlers and later ships.

AT Army Tugs.

AV Army Vessels (300 ton).

This article will deal with watercraft bearing the prefix AB which have served with the Australian Army.

#### Landing Craft

First vessels to carry the AB prefix were two vehicular ferries, the George Peat and Francis Peat requisitioned from the NSW Main Roads Department, and a Sydney Harbour showboat the KALANG requisitioned in late 1942. The vehicular ferries were classified by the Army as powered lighters rated to carry up to 180 DW tons while KALANG was cut down and converted to a repair ship for service in New Guinea waters. Most numerous among those craft to carry the AB prefix have always been landing craft. Between 1943 and 1945 six different types of landing craft were built for the Army by the Ford Motor Company. ALC3, ALC5 and ALC15 were produced in Brisbane on an open production line while the larger ALC20, ALC40 and ALC120 were built at Ford's Geelong plant. On

completion of ALC5 production, ALC40 production was transferred to Brisbane. By 1 March 1945 Ford had built 416 landing craft for the Australian Army against a requirement for 580 such craft at that time as follows.

Type	Requirement	Delivered
ALC3	13	13 order completed
ALC5	137	137 order completed
ALC15	132	105
ALC20	163	104
ALC40	120	55
ALC120	15	2
Totals	580	416

Specifications for each of these landing craft are set out below.

#### ALC3

**Army Numbers:** 103, 105, 110, 162, 306, 317, 318, 384, 385, 386, 396.

**Dimensions:** Length overall 33ft 9in.

Breadth 10ft

Draft (loaded) Aft 1ft 9in,

fwd 2ft (light) Aft 2ft, fwd 6in

**Engines:** 2 x Ford V8 Mercury 85 BHP

**Speed:** Cruising 7.5 knots

Maximum 9.4 knots loaded



The two powered lighters, GEORGE PEAT and FRANCIS PEAT, during their careers as vehicular ferries on the Hawkesbury River.



FRANCIS PEAT, during conversion for Army service at Morts Dock in Sydney.



# AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT



*FRANCIS PEAT in New Britain, November 1944.*

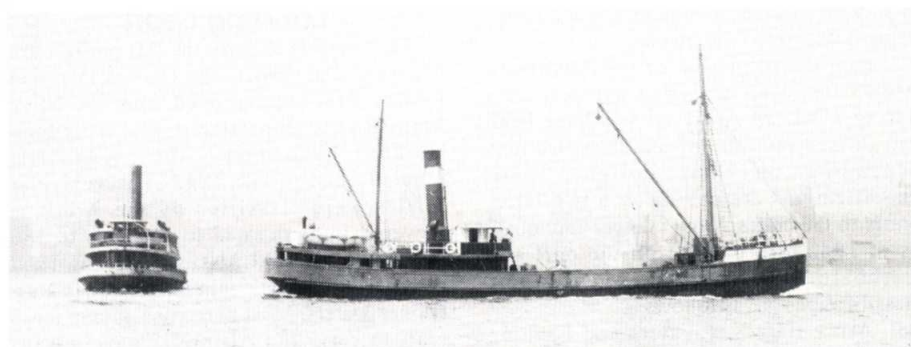
**Fuel:** Petrol – 120 gallons  
**Range:** 105 miles approx.  
**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea 3 tons  
 Sheltered waters 5 tons  
**Crew:** Four  
**Armament:** 1 x Twin Vickers .303  
**Purpose:** Transport of stores & personnel

## ALC5

**Army Numbers:** 86, 106, 107, 160, 161, 176-185, 198-200, 275-277, 282-284, 286-291, 296-299, 301-305, 307, 319-322, 387-391, 434-437, 1001-1138, 1381, 1473

**Dimensions:** Length overall 39ft 9in  
 Breadth 10ft  
 Depth (moulded) 8ft 6in  
 Draft (loaded) Aft 1ft 9in, fwd 2ft (light) Aft 2ft, fwd 6in

**Engines:** 2 x Ford V8 Mercury 85 BHP  
**Speed:** Cruising 7.5 knots



*Coaster COBAKI, prior to acquisition by the Army.*

**Fuel:** Maximum 9.4 knots loaded;  
 10.5 knots empty  
**Range:** Petrol – 120 gallons in 3 tanks  
**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea 5 tons  
 Sheltered waters 7 tons  
**Crew:** Four  
**Armament:** 1 x Twin Vickers .303in  
**Purpose:** Transport of stores & personnel

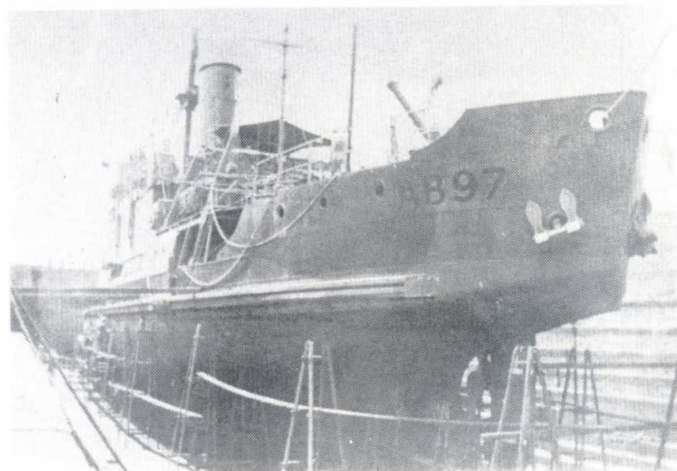
## ALC15

**Army Numbers:** 87, 111, 175, 278, 285, 300, 308, 323, 392-394, 438, 439, 1139-1201

**Dimensions:** Length overall 50ft  
 Breadth 13ft 6in  
 Depth (moulded) 6ft 6in  
 Draft (loaded) Aft 4ft, fwd 2ft 6in



*GEORGE PEAT laid up in Middle Harbour at the end of the Second World War. Harbour tug AT 1520, lies ahead.*



*Former Sydney Harbour Showboat KALANG in drydock. KALANG was employed as repair ship.*



# AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT

**Engines:** (light) Aft 3ft, fwd 1ft 6in  
No per craft – 2  
Ford V8 Mercury engine 95 BHP

**Speed:** Cruising – 8 knots  
Maximum – 9 knots

**Fuel:** Type – petrol  
Capacity – 120 galls (2 tanks)

**Range:** Approx. 150 miles

**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea 15 tons  
Sheltered waters 22 tons

**Crew:** Four

**Armament:** One 20mm Hispano MG

**Purpose for which designed:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles

## ALC20

**Army Numbers:** 61, 62, 1202-1230, 1240, 1382, 1384-1433

**Dimensions:** Length overall 60ft  
Breadth 13ft 6in  
Depth (moulded) 6ft 6in  
Draft (loaded) Aft 4ft, fwd 2ft 6in (light) Aft 3ft, fwd 1ft 6in

**Engines:** No per craft – 2 Ford V8 Mercury engine, 95 BHP

**Speed:** Cruising – 6 knots  
Maximum – 7 knots

**Fuel:** Type – petrol  
Capacity – 120 gallons

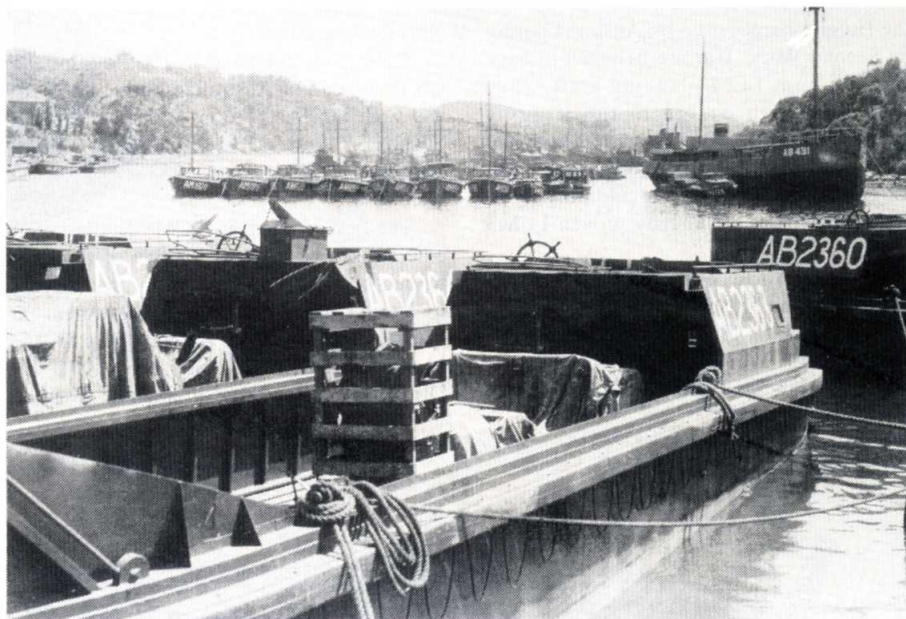
**Range:** Approx. 100 miles

**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea – 20 tons  
Sheltered waters – 25 tons

**Crew:** Four

**Armament:** One 20mm Hispano MG

**Purpose for which designed:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles



*Never converted for Army service, COBAKI was laid up in Middle Harbour, Sydney with numerous other small craft. She later sank and has never been raised. The craft in the foreground are ALC 20s.*

## ALC40

**Army Numbers:** 395, 1474, 2017-2036, 2096-2195

**Dimensions:** Length overall 66ft 6in  
Breadth 19ft 6in  
Depth (moulded) 5ft 6in  
Draft, maximum 3ft 6in

**Engines:** No per craft – 4 Ford V8 Mercury engine, 95 BHP

**Speed:** Cruising 8 knots  
Maximum 10 knots

**Fuel:** Type – petrol  
Capacity – 240 gallons (6 tanks)

**Range:** 120 miles

**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea 40 tons  
Sheltered waters 55 tons

**Crew:** 6

**Armament:** One 20 mm Hispano MG

**Purpose for which designed:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles

## ALC120

**Army Numbers:** 1269

**Dimensions:** Length overall – 106ft 8in  
Breadth – 28ft 4in  
Moulded Depth (Catwalk to Deck) 4ft 0in  
Draft (light) – Fwd 1ft 3in, Aft 3ft (loaded) – Aft 4ft

**Engines:** No per vessel – 5 Ford V8 mercury engine 95 BHP with 3 to 1 reduction gear

**Speed:** Cruising 7 knots. Maximum 8 1/4 knots

**Fuel:** Type – petrol  
Capacity – 2000 gallons

**Range:** 800 miles

**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea – 120 tons

**Crew:** 10

**Armament:** 1 x 40mm Bofors  
2 x 20mm MGs

**Purpose for which designed:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles

## HIGGINS BARGE

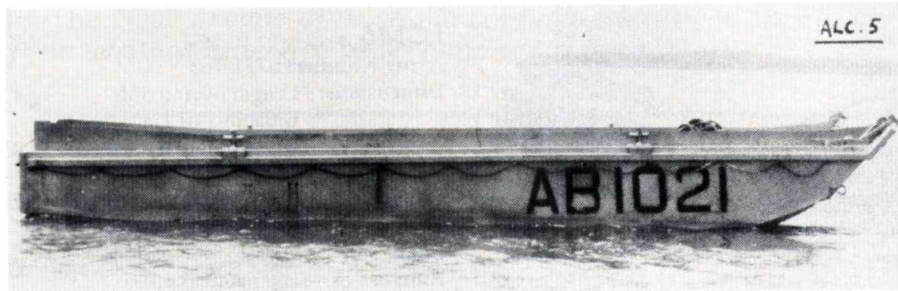
**Army Numbers:** 579-582

**Dimensions:** Length overall 50ft  
Breadth 14ft

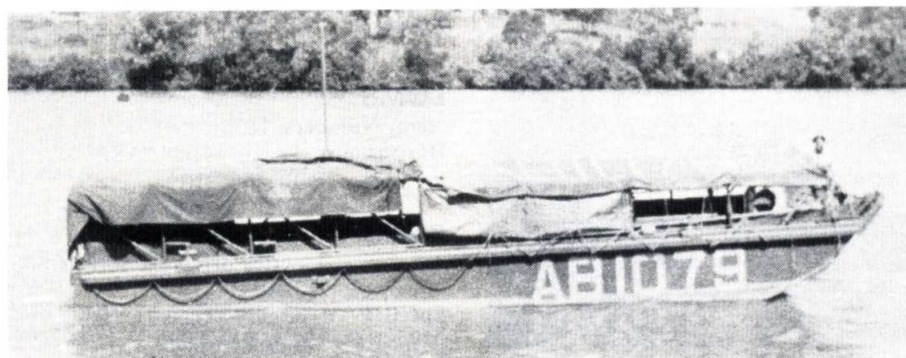
**Engines:** 2 x 225 BHP – various types

**Cargo Capacity:** 30 tons

**Crew:** 4



*Australian landing craft (ALC) 5. Number 1021*



*ALC 5 landing craft number 1079*



## AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT

The Higgins barges used by Australia during the Second World War are believed to have been US built LCM3 landing craft. They were similar in design to the Higgins designed LCM6 craft that served with the Australian Army from 1965; the LCM6 design coming about by the addition of six feet amidships to the already proven LCM3 design.

Existing World War II vintage landing craft remained in service into the 1950s. During the late 1950s two new ALC50 landing craft were built in Devonport, Tasmania principally for service in Papua

New Guinea waters.

These were followed in 1965 by thirteen US designed but Australian built LCM6 for use with the Fast Troop Transport HMAS SYDNEY and within Australia. They remained in service until 1983 when the last were sold.

The first of nineteen LCM8 landing craft entered service in 1967, twelve of the craft having been built for the Army in that year by North Queensland Engineers & Agents at Cairns, Queensland. A further seven LCM8 Mod 2 craft were built in 1972 by Dillingham Shipyard at Fremantle, Western

Australia. All remain in service or in storage except for one, AB1057, which was transferred to Tonga in 1982.

The prototype Balikpapan Class heavy landing craft (LCH), now serving with the Royal Australian Navy as HMAS BALIKPAPAN is the only other type of landing craft to have served with the Australian Army. BALIKPAPAN and her seven sisters were ordered by the Army in 1969 to replace the ALC50 landing craft and the ageing medium landing ships (LSM) then in service. BALIKPAPAN entered service in 1971 remaining until 27 September 1974 when transferred to the Royal Australian Navy. All the other LCHs entered RAN service on completion, never seeing Army service. This resulted from an agreement that only harbour and small amphibious craft would be retained by the Army, with all sea-going vessels being transferred to the Navy.

Particulars of post World War II landing craft are set out below.

### ALC 50

**Army Numbers:** 3000, 3001 (previously numbered 2995, 2996)

**Dimensions:** Length overall 79ft 9in  
Breadth 24ft

**Engines:** 4 x General Motors 6-71 series

**Fuel:** Diesel

**Range:** 1130 miles

**Cargo Capacity:** Open sea 50 tons  
Sheltered waters

**Crew:** 8

**Purpose:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles

### LCM6

**Army Numbers:** 751-763

**Dimensions:** Length overall 56ft  
Breadth 14ft 1in  
Draft (loaded) Aft 4ft, fwd 3ft

**Engines:** 2 x General Motors 6072E (6-71 series) 450 BHP

**Fuel:** Diesel - 466 gallons

**Range:** 130 nautical miles

**Cargo Capacity:** 30 tons

**Crew:** 3 (peace), 5 (war)

**Purpose:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles

### LCM8

**Army Numbers:** 1050-1068

**Dimensions:** Length overall 73.8ft  
Breadth 21ft

Draft (loaded) Aft 5ft 6in  
**Engines:** 4 x General Motors 6-71 series driving 2 screws 600 BHP

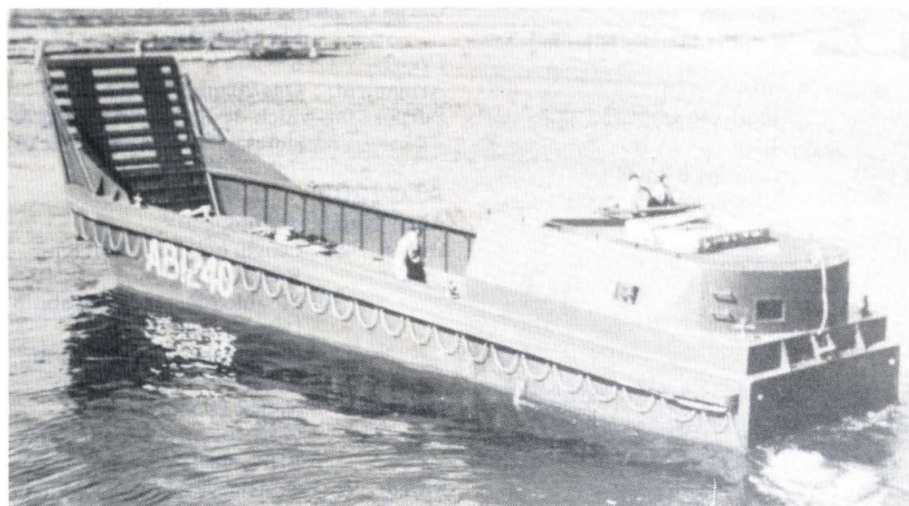
**Speed:** Light 11 knots

Loaded 9 knots

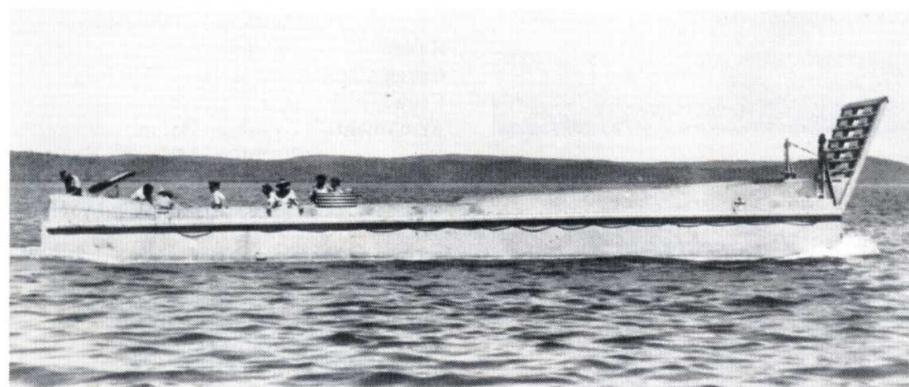
**Fuel:** Diesel



ALC 15, AB 1185.



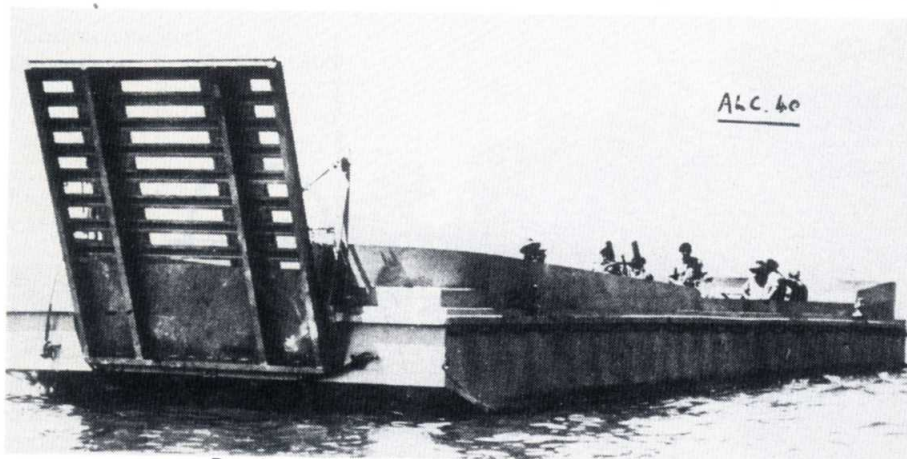
ALC 20, AB 1240.



ALC 40 in Queensland waters 1943.



# AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT



Port bow view of the prototype ALC 40, AB395

boats were numbered AB442 and AB20 respectively and employed as powered lighters in Australian and New Guinea waters. Typical Army loads could comprise fourteen 3 ton (3 tonne) vehicles or fifty jeeps at a speed of 6 knots over 4000 miles. The original bow entry was modified to form a bow for prolonged sea voyages, although the stern ramp was retained for roll-on/roll-off operations. Both vessels were defensively armed.

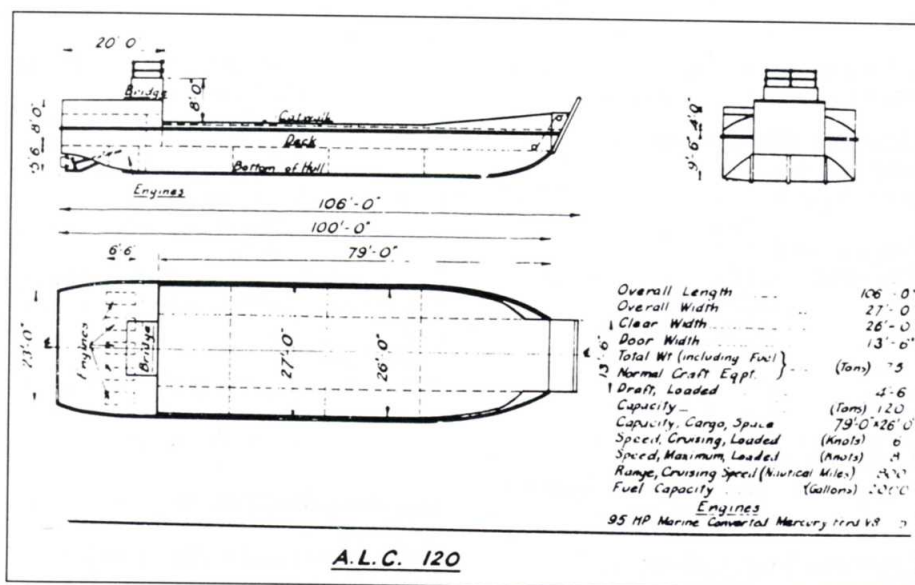
After their discharge from Army service, the vessels were sold to New Zealand and employed in Auckland as vehicular ferries from 1946 to 1959. FRANCES PEAT was renamed ALEXANDER ALISON and GEORGE PEAT, EWEN W. ALISON. Eventually both were superseded by a road bridge and in 1960 were sold to the Transport Commission in Hobart. Alexander Alison, ex Frances Peat, was lost en route to Tasmania on 30 April.

Since 1961 GEORGE PEAT, renamed MANGANA (on 5 September 1961), has been used on the run between Kettering and Bruny Island, south of Hobart, and from the early 1980s has been relegated to the role of standby ferry.

## The Former Sydney Harbour "Showboat"

KALANG was requisitioned in 1942 for use as a mobile workshop in the south-west Pacific region until 1945. In January 1946 she was towed to the Newcastle State Dockyard for reconversion to a showboat.

She returned to normal service in October 1947 and remained so until 1958 when faltering business caused her to be laid up. Two years later, with new owners, a new name (SYDNEY QUEEN) and a totally unsuitable coat of white paint which made her look simply enormous, the old vessel was back in business once again, only to be laid up finally in 1963. Eventually, in 1971, Sydney Harbour's last showboat was sold to Filipino interests for use as a ferry-showboat. However, she was wrecked while resting from her tow in Trial Bay in January 1972.



Line drawings and specifications of the largest WWII landing craft, the ALC 120.

**Range:** Mod 1 230 nautical miles at 10 knots  
Mod 2 290 nautical miles at 10 knots  
**Cargo Capacity:** 55 tons  
**Crew:** 3 (peace), 5 (war)  
**Purpose:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles

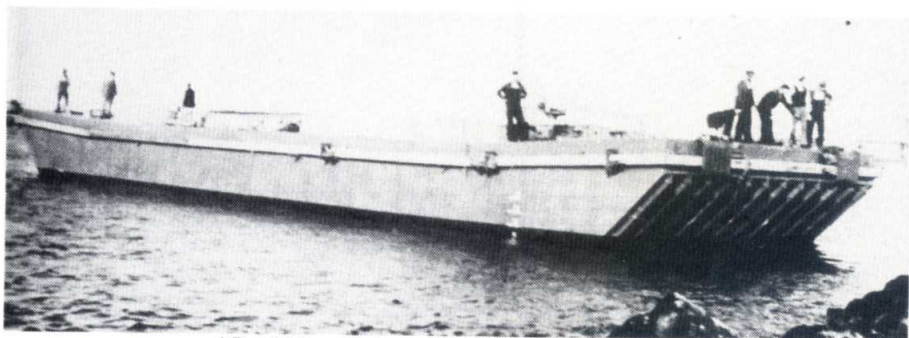
## Major Requisitioned Vessels – Brief Histories

"Australian Ships" described the major requisitioned vessels to carry the AB prefix as follows:

Due to the outbreak of war, both FRANCES PEAT and GEORGE PEAT were requisitioned for duties with the Army. The

## LCH

**Army Number:** L126  
**Dimensions:** Length overall 146 ft  
Breadth 33 ft  
Draft 6.5  
**Engines:** 2 x General Motors  
**Fuel:** Diesel  
**Speed:** 10 knots  
**Cargo Capacity:** 180 tons  
**Crew:** 13  
**Armament:** 2 x .50in Browning MG  
**Purpose:** Transport of stores, personnel and vehicles



AB 1284, a 60 foot (100 ton) Philippine lighter.



# AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT

## Lighters and Barges

In addition to landing craft, the Australian Army from 1941 operated a variety of lighters and barges, principally for off loading of general cargo from ships where port facilities did not exist or were inadequate. Most numerous among these were the various types of Philippine lighters. The small craft building programme as of 1 March 1945 called for 109 such vessels of which only 44 had been delivered at that time with a further 32 under construction as follows.

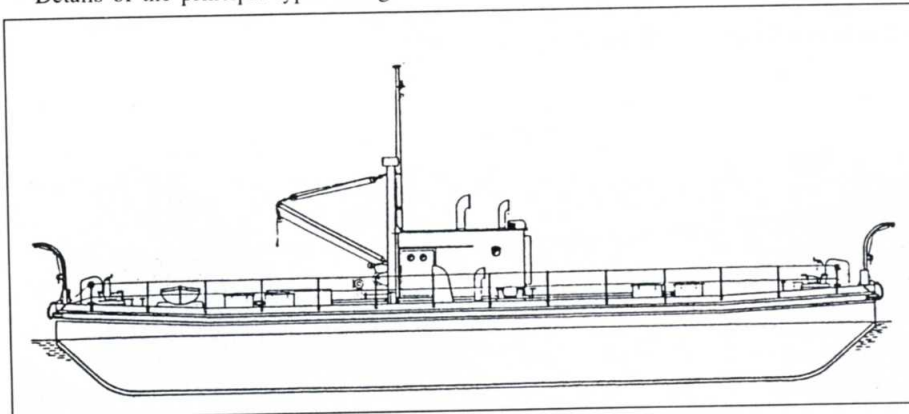
	Programme		
	Delivered	Building	
100ft Philippine Lighters (Standard)	37	10	4
100ft Philippine Lighters (Refrig.)	12	3	9
100ft Philippine Lighters (Fuel)	12	-	12
60ft Philippine Lighters (Standard)	48	31	7
Totals	109	44	32

All 100ft Philippine lighters were fabricated at Port Kembla, NSW under the direction of the Allied Works Council. 60ft lighters were built in both Victoria and New South Wales. Some of the standard 60ft Philippine lighters were also fitted with a propulsion unit (consisting of two Hercules WXL3 marine engines) in order to enhance their operational flexibility by making them self propelled.

Other types of lighters and barges employed by the Army during the period 1942 to 1945 included Armco, Mackenzie, Steele and Tobruk lighters as well as Symonds barges. A number of 30ft surfboats and 28ft lifeboats were also used in the lighterage role. Captured Japanese barges were also put to work in New Guinea waters.

Post World War II only a small number of lighters remained in service, mostly of the Philippine type. Today only a small number of lighters remain in Army service, mostly of more modern flat top steel construction.

Details of the principal types of lighters



Line drawing of Phillipine lighter.(Fuel)



AB 2044, refrigerated lighter.

and barges to have been used by the Australian Army are set out below.

### Lighters Philippine 100ft Standard

Army Numbers: 1278-1282, 1284-1285, 2262-2277

Construction: Steel

Dimensions: Length overall 100ft  
Breadth 27ft  
Depth (moulded) 8ft  
Draft (loaded) 6ft 6in  
(light) 1ft 6in

Engines: Nil. Dumb lighter

Cargo Capacity: 300 tons

Accommodation: Nil

Purpose for which designed: Lightering (general cargo)

### Lighters Philippine 100ft Refrigerated

Army Numbers: 2037-2048

Construction: Steel

Dimensions: Length overall 100ft  
Breadth 27ft  
Depth (moulded) 9ft 8in  
Draft (loaded) 6ft 6in  
(light) 2ft 6in

Engines: Propelling: Nil. Dumb lighter  
Refrigeration:

2 Macdonald YB 20/25 HP diesel engines

Generator: 8Hp aircooked twin Howard 5kVA, 240V, AC electric generator

Fuel: Type - distillate  
Capacity - 1400 galls (4 tanks)

Cargo Capacity: 386 tons DWT - 12000 c ft  
Accommodation: One 6 beth cabin forward

Crew: Six

Armament: Nil

Purpose for which designed: Dumb lighter for the transport of refrigerated cargo

### Lighters Philippine 100ft Fuel

Army Numbers: 2216-2221, 2253-2258

Construction: Steel

Dimensions: Length overall 100ft  
Breadth 27ft  
Depth (moulded) 8ft  
Draft (loaded) 6ft 6in  
(light) 2ft 6in

Engines: Propelling - Nil  
Electrical - Buda 4 cyl engine driving 31.25 KW alternator

Pumping: Centrifugal pump with capacity of 1500 galls per hour at 170ft head

Fuel Capacity: (cargo) 396 tons - 108,200 gallons  
(machinery) 1450 galls (4x350 gall tanks and 1 x 50 gall day tank)

Fresh Water Capacity: 975 galls (4x240 gall tanks and 1x15 gall day tank)

Armament: Nil

Purpose for which designed: Refuelling lighter

### Lighters Philippine 60ft Standard

Army Numbers: 1286-1303, 1672-1701



## AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT

**Construction:** Steel

**Dimensions:** Length overall 60ft  
Breadth 25ft  
Depth (moulded) 6ft  
Draft (loaded) 5ft  
(light) 1ft 9in

**Engines:** Nil

**Cargo Capacity:** 138 tons DWT  
99 tons @ 40 c ft to ton

**Accommodation:** Nil

**Purpose for which designed:** Lightering  
(general cargo)

### Lighters Philippine 60ft Powered

**Army Numbers:** included with standard  
variant above

**Construction:** Steel

**Dimensions:** Length overall 65ft  
Breadth 25ft  
Depth (moulded) 6ft  
Draft (loaded) 5ft 9in  
(light) 1ft 9in

**Engines:** Propelling – 2 Hercules WX  
LC3 Marine engines fitted  
with Chaco gear boxes

**Fuel:** Distillate

**Capacity:** 500 galls (2 tanks)

**Cargo Capacity:** 138 tons DWT  
99 tons @ 40 c ft to ton

**Accommodation:** Nil

**Armament:** Nil

**Purpose for which designed:** Lightering of  
general cargo

### Armco Lighters

**Army Numbers:** 383, 398, 399, 402-421,  
446-452

**Dimensions:** Length 33ft  
Breadth 23ft 3in  
Draft 3ft 9in

### Mackenzie Lighters

**Army Numbers:** 2260, 2261

### Steele Lighters

**Army Numbers:** 590-629

### Tobruk Lighters

**Army Numbers:** 71, 310-314, 327-351,  
1304-1348

**Dimensions:** Length 48ft  
Breadth 18ft  
Draft 4ft 3in

### Symonds Barges

**Army Numbers:** 372-381

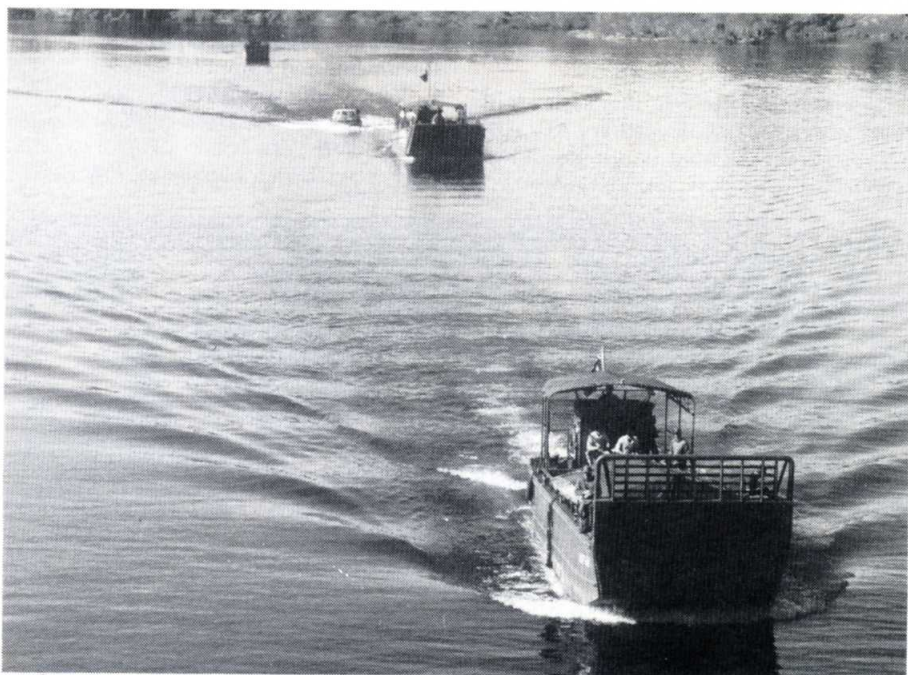
**Dimensions:** Length 48ft  
Breadth 14ft  
Draft 5ft

Six floating docks numbered 1283, 2242-  
2246 also carried the prefix AB before their  
Army Numbers.

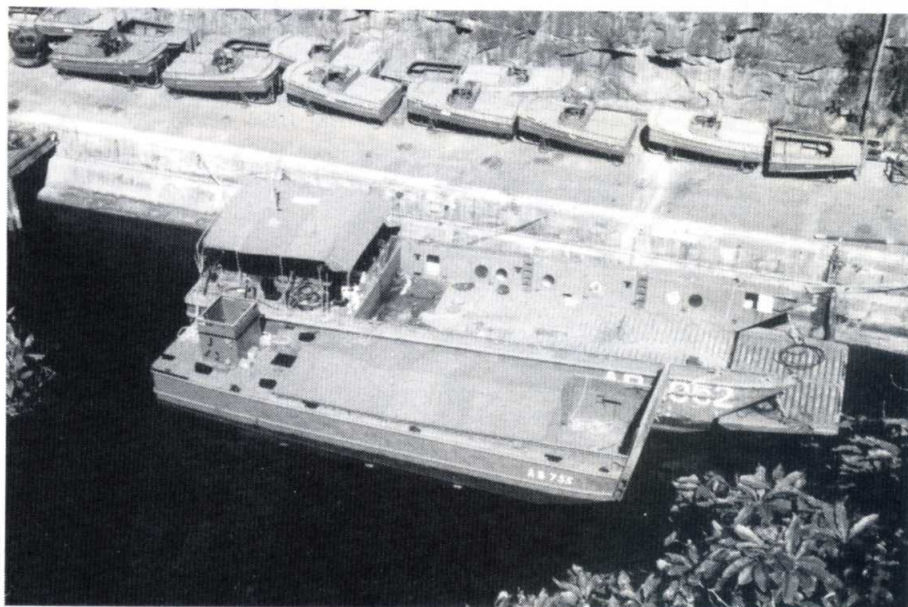
The Army Numbers shown above for  
various watercraft are incomplete. Whilst  
every effort has been made to ensure the list



AB 3000 an ALC 50 landing, September 1967.



LCM 6 AB 759 on the Macleay River 1977, leading an LCM 8 and another LCM 6.



Woolwich Dock in Sydney, 1983, with one LCM 6 and one LCM 8 landing craft.

(Photo B. Alsop)



## AUSTRALIAN ARMY WATERCRAFT

is as complete as possible, Army lists to the end of World War II are themselves incomplete thus making the researchers job very difficult at times.

\*\*\*

In conclusion, it must be said that although not glamorous craft, the landing craft, lighters and barges listed above, along with the crews who operated them, were a lifeline to Australian and American troops fighting the Japanese in coastal Papua New Guinea and the Islands. They also provided mobility essential for amphibious assaults against enemy held areas. Without them in 1942-45, the war in the Pacific would have been nearly impossible for the Allied armies.

The second article in this series will cover vessels bearing the prefixes AD, AH, AK, AL and AM, that is, dinghies, sea ambulances, ketches, luggers and launches.



Army and RAN landing craft exercise in Sydney Harbour, 1982. (Photo - R. Gillett)

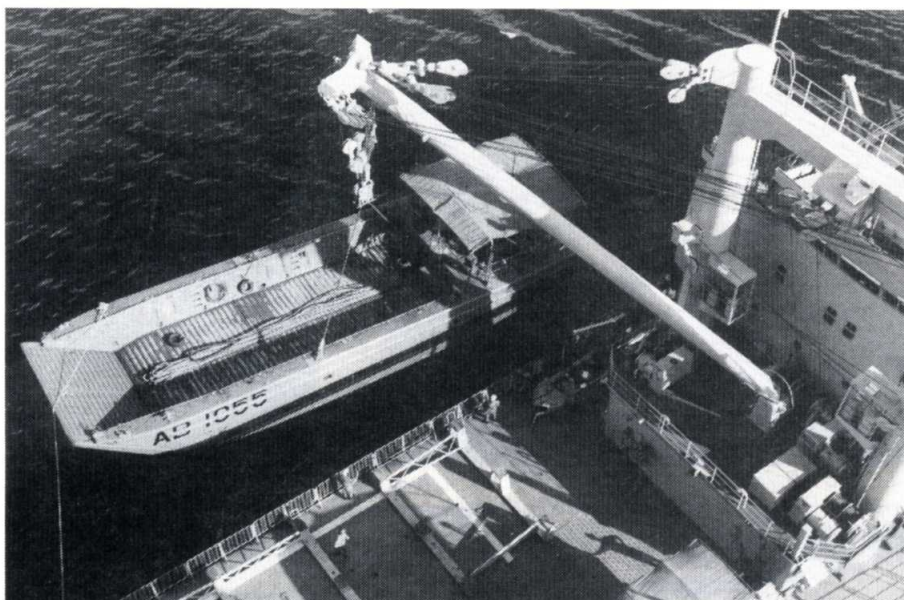
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AB 1055 being hoisted aboard HMAS TOBRUK, 1984. (Photo - RAN)



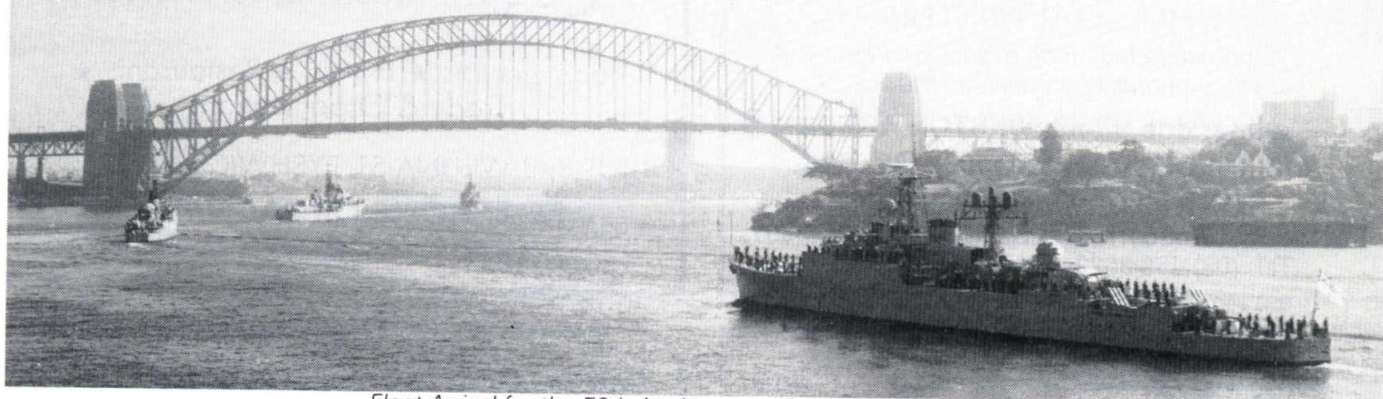
Ordered for the Army, all eight LCHs were handed over to the RAN. The only vessel to wear Army green was BALIKPAPAN (later HMAS), shown in 1973.

(Photo - J. Mortimer)



# Navy Week Pictorial

1961-1967



*Fleet Arrival for the 50th Anniversary of the RAN, June 1961.*



*October 1961. Navy floats are paraded through Sydney streets, this one representing the NSW gunboat SPITFIRE, the ship of yesteryear.*



*Close up view of HMS TAPIR in September 1963. The boat was employed as training vessel for the RAN from 1961-63.*

**ALSO SEE PAGES 23 AND 25 FOR MORE NAVY WEEK PICTORIAL**



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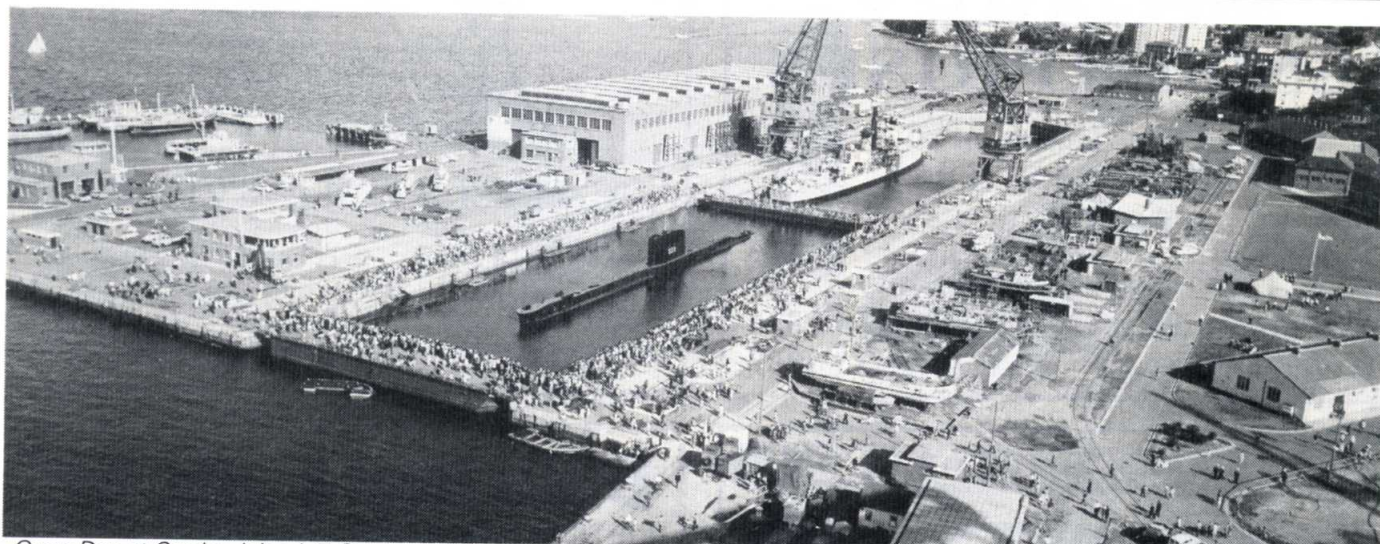
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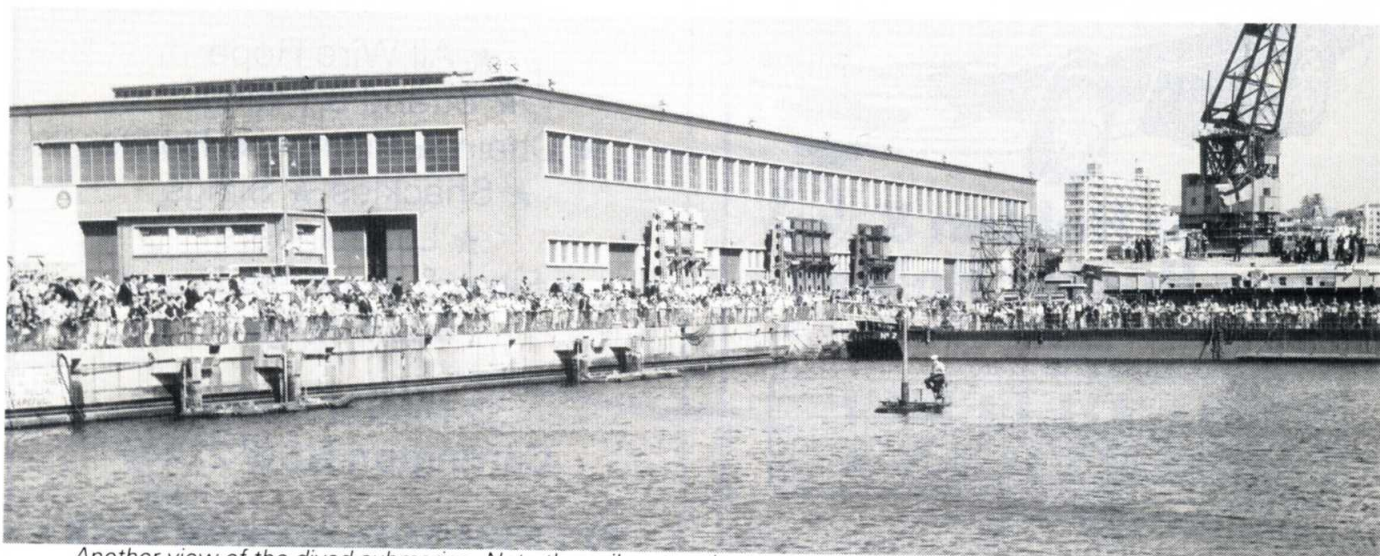
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## NAVY WEEK PICTORIAL



*Open Day at Garden Island, 7 October 1961. A Royal Navy submarine is performing dives in the Captain Cook dock, with HMAS TOBRUK astern.*



*Another view of the dived submarine. Note the sailor atop the superstructure, with the periscope in a raised position.*



*Navy Open Day, October 1965. The small launch RUSHCUTTER, with "King Neptune" embarked moves around the shores of Garden Island.*



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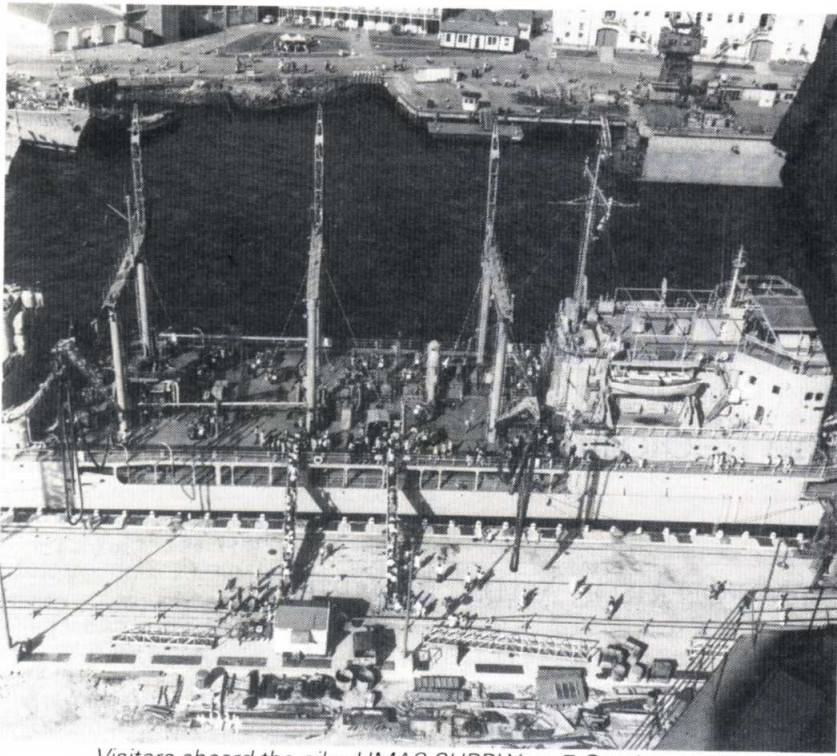
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*Visitors aboard the oiler HMAS SUPPLY on 7 October 1967.*



*October 1964. Crowds aboard the aircraft carrier HMAS MELBOURNE. Three Wessex helicopters and a Gannet are parked forward. HMAS KIMBLA lies ahead of the carrier.*



*Helicopter demonstrations at the 1967 Open Day.*



# Developments in Maritime Power in East, South-East And South Asia

Implications for the Region and for Australia

FROM RADM ANDREW ROBERTSON AO DSC RAN (RTD)

**T**he subject is one which certainly calls for attention, for while the end of the Cold War and Super-Power rivalry has produced a so-called "Peace-Dividend" in the form of major cuts to armaments in Europe and North America, no such reduction is taking place in East, South-East or South Asia. Indeed when viewed over a period of years, despite some cut back in the defence budget of India, most countries and particularly China have increased their resources allotted to defence. This is particularly evident in the defence field which many League members believe is of the greatest future significance to Australia – that of Maritime Power.

The first speech of the evening was delivered by Mr Tim McDonald, who served for many years in the Australian diplomatic corps including a posting as Australian High Commissioner to Singapore. He is now the Director of the Research Institute for Asia/Pacific Studies at the University of Sydney and gave a most comprehensive scene-setting overview of general economic and strategic developments in East Asia.

This balanced speech outlined the positive aspects of the present scene including welcome developments enhancing regional stability such as the probable settlement of the Cambodian civil war; the agreement between China and India lessening border tensions; the rapid economic development of nearly all nations in the area and the increase in the importance of regional economic organisations such as ASEAN and APEC.

Set against these helpful developments were a number of worrying aspects including the Chinese attitudes to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and particularly the Spratley Islands and the South China Sea. Overall however there was a strong argument that all nations now had far more to gain by

*This Navy League (NSW Division) presentation took place on Tuesday 5 October at the Masonic Centre in Sydney, about 80 members and guests attending.*

economic co-operation and development than by pressing territorial claims. Nevertheless underlying tensions must be noted, because economic considerations may not always outweigh matters involving national pride.

Mr John Zerby – a senior lecturer in econometrics at the University of New South Wales then covered merchant shipping – its economic and strategic implications. Mr Zerby, formerly of Pennsylvania, has worked with the Bureau of Transport & Communications Economics in Canberra, and on the staff of the Merchant Marine Sub-Committee of the US House of Representatives in Washington. In an interesting outline of merchant shipping developments he pointed out that the changes now taking place in the area such as the concentration on traffic "hubs and spokes" included the probability that Okinawa would emerge as one such hub, along with those of Singapore, Hong Kong and Japanese ports. The growing interdependence of the economics of the nations of the area and their dependence on shipping and the organisation of such vessels was outlined. This would help to draw the nations of the area together in their common interest.

Following a delicious and, judging by the noise, most popular supper, CDR James

Goldrick, of the RAN Surface Warfare School, outlined the Development of Maritime and Maritime Air Forces in the Region (except for Japan, Russia and the Koreans) drawing his information from open source material including Jane's Fighting Ships. Over recent years the technological gap in equipment between the various navies has narrowed considerably. There has been a great increase in the provision of surface to air and surface to surface missiles in the newer ships of most nations in the area. Additionally some navies have moved into new major capabilities. For instance Thailand has embarked on a major refurbishment and development of its navy. An order has been placed with the Spanish Bazan yard for a 13,000 tonne 26 knot helicopter/STOVL Carrier to be fitted with a ski-jump. There are reports that Harrier aircraft and helicopters have been ordered, as well as two new Chinese-built frigates.

The powerful Chinese Navy seems to have deferred for the time being the purchase of an aircraft carrier but its modernisation process continues and the large increase in the defence budget recently announced would seem to give further impetus to Chinese maritime strength. Currently the Chinese navy has 87 submarines (many somewhat aged) and 83 surface warships of over 1,000 tonnes, together with a powerful naval air force.

The Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean navies are likewise modernising and improving their capabilities. The addition of 39 East German warships, mostly corvettes and amphibious warfare ships, together with the possibility of 2 further type 205 German submarines and some fast patrol boats will add considerably to the strength of the Indonesian Navy. Some 14 Indonesian vessels are now armed with surface to



## DEVELOPMENTS IN MARITIME POWER

surface missiles, their navy being based around 31 surface warships of over 1,000 tonnes and 2 submarines.

For the time being the Malaysian Navy seems to have deferred the acquisition of submarines, but 2 FFGs are on order from the UK and a large force of offshore patrol vessels is planned, along with an increase in maritime patrol aircraft. Singapore now has 12 Corvettes/fast attack craft armed with surface to surface missiles.

The Indian Navy has tripled in tonnage of combatant warships in the last 10 years. It is now the 7th biggest in the world based around 2 aircraft carriers, 18 submarines and 32 warships of over 1,000 tonnes, together with 72 Maritime Patrol aircraft. It also now has a significant amphibious life capability. However many of its larger ships are aging and it faces a significant block obsolescence problem in the future.

All navies, however, have not yet developed true long-range capabilities as all are deficient in afloat support vessels. (It was, however, pointed out in later general discussion that such capabilities can be rapidly obtained through the taking over of merchant shipping or purchase overseas from the many vessels now on offer.)

With the exception of the navies of Vietnam, Burma and the Philippines, the last 10 years has thus seen a major increase in strength and technological capability of the navies of South, South-East and East Asia. In particular the numbers of vessels equipped with Surface to Surface and Surface to Air missiles and helicopters, and of maritime patrol aircraft has grown markedly as have the number of surface combatants of over 1,000 tonnes displacement.

Captain Jack McCaffrie RAN, who has just returned to Australia from the Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, and is now the Director General Maritime Studies Programme in the Department of Defence, gave his view on the Strategic Implications for the Region and for Australia deriving from maritime developments in the region.

He outlined many factors involved in the general increase in maritime power in the area, including the numerous maritime boundary disputes resulting from the 200 nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone claims; the reality of reduced US forward deployments forcing South East Asian States to look more at their own maritime security needs; the perceived need to protect sea lines of communication; and the vastly expanded maritime security responsibilities of the countries concerned in the protection of their offshore resources including oil, gas and fisheries resulting from the extension of territorial seas to 12 nautical miles and the Exclusive Economic Zones to 200 nautical

miles offshore. Additionally there were serious tensions over the Spratley Islands and China's claim to the entire South China Sea as her territorial waters between Taiwan and China; between India and Pakistan; and lesser tensions over maritime claims involving all ASEAN countries, and between China and Japan over the Senkaku Islands.

He felt that the most serious strategic implication is that maritime disputes could become the next regional flashpoint with the regional shift of emphasis towards naval and air forces indicating the salience of maritime security issues in the post cold-war strategic environment.

While initial arms procurements may be made for national security and to gain some technological edge, eventually they might induce an arms race in which military and technological inferiority could become politically and militarily untenable. External factors could also add to the possibility that greater capabilities will lead to a greater willingness to use maritime power.

On the other hand developments in maritime power could lead to greatly improved co-operation among South East Asian States all of which have common strategic interests. Indeed some security analysts argue that prospects have never been better for the emergence of a regional security community of all 10 South East Asian States based on non-interference and non-use of force. This is reinforced by the drive of all States for continuation of economic growth. All have a vested interest in the freedom of the sea lanes and the free flow of sea traffic, and there is an undeniable desire for greater co-operation and an end to disputes. Similar factors operate in the security equation in both South and East Asia.

So far as Australia is concerned he felt that the policy of "comprehensive engagement" developed by the present Government was central to the situation. This relied on mutual commitment between countries that are equals in every respect. In this light the strategic implications of our neighbours developing maritime power should be of little concern to us, nor ours to them. Our increasing capacity to integrate with them for combined operations would in turn permit the building of a more integrated, mutually understanding, and generally secure region.

However there were some potential dangers to Australia particularly as our technological edge eroded over time. Australia's best response is to continue monitoring events and participating fully in the regional security dialogue.

In remoter East Asia, although our interests could be affected, we would be unlikely to become involved directly in

disputes or conflicts there. More direct involvement could be forecast for Australia were China to become assertive in the South China Sea, and this could prove to be a nice test for our policy of comprehensive engagement.

In so far as South Asia is concerned, Australia is well placed to help India integrate more fully into regional security groups, especially as closer ties develop between the navies of India and Australia. If Indian maritime power can be shown to be benign in regional terms, the other much smaller forces will not feel the need to develop their capabilities beyond those needed for their own self-defence and resource protection.

Following the presentations and question time, Captain Mike Downes representing the Company of Master Mariners and RADM Andrew Robertson the senior Federal Vice President of the Navy League delivered their closing remarks.

Captain Downes outlined the RAN as he knew it 25 years ago – a formidable, technologically advanced force of 2 aircraft carriers, 1 cruiser, 24 destroyers and frigates, 18 corvettes/ocean minesweepers, a fleet replenishment ship and many support vessels. He compared this with the RAN of today, and the navies of South, South-East and East Asia. He deduced that Australia's maritime forces had not only been greatly reduced in numbers and strength but also in relative technological standards. The Company of Master Mariners believed that the RAN was no longer capable of defending the Australian merchant marine against any but the lowest levels of threat and had put this view to the Government on several occasions.

RADM Robertson felt that it was timely that Captain Downes had pointed out the relative decline of Australia's maritime power. The Navy League had for many years pressed for a Two Ocean Navy – one of sufficient size as to be capable of effective action off both coasts at the same time. Instead the Two Ocean Basing policy had been adopted, the already much reduced Navy being split between the east and west coasts, resulting in a very limited capability being available at either location.

While there was much in the presentations which gave grounds for cautious optimism regarding the future security situation in the area under discussion, nevertheless there were many unknowns and many disputes and points of friction. No one could foretell the future and we would be wise to follow closely the motto of the RSL "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance".





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# Royal Australian Navy Small Ships at War

In his forward to the book, the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ian MacDougall states "that little attention has been directed towards the smaller units of the RAN, most authors preferring to write about the larger ships and their exploits".

Iris Nesdale, in her latest naval book, *Small Ships at War*, seeks to remedy this situation via a description of many of the smaller units, but most importantly, via interviews with the personnel who manned the craft. The resultant descriptions of life aboard the Navy's small ships provides a richly colourful story of the Second World War era and the variety of vessels taken up for service with the "Senior Service" and the many which were newly built in local yards.

These "behind the scenes" descriptions are the highlight of the book. Together, with over 140 illustrations, most of which are unpublished, *Small Ships at War* is highly recommended to all readers of *The Navy* and members of the Navy League.

Some excerpts and illustrations from the book are reproduced in this issue of *The Navy*, including the loss of HMAS ATLANTA, the China Fleet and two of the examination vessels, requisitioned from the private trade.

## The Loss of Alatna

**O**n New Year's Day 1946 ALATNA was rammed at sea by SS MARINE RUNNER, and sank. Two months earlier PO Jim Nelson had been drafted to ALATNA, 'a small craft designed and built for duties as a fast hospital ship for SRD operations'.

'She had crew quarters forward, a centre bridge and engine room, and an afterhold with three double bunks either side to provide for twelve sick or wounded persons. The bunks, double-tiered upper and lower, could be folded back to convert the space for standing room, or for a cargo hold if necessary,' wrote Nelson.

Lieut. V. Dann had command of ALATNA, with Jim Nelson Petty Officer Coxswain, and crew A/B Gordon Hamilton, A/B Vic Hardy, another A/B and a Petty Officer Motor Mechanic.

The war was over. 'We were on duty as part of the Occupation Force stationed at Macassar,' said Nelson, 'and late in December we were ordered to proceed to Labuan, Sarawak-Borneo.'

'ALATNA ran on 100% high octane aviation fuel, which had become almost impossible to obtain in Macassar, but the frigate HMAS QUICKMATCH was also heading for Labuan, and offered a tow that was a solution to that fuel problem!' There was another.

'The towline was rigged as a solid or fixed two from QUICKMATCH to the small vessel and back to the frigate, and could not be slipped from ALATNA. This very fact was to end in tragedy. 'In a standard tow for these vessels the towline is brought round the stern and into the foc'sle of the ship, where the towline is attached by a slipping shackle,' said Nelson. 'If for any reason then it came necessary to separate, the ship in tow could simply slip clear.'

'By New Year's Day 1946, ALATNA in tow was rounding the northern tip of Borneo

By  
Iris Nesdale

Published by the Author,  
9 Yolanda Street, Eden Hills, SA 5050.

Cost \$40.00  
Reviewed by Ross Gillett

through the Balabac Strait into the South China Sea. Lieut. Dann was on the Bridge as Watchkeeping Officer, and I was on the wheel.'

About 0900 hours, a ship observed on the horizon seemed to be keeping a parallel course, but Dann and Nelson soon became aware, that if QUICKMATCH and the stranger kept their present course there must be a collision. 'ALATNA could not slip her tow, and we were helpless,' wrote Nelson. 'We could only hope that QUICKMATCH would increase speed and tow us out of danger.'

'I called the crew and ordered all scuttles and doors closed, and all crew to come on deck. The merchantman kept closing in on us from an angle, and was now confirmed to be on collision course. Dann stayed on the bridge. I was on the wheel, and hoping the ship would pass.

'Dann ordered "Abandon Ship!" I was instructed to order the crew over the side.'

Just before MARINE RUNNER struck ALATNA on her port side Jim Nelson saw Ordinary Seaman Ray Dodson holding onto the stern guardrail. He tried very hard to loosen Dodson's grip, but failed to do so before the small vessel went down, and the men were thrown into the sea. Nelson had a narrow escape from ALATNA'S propeller when MARINE RUNNER'S bow wave caught and tossed him along her starboard side and into the ship's wake.

He felt himself going down, and says he

was saved by Gordon Hamilton, who had had lifesaving training in Western Australia.

Nelson noted another escape. With the bow section of ALATNA all that remained afloat, he saw the forward hatch open, and someone stepped out. It was an Army man who had 'hitched a ride' on his way home to Australia for discharge. He had been asleep until the crash, and the men had all forgotten him, but he came off with a small kitten he had picked up in Macassar.

Ray Dodson was the one man lost, and despite the wide search by Hamilton. It would seem a miracle that anyone in ALATNA survived that collision.

## HMAS Laurabada New Guinea Veteran

In 1924 Mr H.L. Murray had taken a native crew from Port Moresby to Sydney to take delivery of the wooden twin-screw motor yacht, Laurabada, from the builders Morrison & Sinclair of Sydney. In the 'white man's village' (Sydney) they were much impressed by 'the wonderful way in which water which could not be touched, came from nowhere, ran down a fishmonger's window, and then disappeared without trace'.

There was also 'the little house go up top, bimebye he come along down,' - the lift in a tall city building.

'Before the ship's completion,' noted Murray's nephew, Mick Garrioch, 'he came across a figurehead (origin unknown), and had it fitted to the ship's bows. During years that followed, when Murray called at coastal villages, the natives used to gather and study the carving's features at length, guessing at their tribal identity, but without success, for the head was actually that of an African.'

After completion and some necessary adjustments, LAURABADA was busy on Government patrols from Torres Strait to New Britain, and about islands to the east of Papua.'





*HMAS Ping Wo*

Early in 1942 civil administration in Port Moresby came to a halt. Placed under military control LAURABADA was sent to Jacquinot Bay over in New Britain, to take off the remaining Australians from that area. On 12 April Sub-Lt Ivan Champion, with a volunteer crew, brought out 156 evacuees, and for this operation the vessel was armed with six machine-guns. Length 100ft, speed 10 knots.

On 23 July 1942, LAURABADA was requisitioned, then commissioned into the navy with Lt-Cdr C.F. Symonds RN (Emerg) in command. There were changes in service with the small ship on patrol, as an examination ship in New Guinea waters, as a stores and personnel carrier, and as a survey vessel.

After paying off at Port Moresby on 21 June 1945, HMAS LAURABADA was transferred to Angau, and a news item in the South Pacific Post 10 April 1962, draws attention to the small ship once more:

'Afloat again after being laid up for seven years, Laurabada I, Sir Hubert Murray's elegant yacht is once more the pride of Port Moresby Harbour. At present she is undergoing final fitting for her new role as a coastal vessel. Completely rebuilt in 2½ years by Port Moresby boatbuilder Mr E.H. Yabsley, LAURABADA is now

fitted with two six-cylinder diesel engines...'

More recently in 1983, the ship was in service in Singapore, but as a timber carrier.

### **The China Fleet – RAN Service**

Very early in 1942, shortly before Singapore was taken, ships that were to become known as 'The China Fleet' entered the Allied service. These were HMA Ships PING WO, WHANG PU, PO YANG, the YUNNAN, HM Ships CHANGTE and TAIPING.

PINGO WO and WHANG PU were passenger steamers that had plied along the Yangtse River until requisitioned. HMS Changte and HMS Taiping carried Royal Navy crews, some Australian, and it has been estimated that altogether some 1000 RAN sailors served in the six ships of the China Fleet.

PING WO, gross tonnage 3105. Length 299 ft 8 inches, Beam 48 ft, Speed 10 knots. Armament: One 12-pounder, and two 20mm Oerlikons.

Requisitioned in December 1941 by the Royal Navy, PING WO paid off on 19 May 1942, but was commissioned into the RAN three days later (22 May 1942). Lieut. D.M. Clark, RANR, was Commanding Officer.

As a river steamer PING WO had plied between Chungking and Shanghai, but experience at sea was found to be vastly different, and crew have been quoted as insisting that the ship (if ever given the opportunity) would probably 'roll on a bucket of water', calling to mind a somewhat similar accusation that was levelled at corvettes by crew battling typhoon seas in the Pacific. 'They would roll on wet grass,' said corvette sailors.'

After heavy fighting in the Mediterranean, service in convoy escort and rescue, the destroyer HMAS VENDETTA had been stripped for an urgently needed refit at Singapore. Then, with war flaring as the Japanese moved south so swiftly, and with need to get Allied ships out, VENDETTA was in no condition to sail. She was taken in successive tows by HMS STRONGHOLD, the tug ST JUST and HMAS YARRA.

From somewhere off Tanjong Priok the tow was taken by HMAS PING WO, and at three knots and despite enemy activity, she brought the destroyer to Fremantle, then towed her some further distance towards Melbourne. By the end of the second month VENDETTA was safely at anchor in that port.

With basic training completed, Alan Proleta left Flinders on 24 June 1942 with



## Small Ships at War

his draft to HMAS PING WO. He had been told by someone, that she was a Chinese River Gun Boat, and expected to see 'something sleek and fast', but admits to quite a shock with the actuality.

'I don't think my enthusiasm for the Navy ever recovered from the trauma of coming face to face with this rusting old heap, was a rueful comment, but not so long afterwards he was feeling annoyed with someone else who made a disparaging remark. By then, of course, it was his ship.

'PING WO had a gun mounted on the foredeck, but we were advised not to use it as the shock might cause the ship to fall apart', said 'Doc' Proleta.

Caught in a really bad storm en route from Newcastle towards the north, the ship was taking a battering, and it was then perhaps, that the Captain is thought to have placed the responsibility upon the Lord's shoulders with his comment, 'I have done all I can. It is in God's hands now.'

At that point, evidently the ship was heading straight for the cliff, when backwash from the cliff swung the bow around, another wave whacked PING WO in the stern, and she was through, surfing her way into the bay and shelter. The battering had left the ship with 'damage to the upper deck, and sheets of armour plating badly buckled'.

PING WO was commissioned as a tender to HMAS Assault, Port Stephens, and whilst there carried stores and water. The ship's

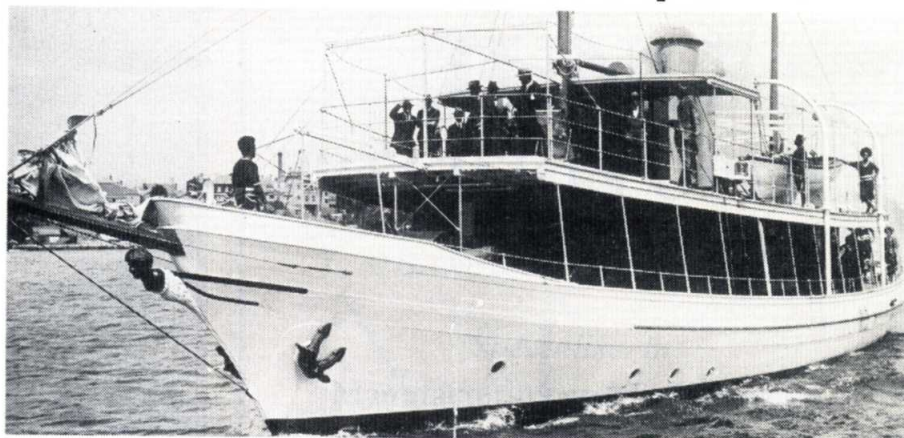
complement was mixed, two RN officers, RANR ratings and 16 Chinese seamen. Until December 1943 then she was busy with training exercises, etc. and was then sent to New Guinea. The following year with Commander Perry RNR, PING WO was mainly running stores between Milne Bay and Buna.

On 16 July, ten of PING WO's crew were drafted to the BISHOPDALE, one of the Royal Navy Fleet Tankers. They replaced absconding West Indian crew, and the tanker went to Noumea to refuel ships that were engaged in the Coral Sea Battle.

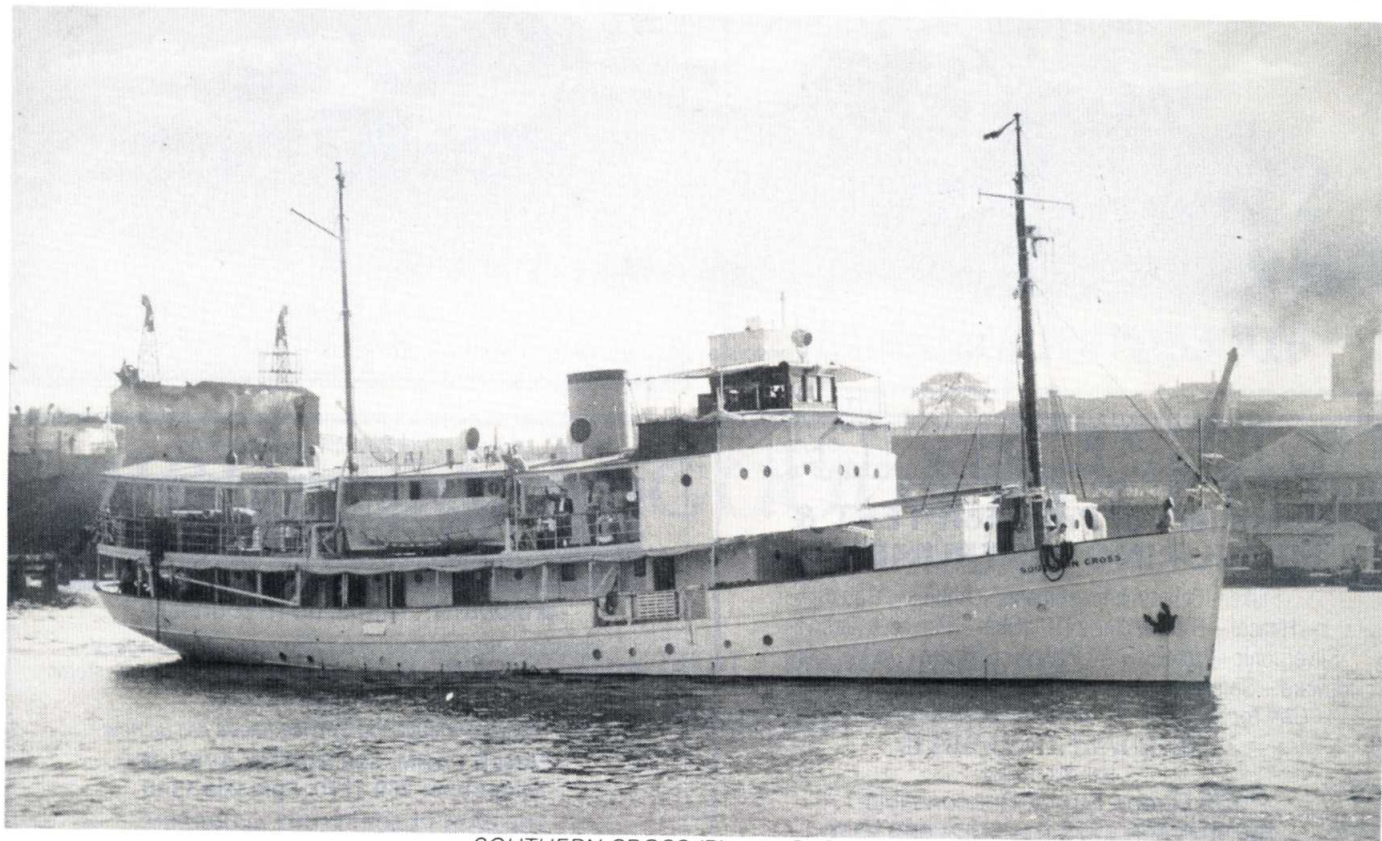
The last two years of war he served in Fairmiles, and decided that he had his 'fast, sleek gunboat' at last, but Alan Proleta is National Secretary of the RAN Allied Chinese Ships Association; his affection remains with the old Ping Wo.

In January 1945 during refit, the ship was converted to become a working vessel and went back to New Guinea. Then it was a return to Sydney, back in April 1946, she departed Port Jackson and paid off in Hong Kong.

**Following is a selection of some of the unusual photographs in the book, *Small Ships at War*.**



*Laurabada on trails, 1924 (Photo - G. Garrioch)*



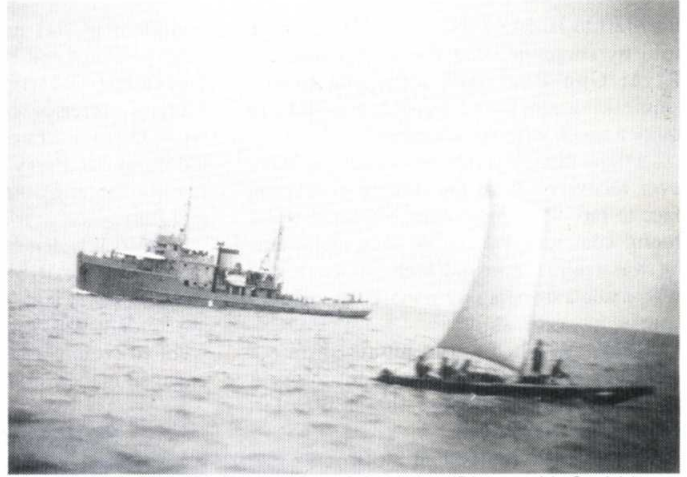
*SOUTHERN CROSS (Photo - G. Garrioch)*



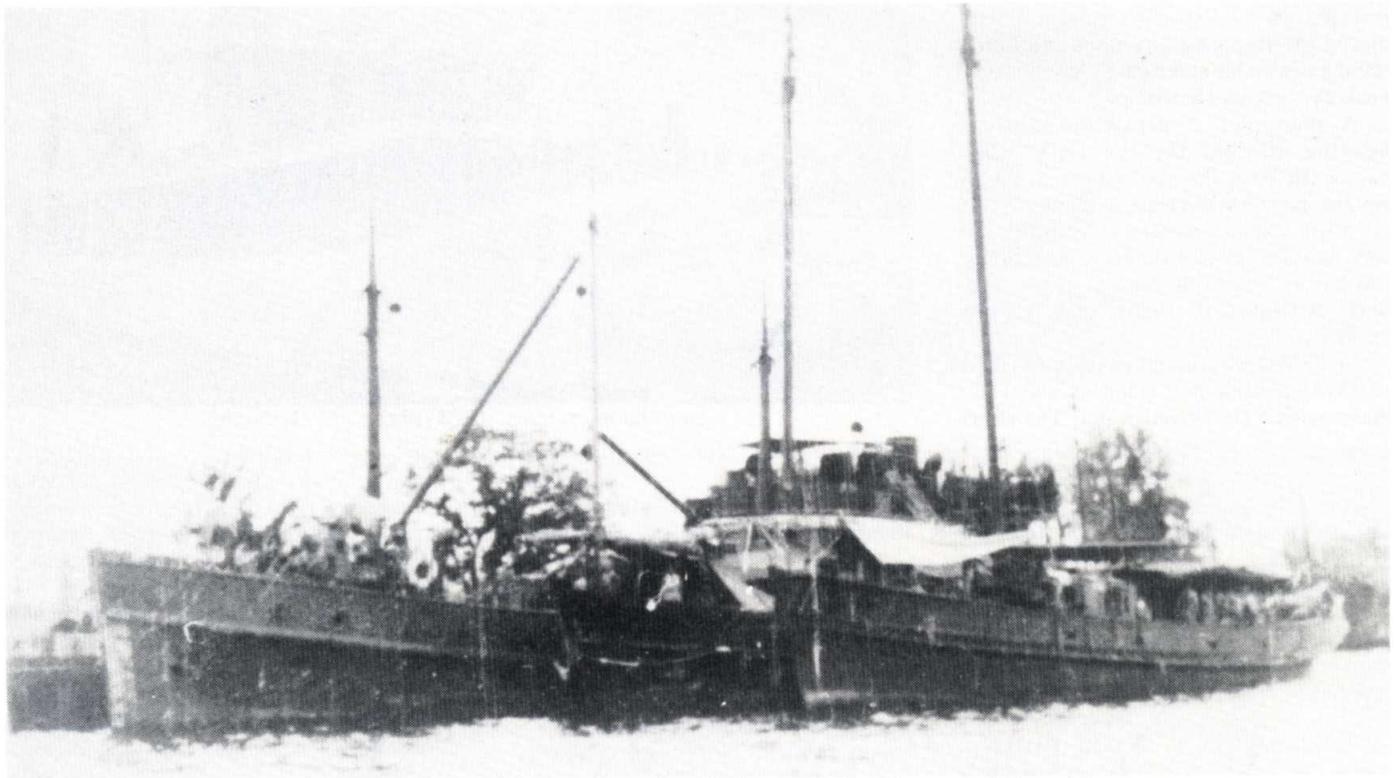
## Small Ships at War



ML 801. (Photo - S. Stock)



HMAS SPRIGHTLY at Port Moresby (Photo - N. Smith)



Services Reconnaissance Vessels at Labuan, 1945. (Photo - A. Edwards)

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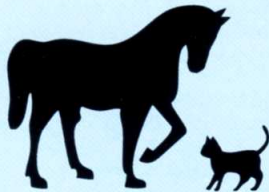
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