



NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

January 2022
Volume 6, Issue 1

DOWN THE VOICEPIPE *do you hear there!*

COMING UP

Executive meeting NLWA Monday

07th. March 2022 at 1700

HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation INC
Executive meeting Saturday

February 19th. 2022 at 1000

Business Meeting
HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL

Wednesday 23rd February 2022 at 1000

Maintenance period 05th. February 2022 at
0800 –1000

HMAS ADELAIDE
TONGA 2022

ALL ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THIS
NEWSLETTER ARE PRINTED IN GOOD FAITH
AND DON'T NECESSARY REFLECT THE VIEWS
OF THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division News update



Here we are at the end of January and well into another year.

I recently advised of the passing of former President of the WA Division and Life Member, Mason Hayman. Tuesday 25/01/22 saw us give a final farewell to a man who has been an unwavering servant, not just to us but to many other organisations in the state, around the country and overseas. Navy League WA were very well represented with four acting as pall bearers and as many again in attendance.

January also saw the completion of the external cladding to the building. Paint has been ordered, brushes and other incidentals have been ordered as has a large bin and as I write this there is a considerable amount of rubbish in said bin, sadly as is often the case these days, it is not all ours. The first weekend of February will see us put to work painting, pruning and cleaning the facility in readiness for the next renovation steps to be taken and the hopeful commencement of the Memorial Wall containing a full list of names of HMAS PERTH I crew at the time of her loss, some 80 years ago this February.

Our charity golf day had to be postponed with Perth breaking all previous records for continuous days above 40 degrees which helped make my mind up. I take no pleasure in mentioning the latest long-range forecast is for February to be even hotter than January, so suffice to say, the day may not go ahead next month either.

Planning is underway for our next getaway scheduled for February though we do have a full dance card with the HMAS PERTH Memorial Regatta, the HMAS PERTH Memorial Church Service and the set up of the HMAS PERTH exhibition being held in the Perth Town Hall in March. As you can see, there aren't that many weekends left in the month. Suffice to say, all of these activities are subject to the latest Covid rules and could regrettably be cancelled at the last minute.

Not a great deal of news to report this month but hopefully with activities going ahead next month our newsletter, well my part of it anyway, could contain a bit more than this one.

Until next month,

Regards

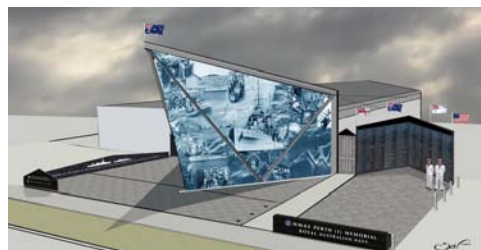
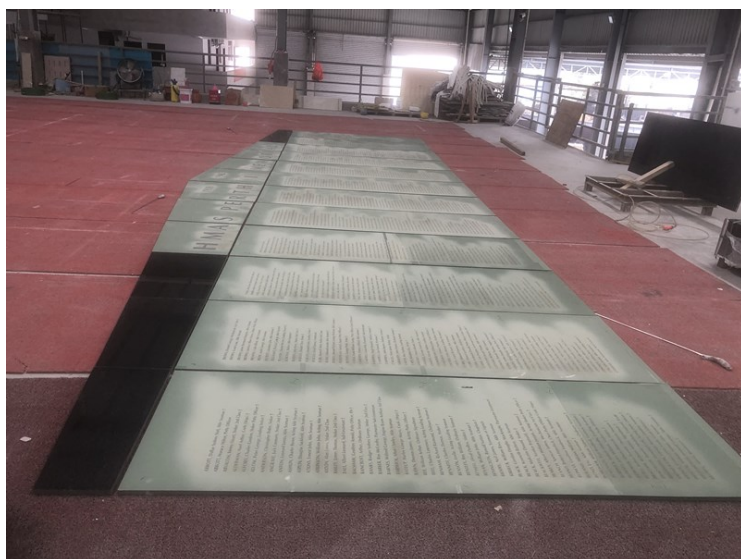
Brad



HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL PROJECT

Good news finally the extension to the memorial is underway. The first stage will commence by the end of February providing the shipment of granite from China arrives on time. All the artwork and wording was completed in China over xmas and as it is stage one will commence shortly after arrival. We can then commence specifications and planning on the main structure. Some utility works will need to be relocated in the meantime and efforts to raise \$330000 dollars is being expedited to allow the main structure to proceed. NLWA is about to commence building a purpose built Boatshed behind the memorial wall to accommodate the Australian Navy Cadets seamanship program at an estimated cost of \$20000 which will be purchased entirely from NLWA funds and separate from the Foundation's finance. Work bee's are in progress by NLWA, Foundation members, HMAS Perth Association and the Volunteers of Foreign Wars. It was notable the members of the business committee before our meeting cleaned all the building materials left over from the re-cladding of the existing facility/memorial. They included Yours truly, Trevor Vincent, Zenda Gardiner, Mike Bailey, David Green, Bob Mummery and Jared Hazelhurst. A further work party is planned for Saturday 5th. January, more about that schedule next issue.

CMDR Jim O'Neill ANC RTD.
Project Manager



Navy says it ensured sub safety after fake strength tests surfaced, but won't detail how

By [Geoff Ziezulewicz](#)

Jan 7, 02:37 AM



The fast-attack submarine Hampton approaches the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands on Oct. 21, 2021. (Navy)

The Navy says it has worked to ensure submarine safety following revelations late last year that a Washington state metallurgist spent decades faking the strength tests results for steel used to make subs.

But Naval Sea Systems Command, or [NAVSEA](#), has declined to provide specifics on which submarines were built with the affected steel and what steps have been taken to ensure the safety of American boats.

NAVSEA spokesman Alan Baribeau said that “a thorough analysis” of castings and other measures have ensured “safe operation of the affected vessels.”

“The Navy conducted a thorough analysis of the castings and took steps to ensure safe operation of the affected vessels,” Baribeau said in an email. “There are no operational impacts to submarines and we have addressed impacts for new construction vessels. High quality standards for components are an integral part of the Navy’s effort to ensure the safety of our sailors.”

Elaine Marie Thomas pleaded guilty in November to faking the strength tests from 1985 to 2017 on at least 240 steel productions, about half the steel the Tacoma-based foundry produced for the Navy, the [Associated Press](#) reported that month.



[Metallurgist admits faking steel-test results for Navy subs](#)

Elaine Marie Thomas pleaded guilty to fraud Monday.

Such tests are meant to show the steel wouldn’t fail in a wartime scenario or in a collision.

Thomas, who was 67 at the time of her guilty plea, was the director of metallurgy at the foundry, which supplied steel castings used by Electric Boat and Newport News Shipbuilding to make sub hulls, [the AP reported](#).

“Yeah, that looks bad,” Thomas reportedly said when confronted with the doctored results, [according to the AP](#).

Following the revelations involving the faked steel strength tests, subject matter experts with NAVSEA and “associated Warfare Centers” oversaw an analysis of the steel, Baribeau told Navy Times.

Officials said at the time of Thomas’s guilty plea that the Navy had incurred extra maintenance and costs to ensure the subs were seaworthy.

“The Navy will aggressively investigate and pursue all possible recoveries from suppliers who do not meet standards,” Baribeau said.

Thomas is scheduled to be sentenced next month and faces up to a decade in prison and a \$1 million fine, but [the AP reported](#) in November that the U.S. Justice Department plans to recommend a prison stint at the lower end of the sentencing range.

Her actions came to light in 2017 after another metallurgist noticed suspicious test results and alerted their company, Bradken Inc., [according to the AP](#).

The company fired Thomas and reported its findings to the Navy, but then suggested that the test discrepancies were not due to fraud, which prosecutors said hindered the Navy’s investigation into the scope of the problem and efforts to remediate risk to sailors, [the AP reported](#) in November.

The company agreed to pay \$10.9 million in June 2020 under a deferred-prosecution agreement, [according to the AP](#).

When confronted by investigators, Thomas suggested that she changed the tests to passing grades in some cases because she thought it was “stupid” that the Navy required the tests to be conducted at negative-100 degrees Fahrenheit, [the AP reported](#).

“Ms. Thomas never intended to compromise the integrity of any material and is gratified that the government’s testing does not suggest that the structural integrity of any submarine was in fact compromised,” her attorney, John Carpenter, wrote in a statement filed in the court on her behalf, [according to the AP](#).

“She regrets that she failed to follow her moral compass,” the statement continues. “Admitting to false statements is hardly how she envisioned living out her retirement years.”

Navy says the leaked images of the F-35 crash into the South China Sea are real

By [Diana Stancy Correll](#)

Jan 29, 04:25 AM



A F-35C Joint Strike Fighter jet deployed aboard the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson launches off the ship's flight deck Jan. 22, 2022, in the Philippine Sea. (MC3 Megan Alexander/Navy)

A video and photos of an F-35C Joint Strike Fighter that suffered a “landing mishap” Jan. 24 [aboard the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson](#) and then fell into the South China Sea show the jet just before and after its impact with the flight deck.

The carrier has verified the photos were taken on the ship during the crash, according to the U.S. 7th Fleet. “The ship has assessed that the video and photo covered by media yesterday was taken onboard USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) during the crash,” Cmdr. Hayley Sims, a spokesperson for the 7th Fleet, said in a statement to Navy Times. “There is an ongoing investigation of the incident.”

[CNN first reported](#) the authenticity of the images.

The Navy said Monday that an F-35C suffered a “landing mishap” on the Vinson’s deck while conducting routine flight operations in the South China Sea — [injuring seven sailors](#). According to Navy officials, the aircraft fell into the ocean after crashing on the deck.

“Impact to the flight deck is superficial and all equipment for flight operations is operational,” Navy spokesman Lt. Mark Langford told Navy Times in an email Tuesday.

“All injured Sailors have been reported to be recovered or in stable condition,” Langford said.

Three sailors – including the pilot and two other sailors – were evacuated to receive treatment for their injuries in Manila, Philippines. The other sailors were treated aboard the ship.

The Navy is planning to recover the jet from the South China Sea, [according to ABC News](#).

Mark Cancian, a retired Marine Corps officer and current senior advisor for the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ International Security Program, told Navy Times it’s necessary to recover the jet so adversaries can’t access it.

“This is our most sophisticated aircraft, it has all kinds of electronics onboard that our adversaries would love to get a hold of,” Cancian said. “We need to make sure they don’t.”

Recovering the jet should be “relatively easy,” given that the South China Sea’s waters aren’t terribly deep.

“The United States routinely goes and salvages aircraft that have crashed in order to better understand what happened and to safeguard the sensitive equipment on them,” Cancian said.

The Vinson’s deployment, which is expected to wrap up in the spring, is the first including the F-35C Lightning II fighter jet and the CMV-22 Osprey.



Options for Australia's n-subs



RN Astute Class sub
By Pete Sandeman*

The political and strategic ramifications of the AUKUS pact involving the US, UK and Australia continue to reverberate, but the details of how Australia will acquire nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs) have often been overlooked. There are daunting technical, industrial and financial challenges on the long road to joining that club.

Even the acquisition of conventional submarines isn't easy and projects completed on time and budget are rare. Nuclear propulsion adds another layer of complexity and cost, and the engineering challenge has been described as more demanding than building the space shuttle. There are good reasons why SSN ownership is limited to a small group of elite nations—the US, Russia, China, the UK, France and India. (With considerable French assistance, Brazil is on track to have its first nuclear boat in the late 2020s.)

The Royal Australian Navy's conclusion that it needs SSNs makes complete sense. The distance from its bases to the likely areas of operation are considerable and even the best conventionally powered boat will take many more days to get into theatre. It's around 5,500 kilometres from the RAN base near Perth to the South China Sea. The RAN will need to compete with China's SSNs, which may not currently be of the quality of Western equivalents but progress with the surface fleet indicates that they're likely to grow rapidly in quality and numbers over the next decade.

Some commentators suggest that Australia's first boats at least could be bought off UK or US production lines. Alternatively, old or 'surplus' submarines could be leased until new vessels are available. These assumptions are at odds with the US Navy's and Royal Navy's struggles with bringing new boats into service and maintaining ageing vessels.

HMS *Astute* arrived at HMAS Stirling near Perth in October, the first of its class to berth in Australia. It was visited by the RAN chief, Vice Admiral Mike Noonan, and other dignitaries. There's been talk of eventually operating an Astute-class sub from Australia when appropriate support facilities have been developed, but the tiny RN submarine force already has its hands full in the Euro-Atlantic.

Defence Minister Peter Dutton [has said](#) the RAN is considering leasing boats from the USN or RN but that's far from a certainty. The RN is already severely short of active boats—nominally down to six SSNs, and able to field two or three on a good day. The USN is trying to maintain its existing force, struggling to build enough new Virginia-class SSNs while its Los Angeles-class boats are phased out. However supportive of Australia the UK may be, it has no suitable boats available to lease. The US has a far bigger fleet with 28 Los Angeles boats still active, but its force is already overcommitted and Washington is unlikely to offer anything, except perhaps a recently retired boat as a static training vessel.

Neither the US nor UK keeps submarines 'in reserve'. The UK has already expensively extended the 1980s-vintage Trafalgar-class boats well past their 30th birthdays. None of the growing collection of decommissioned hulks could be returned to service with all the funds and will in the world. Their nuclear fuel is spent, and they would need colossally expensive refits and refuelling. More critically, submarines have finite hull lives. Every dive fatigues the pressure hull and pipework to a point where safe diving becomes severely restricted or the boat becomes unseaworthy. Older boats become increasingly hard to maintain and struggle to retain their all-important minimal acoustic signature.

The US has a more effective submarine dismantling program than the UK and its LA-class boats are gradually being scrapped. The inactive boats that remain intact are equally tired and some were withdrawn from service prematurely to avoid the cost of mid-life refuelling. There's a slim chance that one or two of these boats could see further service with the RAN but only at enormous expense, and refitting them would put more strain on overburdened US industrial capacity.

RAN Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead has said, 'It is our intention that when we start the build program, the design will be mature and there will be a production run already in existence.'

[Some suggest](#) the Astute's the best solution, optimistically proposing that the first couple be built in the UK before technology transfer enables the remaining six to be made in Australia. In many ways, the Astute would appear to be ideal—it's already in production, it would be far cheaper than the US options with smaller crews, and the vessels are highly rated. Unfortunately, there are almost insurmountable obstacles to the class ever numbering more than seven.

In the UK, completion of the remaining Astute-class boats is finely balanced with the construction of the Dreadnought-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) and there's not space in the shipyard or skilled people available to add additional boats. (If it were possible, then many would argue that the RN should buy more Astutes as priority one.)

BAE Systems and the specialist UK submarine supply chain broadly welcome the opportunity but are still in the early stages of exploring how they can help Australia. People didn't prepare for nuclear submarine exports and AUKUS was a bolt from the blue.

Assuming money was no object, new engineers could be recruited and the Barrow facilities could be enlarged, the project would still be in trouble because the Astute's PWR-2 reactor no longer meets modern safety benchmarks and production has almost ceased. Reactors require very long lead times and reactor assembly begins well ahead of cutting steel for the hull. The RR nuclear manufacturing facility in Derby is being comprehensively rebuilt and production is now focused on the larger PWR-3 for Dreadnoughts and eventually the SSNR, which it's believed will follow the Astute. (Design work on PWR-3 began as long ago as 2006.)

Even if additional PWR-2 reactors could be acquired and the Astute boats could be constructed in Australia, they'd be semi-obsolete when they began to arrive in service by the late 2030s. The Astute is among the world's best SSNs and will continue to be the gold standard in stealth terms for another decade at least. However, the design, from the early 1990s, is likely to be superseded by the 2040s. The next generation of SSNs will need much greater capacity than the Astute to launch, recover and communicate with the unmanned underwater vehicles that will become an ever-growing part of the undersea battle.

The original Virginia design (Block I) is older than the Astute but has benefited from an iterative development program, with 34 boats built or on order to date. Among many improvements, from the Block III boats onwards, they have been fitted with two Virginia payload tubes (VPTs), vertical launch cells which can each hold six Tomahawk and other missiles, and, potentially, uncrewed vehicles. The latest Block IV boats have been stretched by 25 metres to include another four seven-cell VPTs.

About two Virginias are produced per year, although last year the USN announced a plan for an SSN force of 72–78 by the 2040s, which would require production to increase in the 2030s to about three per year, concurrent with building the very large Columbia-class SSBNs.

Although the USN benefits from an established design and an industrial base that's vastly more efficient than that of the RN, the yards and supply chain will need to expand significantly to fulfil the ambitious plans to grow the USN fleet. A recent [report to Congress](#) noted that 'observers have expressed concern about the industrial base's capacity for executing such a workload without encountering bottlenecks or other production problems in one or both of these programs'.

The USN also has issues maintaining its existing submarines. The report says: 'SSNs have had their deployments delayed due to maintenance backlogs at the Navy's four government-operated naval shipyards which are the primary facilities for conducting depot-level maintenance work. Delays in deploying SSNs can put added operational pressure on other SSNs that are available for deployment.'

The latest Virginias have considerably greater land attack capability than the Astute and are more modern. But despite the economies of scale, they come with a significantly bigger price tag and have a crew of 132. The RAN is already short of people for its six Collins-class boats, which have just 58 crew. If the RAN were to acquire eight Virginia Block IV or equivalent, it would need a major recruitment and training effort. It's estimated that the RAN needs 2,300 trained submariners. Achieving that number will take years and must allow for a typical wastage rate of about 30% of recruits dropping out or failing to qualify.

For the more senior roles, the process is even more demanding. It takes [at least 16 years](#) from initial entry to qualify as a nuclear submarine's engineering officer. The RN and USN can certainly assist with submariner development and provide hands-on opportunities at sea. Both navies have very similar reactor technology and operating procedures, and RAN personnel would gain valuable experience on exchange with either navy, whatever SSN Australia selects.

Very little can be said with certainty about the US and UK future designs which are in the early concept phases. Both will probably [feature aspects](#) of the Columbia and Dreadnought SSBNs, be bigger than the boats they replace, and have x-tail hydroplane arrangements and turbo-electric drive instead of direct drive from their steam turbines.

If the RAN waits until at least 2040 for SSNs, partnering with one of these programs would make sense. The RAN would have input into the design from the outset and development costs could be shared along with economies of scale in the supply chain. The British boat will almost certainly be more affordable and there's already synergy between BAE and Australian industry with the Hunter-class frigate. The US SSN would be more costly but might be more attractive since US combat systems and weapons are used on the Collins-class boats. A US solution would also benefit from the relative proximity of Guam and Japan, where they could share support facilities.

When the AUKUS announcement was made, the Australian government promised to acquire at least eight nuclear submarines to be built by ASC in South Australia. There's limited submarine building experience left at ASC since the Collins boats were completed in the early 2000s. The deal with the French to build Attack-class boats included technology transfer to regenerate the skills base. Whatever SSN design is selected, greater assistance will be needed from the UK or US. With limited nuclear infrastructure, Australia is unlikely to be able to enrich uranium to fuel the reactors. It's likely that the reactor compartments will have to be imported pre-fabricated from the US or UK. The entire submarine enterprise will require Australia [to establish](#) a new safety and regulatory framework.

Australia will need to recruit, train and educate some of its brightest and best to build up a significant cadre of civilian engineers for construction and shoreside support tasks. Secondment of personnel to gain experience with BAE or with General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries should start as soon as possible. Personnel allocation must be carefully coordinated across the three nations. Poaching scarce technical staff from the UK or US with offers of well-paid jobs in sunny Australia would quickly cause friction and undermine AUKUS.

Besides the high-profile investment in the main construction facility, Australia will have to spend substantial sums on supporting infrastructure, including dry docks, jetties, weapons handling and storage facilities, and personnel accommodation. The 10 UK submarines require three nuclear-certified dry docks, two at Devonport and a covered ship lift at Faslane. This doesn't include the construction facilities at Barrow and two docks dedicated to the disposal of old boats. Nuclear-certified docks and jetties are expensively overengineered to withstand once-in-a-lifetime seismic, tidal or storm events and have multiple redundancies in power and water supplies.

The UK demonstrated that such infrastructure can be created from scratch quickly during the 1960s Polaris project, but such works are major undertakings, costly and require highly competent management.

Former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull said of the AUKUS deal: 'There is no design, no costing, no contract. The only certainty is that we won't have new submarines for 20 years, and their cost will be a lot more than the French subs.' This is broadly correct. The eventual acquisition of SSNs is possible, but there are many potential showstoppers. The single biggest factor will probably be just how much the US government is willing to prioritise industrial assistance to the RAN at the expense of growing and supporting its own submarine fleet. The US has only ever exported nuclear technologies to Britain and must amend its laws to do the same for Australia.

A couple of elderly SSNs might be available for lease in the 2030s, but realistically it will be the 2040s before the RAN has sufficient SSNs to exert a strategic effect. The geopolitical situation could be vastly different then, and growing Chinese power and influence won't wait for others to attain parity. The Australian public will also have to buy in to a project needing political commitment for decades and the RAN will have to lean heavily on allies and provide an enormous budget to cover the true financial costs of nuclear ownership.

***Pete Sandeman** is the main writer and editor of the UK site *Navy Lookout*, which he founded in 2007. He is a regular contributor to *Warships International Fleet Review* magazine and a member of the UK's Independent Defence Media Association. This is an edited version of a [piece](#) he wrote for *Navy Lookout*.

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'Three sheets to the wind'

The earliest written record of this everyday phrase is in the 1820s, and the original phrase was 'three sheets *in* the wind'. To be three sheets to the wind is to be very drunk.

The 'sheet' are the ropes that control the sails on a ship. If the line is not secured, the sail flops in the wind, and the ship loses headway and control. If all three sails are loose, the ship is out of control.

At the time, sailors had devised a sliding scale of drunkenness; to be tipsy was one sheet to the wind 'or a sheet in the wind's eye', and three sheets to the wind was the falling-over stage!



Kitty Hawk carrier heads for scrapyard



The US Navy warship USS Kitty Hawk, the last commissioned conventional-powered aircraft carrier, embarked on its final voyage on Saturday, leaving Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Washington, to be turned into scrap metal by a shipbreaking company in Brownsville, Texas, [the Navy said](#), the [Insider](#) reports.

The Navy decommissioned the first-in-class ship in 2009 after 48 years of service, putting the ship in mothballs for over a decade before selling the carrier and the USS John F. Kennedy to International Shipbreaking Limited for just one cent each in October, [Insider previously reported](#).

Because the Kitty Hawk is much too large, at over 280 feet wide and more than 1,000 feet long, to traverse the Panama Canal, the "Battle Cat" will make its final journey to Texas via the Strait of Magellan, a natural passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, [The Kitsap Sun reported](#).

The journey around South America could take it across roughly 16,000 miles and over 130 days to complete, [The War Zone reported](#). Launched in 1960 and commissioned the following year, the Kitty Hawk carried out missions around the world and participated in combat operations in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The ship later served as the only forward-deployed carrier for 10 years.

Notable moments from its many years of service include testing whether U-2 spy planes could be launched from the deck of a carrier; a race riot; and a collision with a Soviet submarine. The Kitty Hawk was the last commissioned oil-powered US Navy aircraft carrier to be decommissioned. The current fleet is made up entirely of nuclear-powered carriers.

"As hard as life was on this ship, it's part of my history," Corey Urband, who served as a machinist's mate on the Kitty Hawk in the 1990s, [told The Kitsap Sun](#). "While most people were graduating from high school and college, I was 30 feet below the waterline, halfway around the world from home." The former sailor watched from shore as the ship left Bremerton over the weekend.

The aircraft carrier is the last of the Kitty Hawk-class carriers, as the other two ships in the three-ship class were either scrapped or scuttled.

Royal Navy frigate collided with Russian sub, it's revealed

The 2020 incident has only just come to light.

James Wharton

6th January 2022 at 5:30pm

A Royal Navy Type 23 frigate was involved in a collision at sea when a piece of the ship's underwater tracking equipment came into contact with a Russian submarine, it has been revealed.

HMS Northumberland's sonar apparatus was struck while deployed underwater by a vessel it was tracking in the North Atlantic in late 2020.

The collision has been revealed by a Channel 5 documentary, the filming of which coincided with the incident, and which defence sources described as "extremely rare."

The television documentary series is called *Warship: Life at Sea*, and is currently airing on Monday evenings, with the episode featuring the incident due to be broadcast later this month. A Royal Navy source has confirmed that the collision happened, saying: "It's unfortunate that the tracked item came into contact with the equipment tracking it, causing HMS Northumberland to return alongside."



HMS Northumberland was on patrol in the North Atlantic when equipment attached to her stern "collided" with a Russian submarine in late 2020. Credit: CROWN.

In the episode, HMS Northumberland is filmed as she is forced to end her patrol early following the collision, returning to Scotland for essential repairs.

One former navy commander with considerable knowledge of the sonar equipment and type of patrol HMS Northumberland was undertaking at the time questioned whether the incident was an accident.

"Maybe it wasn't an accident."

Speaking to Forces News, Former Royal Navy Commander Tom Sharpe said the collision could have been a deliberate act by the Russian sub.

He said: "That class of frigate, well operated and well run, is very, very stealthy. It's possible the submarine was closer than it thought it was.

"Otherwise, you start tending to think that maybe it wasn't an accident. Maybe it was deliberate. I don't want to cause mischief, but that has happened before so that's an option in this case."



The collision caused HMS Northumberland to return alongside for essential repairs. Picture: Channel5/Artlab Films
The equipment in question is called a Towed Array. Type 23s like Northumberland use them to detect underwater threats while on patrol.

It works by being tethered to the ship's stern and extended out at distances of up to two miles. Fitted to the array is sophisticated sonar equipment, which, in this incident, was in a collision with the Russian submarine.

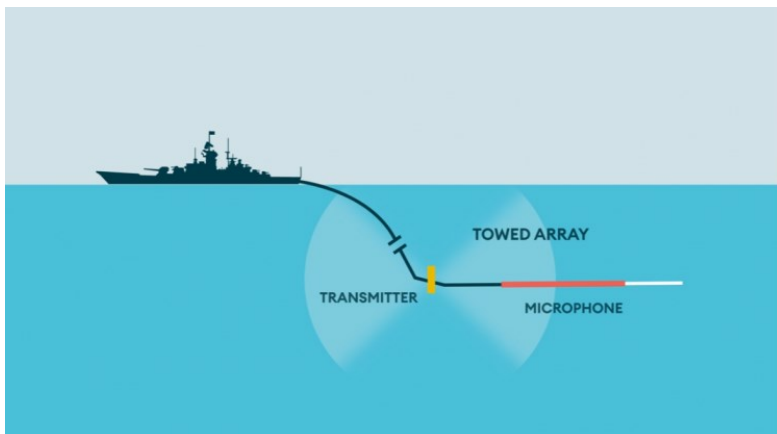
HMS Northumberland was tracking the underwater vessel at the time of the incident. Yet, it is unclear whether the submarine was damaged in the contact or remained in the area following the frigate's departure.

Nevertheless, Mr Sharpe said towed arrays are not insignificant bits of kit and more likely than not, the Russian crew would have felt the impact.

He said: "These are huge bits of kit. The towed array on its wheel is vast and weighs tonnes, and it's very complex. Within it is a great array of equipment and wires."

A Ministry of Defence Spokesperson said: "In late 2020 a Russian submarine being tracked by HMS Northumberland came into contact with her towed array sonar."

"The Royal Navy regularly tracks foreign ships and submarines in order to ensure the defence of the United Kingdom."



The Russian submarine struck a Towed Array deployed from HMS Northumberland's stern.

The Rebellious Reason British Submarines Fly The Jolly Roger After Missions

The tradition followed comments that submariners should be hanged as pirates
6th August 2021 at 5:25pm



HMS Conqueror submarine flies the Jolly Roger as she returns to Faslane Holy Loch after sinking Argentinean battleship General Belgrano South Atlantic Falklands War, July 1982. Picture: Trinity Mirror / Mirrorpix / Alamy
The sight of a Jolly Roger flag once struck fear into the hearts of sailors at sea as it often meant a bloodthirsty band of pirates were about to launch a deadly attack – but there is a fascinating, if not somewhat rebellious, reason why today's Royal Navy submarines fly the iconic skull and crossbones as part of a tradition that dates back to the First World War.

Britain's Submarine fleet might now be seen as an unrivalled Silent Service that gives the Royal Navy strength beneath the waves but that was not always the case. In its early days, the service was not so well regarded in all quarters of the navy, with some suggesting that underwater warfare was, well, just not cricket. When the Royal Navy launched its first submarine in 1901, the then First Sea Lord, Admiral Arthur Wilson, reportedly stated that submariners were 'nothing more than tradesmen'.

He added that submarines were 'underhand, unfair, and damned un-English,' with some suggestions that submarine crews should be hanged as pirates. The service had only been in operation for just over a decade when the First World War broke out in 1914 and had yet to prove itself in battle. That changed with the onset of the Great War.



Submarine tradition includes flying the Jolly Roger. Picture: Jumpstory.

Submariner Lieutenant-Commander, later to become Admiral, Sir Max Horton, had at the time been in command of one of the first of Britain's ocean-going submarines, HMS E9, which notched up a series of successful operations as the war developed – including torpedoing the German SMS Hela off the coast of the North Sea archipelago Heligoland, and the sinking of the German destroyer S116, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

Britain's Submarine Service began earning a reputation as an [effective fighting force](#) that was making a significant strategic difference to the course of the war. Another British submarine attack on the Prinz Adalbert in October 1915 inflicted what was perhaps one of the greatest single losses for the German Navy in the Baltic – helping to seal the reputation of Britain's submarines as a vital part of the Royal Navy's fleet.

Following a series of victorious operations, the then Lieutenant Commander Max Horton, remembering the comments about submarine crews being thought of as 'pirates' offered a retort to the initial sentiment – by flying a Jolly Roger from his submarine on return from a successful patrol. He carried on this practice – adding another flag on the submarine each time he returned from a successful operation.

However, the submarines started to win victory after victory, so the collection of flags flown from the top of the conning tower soon became numerous, so that practice was swapped – with a submarine flying one single large Jolly Roger flag, with symbols indicating each of the submarine's successes sewn on to the flag.

The current First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, paid homage to the legacy of Admiral Sir Max Horton in a post on Twitter earlier this month, marking "70 years since the passing of Admiral Sir Max Horton" and adding: "As Captain of HM Submarine E9 he instigated the tradition of submarines flying the Jolly Roger on successful return from patrol."



NAVY

[We Give You: Dreadnought Class Trident Nuclear Submarines](#)

20th March 2020

The First Sea Lord also posted an image of HMS Utmost flying a Jolly Roger in 1942, showing how the tradition has been carried on through the Second World War into modern times.



NAVY

[Royal Navy's Gold Dolphin Badge Marks 50 Years Of Pride For Submariners](#)

15th July 2021

Symbols included bars, to show how many hits on ships had been notched up, with each bar representing ships torpedoed. However, post-war flags sometimes depict the silhouette of a ship instead. Symbols of mines indicated mine-laying operations, while other operations, such as when a submarine was used as a navigation marker, were depicted by torches or lighthouses.

Commanders of submarine flotillas followed in the footsteps of Sir Max and even began issuing Jolly Roger flags to submariners, with procedures issued for how they should be used and displayed. Reports suggest not all submarines joined in the practice, with some fearing that flying the flag was too boastful, or that successes could not always easily be confirmed. However, some Allied submariners and Commonwealth nations did follow suit during the Second World War – flying the Jolly Roger on return from missions.

The practice later [turned into tradition](#) – with other submarine commanders paying homage to the original practice by Admiral Sir Max Horton and this has continued throughout the 20th Century and into the 21st. During the Falklands War, for instance, the crew of HMS Conqueror is reported to have raised the Jolly Roger, complete with the silhouette of a cruiser, following a successful attack on the Argentine cruiser ARA General Belgrano.

There is no official Royal Navy policy in place to govern the flying of Jolly Roger flags, but submarine commanders have been known to follow the tradition, with some submarines spotted flying the flag on their return to port at Faslane.

HMAS Adelaide suffers power failure during Tongan mission after volcanic eruption

Exclusive by defence correspondent Andrew Greene 52 mins ago
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Provided by ABC NEWS HMAS Adelaide went sent to Tonga to deliver humanitarian aid in the wake of the volcanic eruption. (Defence Media: POIS Christopher Szumlanski)

A massive electrical power failure has crippled the Australian Navy's largest warship as it completes its humanitarian mission to Tonga following the January 14 volcanic eruption and tsunami. The ABC can reveal that despite days of emergency work HMAS Adelaide, known as a landing helicopter dock (LHD), is still experiencing problems, having earlier been "stranded".

An email sent by HMAS Adelaide's commander states: "Marine Technical Department have worked throughout the past few days to restore power and get us operational again." In the message, obtained by the ABC, Captain Stuart Watters says: "We are still experiencing issues with external communications and wanted to let you know that everyone onboard is safe."

"We want to thank the technical team for their hard work in hot and difficult conditions which is enabling us to complete our task and restore services and communications." Sources on board HMAS Adelaide have told the ABC the ship was "stranded" for a period of time, because of a "total power failure", including the backup power.

According to several members of the crew, most of the ship's company were now sleeping "above deck" because of the power problems. Last week, [HMAS Adelaide was allowed to dock in Tonga to deliver humanitarian supplies](#), despite a COVID-19 outbreak that occurred on board shortly after it had departed Australia.

The ship's commander insists "COVID protocols are in place and effected personnel are being provided with medical care and being supported". "A number of people who were originally identified as infectious have been cleared to return to duty after completing quarantine," Captain Watters wrote. The Defence Department is yet to respond to the ABC's request for comment.

Claims sailors are enduring scorching conditions to repair 'stranded' HMAS Adelaide as COVID cases onboard rise



© Provided by ABC NEWS Sources on board HMAS Adelaide have told the ABC the ship is not fixed yet. (Supplied)

Exhausted naval technicians claim they're battling temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius as they work around the clock to repair a power failure that's crippled Australia's largest warship, HMAS Adelaide, in the Pacific.

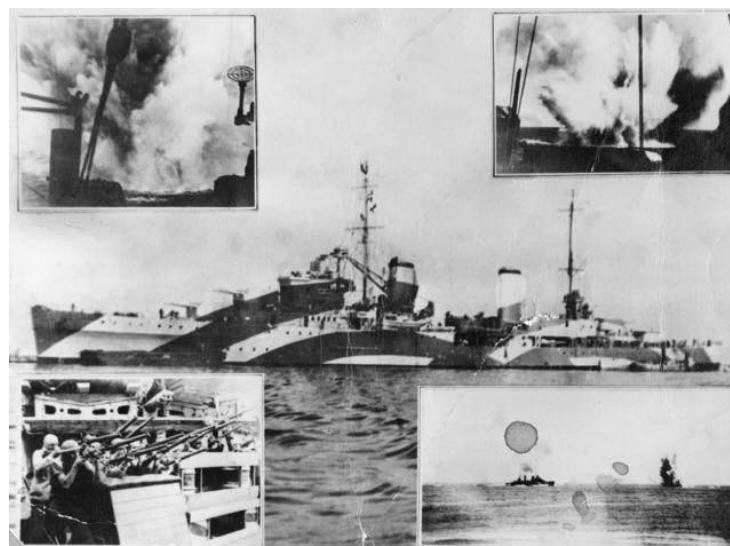
The ABC has also been told the number of COVID-19 cases on board the vessel known as a "landing helicopter dock" (LHD) is continuing to rise, with some defence sources suggesting up to 70 crew members have now tested positive to the virus.

"Some of the marine technicians are experiencing heat exhaustion, as they pull 12- to-14-hour days in 50-degree engine rooms," a figure familiar with the situation claims.

"The ship isn't fixed; it cannot move and there is more for them to fix!" the defence source told the ABC, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

HMAS Adelaide had been completing a humanitarian mission delivering supplies to tsunami-devastated Tonga when the massive power outages hit the Spanish-built warship last week.

Sources on board the ship [told the ABC the ship was "stranded" for a period of time, because of a "total power failure"](#), including the backup power.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00395.001

Ahead of the LHD's arrival in Tonga, a COVID-19 outbreak emerged on board despite extensive screening of the ship's crew before their departure from Brisbane.

Last week Defence Minister Peter Dutton confirmed 23 positive cases had been detected at sea, but the ABC has been told that figure has now risen to as high as 70.

In an email obtained by the ABC, HMAS Adelaide's commander has described conditions on board as "uncomfortable", but Defence insists "essential functions such as refrigeration and sanitation systems are up and running".

The Defence Department has also revealed "air-conditioning is operational in most areas of the ship" and "back-up power has been activated".

RAAF flights carrying spare parts

At least two Royal Australian Air Force planes are soon expected to leave for Tonga, carrying spare parts needed to fix the problems hampering HMAS Adelaide.

On Monday the Defence Department revealed civilian specialists were already "en route to conduct an assessment of the affected systems".

The ABC has been told the complex repair operation involves obtaining spare parts and equipment from "all over Australia including Western Australia" and then flying them to Tonga under strict COVID-19 protocols.

The Defence Department has so far declined to respond to a series of detailed questions sent by the ABC regarding the current status of HMAS Adelaide and the crew on board.

Independent Senator and former Royal Australian Navy submariner Rex Patrick says he's particularly alarmed at the picture emerging from HMAS Adelaide.

"What we are seeing reportedly is that there is a total of power failure," Senator Patrick told the ABC.

"If that is the case, that means there is a single point of failure and you cannot have that on the war-ship and we will definitely have to do look at the details of what happened there, because that is not acceptable."



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RN's newest attack sub commissioned



HMS Audacious, the fourth of the Royal Navy's Astute-class submarines, arriving at her new home at HM Naval Base Clyde

The Royal Navy's newest attack submarine HMS Audacious has been formally commissioned into the fleet during a ceremony at Clyde naval base.

Members of Audacious' company and personnel from the Submarine Flotilla were joined at the Faslane ceremony by the Astute-class nuclear-powered submarine's sponsor Lady Elizabeth Jones. It marked the completion of extensive tests and sea trials for the 97-metre vessel with Audacious now ready for global operations. Commander Jim Howard, Commanding Officer of HMS Audacious, said: "As we now move from sea trials into our operational sea training programme, I and the whole ship's company are ready for the challenge ahead. "This formal commissioning ceremony marks another major milestone in the platform being fully operational and ready for tasking." According to the Navy, the Astute-class submarines are the largest, most advanced and most powerful attack submarines ever operated by the Senior Service.

The vessels, which are equipped with sophisticated sensors, can carry Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise Missiles and Spearfish heavyweight torpedos – [HMS Audacious recently conducted trials of the upgraded Spearfish torpedo in the Bahamas](#). The Astute-class submarines will gradually replace the Trafalgar-class and can circumnavigate the globe while submerged, producing their own oxygen and drinking water. They are also the Navy's quietest class of submarines yet and the first to be fitted without optical periscopes, instead using high-spec video technology. During the ceremony, Audacious' company formed platoons on the jetty and were inspected by Lady Jones. She then addressed those gathered for the occasion and cut the commissioning cake. Commodore Jim Perks, head of the Royal Navy Submarine Service, said the commissioning ceremony is an "extremely important day in the life of HMS Audacious".

"Throughout this pandemic, Audacious has delivered her extensive trials programme without fuss and with considerable style. "I wish the boat, crew and their families all the very best for the future and look forward to seeing her deliver on operations."

HMS Audacious joins her sister vessels HMS Astute, HMS Artful and HMS Ambush in the fleet. The boats will eventually be joined by HMS Anson, HMS Agamemnon and HMS Agincourt and will all operate from Clyde naval base. It was announced last week that [£170m was being invested to design the replacement of the Astute-class submarines](#) for when they leave service. Each Astute-class boat is expected to serve for at least 25 years.

FREMANTLE SHIPPING NEWS

THE RESEARCH VESSEL “PAX” – WHAT A STORY!

December 5, 2021 in Shipping News

By Jay Harman

*Here's the largely unexpurgated true story, told by her last owner but one, of how the Research Vessel “Pax” became the **Research Vessel “Pax”**. Sadly she is no more.*

~~~~~

Inside she looked and smelled like the Black Hole of Calcutta, yet I felt like I had found a Rembrandt in the attic. Here was a rare find, fully deserving restoration.



The RV “Pax” a few years after the author’s discovery of her

The former warship was in a sorry state when I first saw her on a visit to the Port of Fremantle in January 1991. Sun, water, and salt had ravaged her paint and exposed her timbers. In Navy tradition, there were no portholes in this ship, so all cabins and holds were completely dark. As there was no fuel to run the generators and start the lighting system, I inspected her with a torch. All her decks leaked badly. There were no dry quarters in the entire vessel. Forty-one mattresses were mouldy and rotten.

With a length of 44 metres and weighing 330 tons, **RV Pax** was Australia’s largest wooden vessel. She was constructed in San Francisco with the finest oak and Douglas fir cut from ancient forests. Her extensive fittings were crafted in solid naval bronze and all fuel and water tanks were built in heavy copper.



The RV Pax in an earlier life as M855 of the Dutch Navy

Built as an acoustic minesweeper, she could not have any magnetic materials on board that might attract and trigger an explosion from a mine. As a result, her perfectly preserved engines (slow-revving Cleveland diesels), transmissions, and machinery were constructed entirely of nonmagnetic stainless steel. 5,000 years of wooden ship building, one of humanity's most important traditions, and driver of technological innovation, is ending. Few wooden ships have been built in the past 50 years and it is almost guaranteed that wooden shipbuilding around the world will become extinct in the coming years. Skills, facilities, tools, and suitable timbers are in major decline. Today it would cost many times more to build a boat in wood than in steel. The great shipbuilding timbers: including mahogany, Baltic pine, teak, old growth Douglas fir, and Kauri have been exploited so heavily that few productive forests remain on earth.

Shipwrighting is regarded as the most demanding, and having the highest skill requirements, of all the trades – especially when it comes to wooden boats. Correlated to the demise of shipwright trades is the disintegration of wooden ships themselves. Pre-modern techniques provided little protection against rot and worm damage. Combined with their vulnerability to being wrecked, the life expectancy of a wooden ship was in the order of 20 to 30 years. 21st century anti-fouling coatings, epoxy preservation, and high tech paints have meant that an existing wooden ship can be preserved indefinitely. But where are the wooden to preserve? If the industry as a whole waned over 50 years ago and most wooden ships only lasted 20 to 30 years, then few wooden ships of note should remain in the world. And this proves to be the case.

I had been searching for a suitable, well built, comfortable ship for conversion to a marine research vessel. MSC148, built during the Korean War, served as a minesweeper for 20 years of the Cold War. She was built to the highest standards and most advanced technology of the day. The USA was rich, with a burgeoning economy. It could afford the best and it was essential in the face of the Cold War. MSC148 was therefore built using the historic pinnacle of wooden boat building technology. She was the product of a then abundant availability of premium material, skilled traditional shipwrights, new technology, and arguably for that time, the best naval architects in the world, Sparkman and Stevens. She was the sole survivor of 160 commissioned Acoustic Minesweepers (AMS) in the Bluebird class. She was perfect for me to use as a base for my marine research focusing on the drag and friction reduction strategies of sea creatures and seaweeds.







Although built for the United States Navy, MSC148 was soon transferred to NATO and, in 1954, assigned to the Royal Netherlands Navy. Christened MSS “Breskens,” M855 served as a mine sweeper in the North Sea until being decommissioned in 1976 and sold to a private owner.

It is rumored that she was then involved in illegal smuggling activities along the North African coast until eventually being acquired by Prince Jah, the Nizam of Hyderabad – heir to the world’s richest man (his grandfather) and inheritor of one of the world’s most valuable and fabulous collections of jewels.



Hyderabad emerald headpiece

Prince Jah renamed the vessel the Motor Yacht “Kalbarrie” and sailed her to India and Singapore, where she underwent a conversion to a private yacht. At that time, it was reported that many secret compartments were added and according to the Prince’s personal staff, she was used to bring family treasures from India. The many priceless artifacts accumulated by the royal family during centuries of rule included two solid gold “coins”, which were so large that it required a horse to carry them. The coins were 370 years old, minted by Mughal emperors and valued at about \$18 million in 1980. The prince subsequently offered them for sale through Christie’s auction house, causing a challenge to the sale with the claim that they were national treasures.

The staggering collection of family jewels included the 184.75 carat Jacob’s Diamond, formerly known as the Victoria and then Imperial Diamond. It is one of the largest in the world. Before being cut, it was 457 carats, by far the world’s largest diamond. Undervalued by Jah’s ancestor, it was used as a paperweight for many years.



The Palace at Chowmahalla

With a kingdom the size of France, the Nizam had 16 million subjects, 40 palaces, an army of 22,000 and 11,000 servants. The previous Nizam, who in today’s money was worth \$211 billion dollars – more than double Bill Gates’ fortune – had hundreds of shirts flown to Paris to be laundered. He had a stable of Rolls Royces and Bentleys from 1916 vintage onwards. Bags of pearls were used as doorstops. There were wagons of gold bars, 25,000 diamonds, and 2,000 emeralds.

In his thirties, whilst studying engineering in London, Prince Jah was shocked to find that his grandfather had bypassed the assumed heir (the Prince’s father) and left him his fortune. Unprepared for such wealth and responsibilities, he embarked on a lavish lifestyle including a major birthday celebration in Hyderabad attended by Jackie Kennedy. Yearning for a quieter life, he decided to emigrate to Australia, with as much wealth as he could carry. The Indian government was seeking to appropriate the inheritance as national treasures. “Kalbarrie” was sailed to Western Australia.

Prince Jah had a personal ambition to catch the world's largest game fish (a great white shark) in the Great Australian Bight. To handle such a prize, a three-ton crane was fitted to the aft deck of Kalbarrie. It also served to lift his Land Rover on and off the boat when visiting remote ports. The Prince moored his vessel in Fremantle, the port to Perth, and threw grand parties onboard for wealthy friends and socialites, especially during the 1987 America's Cup yacht races off Fremantle.

In the 1980s, the ship was suspected of being used to smuggle stolen bullion out of Australia from the celebrated "Mint Gold Heist." Perth is the most isolated capital city in the world. The nearest neighboring city is Adelaide – 2700 kilometers away and connected only by a two-lane highway stretching across barren desert. Established in 1829 as the most remote outpost of the British Empire, Perth had not been exposed to sophisticated criminal activities. Until.... Western Australia built its early economy and culture on a major gold rush in the late nineteenth century. The official processor and marketer of the large quantities of precious metals, still being mined today, has been the State government-owned Perth Mint.

It came to pass that an anonymous gentleman, Mr X, began telephoning staff at the Mint on a regular basis inquiring about the fluctuating market price of bullion. Over several months he became well known to and friendly with the staff. His message? That as soon as the price was right, he was going to purchase a large quantity of bullion. Coincidentally, during this period, a suburban bank was broken into and set on fire. Mysteriously, no money was stolen. What wasn't discovered until much later was that some blank cashier's cheques were taken and the fire was set to hide the fact.

Next scene: Mr X telephoned his "friends" at the mint and advised that the bullion price was now right. He was going to purchase a large quantity with a bank cashier's cheque delivered by a courier service that would also pick up the gold. It went flawlessly. Mint staff, trusting in the Australian tradition of "mateship," greeted the courier with open arms. They carried the gold out to his van, helped him load it and waved him and the gold goodbye.

The van driver was later found and questioned. He had been instructed to drop his load of gold on the road verge beside an unsecured airstrip. As a former Fisheries officer I had come to know the Mickelberg brothers, a family of pioneering, professional abalone divers, hard-working men living adventurous lives. It so happened that one of the Mickelbergs was a pilot. One thing led police to another and pretty soon the brothers were deemed suspects. Coincidentally it seems that the police suspected one of Prince Jah's staff of being implicated in the affair, so when MY Kalbarrie departed soon after for foreign ports, the police surmised that the stolen gold was aboard. The hunt was on. Some days and 2,000 kilometres later, Kalbarrie called into Broome to refuel on her way to Papua New Guinea and beyond. Police swarmed the vessel and searched it for two weeks. Holes were cut in the interior paneling, air-conditioning ducting and floors in a thorough but vain attempt to find the booty. Sniffer dogs were similarly unsuccessful.

Far from convinced of the vessel's innocence in the matter, the police ultimately had no choice but to release her. Kalbarrie sailed on another 3,000 kilometers to Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. Local police had been alerted by Australian authorities, so they too seized and searched the vessel. Despite weeks of searching from top to bottom, no gold was found – though several of the aforementioned secret compartments were still not discovered. The innocence or otherwise of the Mickelbergs has been hotly contested ever since. They were convicted at trial and served years in prison. In 2004, the West Australian Supreme Court quashed their convictions. Members of the police force were found to have fabricated evidence. There followed a formal apology from the police and very large compensation payouts to the brothers. The crime still has not been solved.



The Prince subsequently fell upon hard times and the State's Sheriff eventually seized the vessel, after her return to the State, for unpaid bills. It is reported that more than 800 claims had been made against the Prince and his inheritance. I was in the right place at the right time. I purchased her, renamed her the Research Vessel "Pax," and converted her to a research platform.



RV Pax into the water 2007

I spent 20 years stabilising and maintaining her, and learned that a couple of very valuable items of jewelry had gone missing on the vessel during transit from India. The exciting thought of finding them was never far from my mind. I searched high and low with no luck, though I did find a number of empty secret compartments.

In 2012 I wound up my ship-borne research and contemplated what should happen to the vessel I'd fallen in love with. Certainly I thought it should be preserved for future generations. I determined to donate her to a worthy cause and ran a national advertising campaign calling for expressions of interest and ideas for her future. There were many responses from as far afield as Switzerland, the US, and many parts of Australia.

I was approached by a group of first responders suffering PTSD – ambulance, police, firefighters, and military, who felt it would be an excellent platform and activity for their convalescence. I was delighted to gift Pax to them.





The new owners started out well, though their resources were scarce and attendance to the vessel was limited. Thieves broke into a storage facility and stole over \$100,000 of propellers and other irreplaceable equipment. That was bad enough, but it appears that vandals later broke into the boat itself, opening the seacocks to disguise their entry. Sadly, that resulted in her sinking on her mooring in Cockburn Sound, with seawater flooding all her compartments, engines, and equipment.

The veterans could not organize a recovery, so the State of Western Australia stepped in to raise the wreck and dispose of her – the last example of the peak of 5,000 years of wooden shipbuilding was dismantled, crushed, and carted off to scrap merchants and landfill.

I did recover Pax's steering wheel, compass, and other artifacts, which I plan to donate to the Augusta Museum.

I still wonder what became of the fabulous missing jewels and gold.

\* Words by **Jay Harman**. The black and white images, that of the Hyderabad emerald and that of the Palace are in the public domain; the others belong to Jay Harman.





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