



Navy League of Australia South Australia Division

A.C.N. 008 451 063

The Honourable Frances Adamson AC Governor of South Australia

South Australia Division Newsletter – June 2023

Web: <http://navyleague.org.au/>

HMAS WESTRALIA HEROIC CREW REMEMBERED - 25TH ANNIVERSARY - 8TH MAY 2023 AT HMAS STIRLING



Commander Australian Fleet Rear Admiral Christopher Smith salutes after laying a wreath during the HMAS *Westralia* 25 year memorial service at HMAS Stirling W.A.

Photo: Able Seaman Rikki-Lea Phillips

The heroic actions of the crew on board HMAS *Westralia* 25 years ago were remembered at a memorial service at HMAS *Stirling*. On 5th May 1998, soon after departing HMAS *Stirling*, a devastating fire broke out in the ship's engine room. Despite the fire eventually being brought under control these young sailors succumbed to the smoke which engulfed the engine space.

Midshipman Megan Pelly (b.1975)

Petty Officer Shaun Smith (b.1968)

Leading Seaman Bradley Meek (b.1972)

Able Seaman Phillip Carroll (b.1974)

The service was attended by survivors of the tragedy, along with their families and the Commander Australian Fleet Rear Admiral Christopher Smith, who paid tribute to the bravery and sacrifice shown by ship's company and crews of supporting ships.

"Those on board *Westralia* fought heroically and effectively to overcome the fire that day, with the acts of bravery observed in the finest traditions of our Navy," stated RADM Christopher Smith.

"I acknowledge our Navy people and their families who were impacted by this maritime accident and remember and honour the four *Westralia* shipmates we lost that day."

The resulting board of inquiry made numerous recommendations to improve safety systems across the fleet, and the Navy of today is better placed to prevent a tragedy such as this happening again. Importantly, the board of inquiry also noted "all members of the ship's company contributed, in some way or other, in successfully overcoming the main machinery space fire and in providing good medical care to the casualties". This team effort was recognised with a Navy Group Commendation by the Chief of Navy in 2019.

The board found that "the dangerous and difficult fire in the main machinery space of *Westralia* was fought heroically and effectively by the ships' crew. There were many acts of bravery and exceptional performance on the day".

LEST WE FORGET

THE KING'S CORONATION – AN EXTRAORDINARY DAY TO REMEMBER



The Australian Defence Force took pride of place as they marched down the Mall on 8 May 2023 at the Coronation of their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. (photo Emma Schwenke)

The King and Queen were crowned in a ceremony at Westminster Abbey in front of thousands of guests, including Corporal Daniel Keighran VC and Keith Payne VC who formed part of the Order of Chivalry procession.

"It was a huge privilege to have played even a small part in the service, and an absolute honour to be there with Keith representing our brave service men and women past and present," Corporal Keighran said.

About 40 Australian soldiers, sailors and aviators formed part of the 600-strong Commonwealth contingent from nearly 40 nations and led the Coronation Procession from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace.

Petty Officer William Garlick was proud to be a part of the historic occasion.

"The highlight for me was hearing the crowd cheering 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie' as we went past. That certainly brought a little bit of home to England," Petty Officer Garlick said. "It is an honour to come back to the United Kingdom after having marched in Her Majesty the Queen's funeral. The atmosphere this time around was very different; it was less solemn and more joyous. "You could see the pride in the smiles on everyone's faces and you could hear it in the cheers of the crowd. It is definitely something that will stay with me for a long time."

The contingent marched in alphabetical order with Antigua and Australia at the front of the Commonwealth Procession with Zambia bringing up the rear.

They were followed by 4000 British service men and women with a further 2000 lining the streets between the Abbey and the Palace.

Corporal Tegan Ross and Bombardier Michael Nona marched alongside the King and Queen in the 260-year-old Gold State Coach. "It was everything I thought it would be and more," Corporal Ross said. "I will cherish this moment for the rest of my life." "It was pretty exhilarating and pretty surreal," Bombardier Nona said.

"It all came together with the crowds, the atmosphere and the flyover. This experience will be the highlight of my career."

Australia's Federation Guard Officer Commanding, Squadron Leader Mitchell Brown, was pleased that all the training paid off. "I'm so proud of the Federation Guard members here representing all three services," Squadron Leader Brown said.

Australian Defence Force personnel weren't just on foot. Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Daniel Cochrane, on exchange to the Royal Navy's 820 Naval Air Squadron, flew as a crew member aboard a Merlin MK2 helicopter. "It was surreal," Lieutenant Cochrane said. "There were a lot of changes to the plan due to the weather, but we got there in the end."

Squadron Leader Brown summed up the occasion as **"It was just an extraordinary day."**

Our Governor, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC represented South Australia



The Governor of South Australia, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC at a reception in London with His Majesty King Charles III, before attending the Coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey.
RIGHT- Meeting Aussies waiting along The Mall



Early morning Coronation Rehearsals for 40 ADF personnel as part of the Commonwealth Contingent

HMAS SYDNEY RESCUES CIVILIAN MARINER



Leading Seaman Ryan Feenan, Leading Seaman Aaron Evans and medical officer Lieutenant Jarrad Blackburn provide care to an injured mariner aboard an oil tanker during a medical evacuation in the Southern Indian Ocean. Photo: Tyson Burraston

HMAS *Sydney* personnel have conducted a medical evacuation of a civilian mariner from an oil tanker, hundreds of nautical miles off the West Australian coast. The initial request for Navy Maritime Operations assistance came from the Rescue Coordination Centre Australia within the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

With advanced on-board medical capabilities, speed and range, *Sydney* was promptly re-tasked from training exercises at sea and directed by Maritime Operations to render assistance.

Sydney proceeded at speed, travelling about 850nm (1600km) deep into the Southern Indian Ocean to assist the mariner, who had sustained a serious injury while working to rectify a mechanical defect on board the oil tanker *MV Energy River*. The tanker was unable to transport him to a medical facility within an adequate time.

Even at speed, it took almost two days for *Sydney* to reach this remote area of the globe, at which point, a specialist team was inserted onto the vessel to assess, treat and transfer the patient.

Commanding Officer *Sydney* Commander Grant Coleman said the crew remained adaptive and resilient throughout the operation. "The men and women on board *Sydney* were required to shift quite quickly from conducting warfare exercises at sea to assisting an injured and distressed mariner," he said. "The medical evacuation team showed great professionalism in safely transporting the injured mariner from the oil tanker back to the ship. "I'm proud of team *Sydney* for their conduct throughout the operation."

Although favourable conditions prevailed, evacuating an immobile patient in a stretcher off a merchant ship in the open ocean came with its challenges, and highlighted the skill and professionalism of *Sydney*'s medical and seamanship teams. Medical officer Lieutenant Jarrad Blackburn led the medical evacuation team, which provided much needed medical assistance to the injured mariner.

"From the ship's company of *Sydney*, we wish the mariner all the best in his recovery and hope he can return to sea again soon."

SHIP'S MILEAGE "OUT OF THIS WORLD"



Commanding Officer HMAS Toowoomba Commander Darin MacDonald, left, receives a painting by artist Domenic Bartolo from the Western Australian Naval Association President Ian Holthouse.

Photo: Leading Seaman Ernesto Sanchez

It's equivalent to a trip to the moon and back and 23 times around the circumference of the Earth. Although, near impossible to imagine, HMAS *Toowoomba* has completed half a million sea miles since commissioned.

After being welcomed into the Navy on October 8, 2005, *Toowoomba* was immediately called into service, completing its first operational deployment in December that year. Almost three years to the day of commission, *Toowoomba* achieved its first major sea mileage milestone, completing 100,000 nautical miles.

Toowoomba has undergone significant upgrades throughout its period of service in the Navy. In 2016, *Toowoomba* completed the anti-ship missile defence upgrade, which provided cutting-edge radars and missile defence systems.

More recently, *Toowoomba* completed the Anzac mid-life capability assurance program, which provided further upgrades through the ship's engineering plant, warfighting capability and modernised communications suite.

Chief Petty Officer Electronics Technician Daniel Wright has served on *Toowoomba* throughout the past decade. "It is amazing to think what this ship has achieved during its 17 years of service," he said. "It has been impressive to observe the capability enhancements over the years, which allow *Toowoomba* to remain a formidable capability for the Navy."

The crew celebrated the milestone with the Commanding Officer Commander Darin MacDonald addressing the crew.

"I am immensely proud of the achievements of this ship and her crew, past and present. *Toowoomba* is only 17 years old, yet she has accomplished so much. "I am privileged to contribute to *Toowoomba*'s distinguished legacy as her eleventh commanding officer and I am immensely proud to lead such a fine ship's company, in such a capable ship."

During *Toowoomba*'s half a million sea miles across 17 years of service, it has completed deployments to operations Relex, Catalyst, Slipper, Manitou and Resolute. These are in addition to the numerous regional presence deployments, outreach programs and international exercises across the world.

FIVE POWER DEFENCE ARRANGEMENT (FPDA) EXERCISE



HMAS *Anzac* conducts a light line transfer with Royal Malaysian Navy KD Lekir during Exercise Bersama Shield. Photo: Leading Seaman Jarryd Capper

HMAS *Anzac* recently joined ships from the Royal Malaysian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy at sea for the Five Power Defence Arrangements' Exercise Bersama Shield, working to enhance interoperability in a multi-threat environment.

Lieutenant Benn Van Balen was one of the principal warfare officers aboard HMAS *Anzac*, responsible for conducting the battle on the surface, in the air and below the water. "For Bersama Shield we were fortunate enough to have training serials in multiple spheres of warfare.

"Exercising with our partners Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and the United Kingdom meant that there were a lot of assets that we were able to utilise to exercise these serials with each other across the Malaysian peninsula. "We conducted air defence exercises, anti-submarine warfare exercises, as well as surface exercises, which are ship-on-ship engagement exercises."

Lieutenant Van Balen said the ability to exercise with live assets was always appreciated and something to learn from. the multitude of live assets brought to bear by the Singaporeans and Malaysians throughout, as well as working with the many exercise construct staff from the United Kingdom, Singapore, New Zealand and Malaysia, was of great benefit for *Anzac*.

While the players in these training serials were primarily based in HMAS *Anzac*'s operation room and bridge, the ship's embarked MH-60R helicopter, named *Carnage*, was also a key enabler in gathering information and providing it back to the ship. *Carnage* aircrewman Leading Seaman Jim Neville conducted surface and sub-surface search flights throughout Bersama Shield. He stated "having a helicopter embarked aboard HMAS *Anzac* greatly increases the ship's capability – there's a variety of roles that the helicopter can fulfil for the ship, including tracking and scanning ahead of the ship for any underwater contacts or using the radar and forward-looking infrared camera to extend the range of what the ship can see.

There is also the capability of search and rescue, aeromedical evacuation and vertical replenishment, where they can externally load stores from land to ship or ship to ship. Plus a variety of different roles we can perform from the back of the helicopter."

LEGACY CENTENARY TORCH RELAY 2023 “Serving The Families of Those Who Served”

The Legacy Centenary Torch Relay began in Pozières, France in time for ANZAC Day, marking the start of a journey to celebrate 100 years since the Legacy promise was made. In the trenches of the Western Front during World War I, a soldier said to his dying mate “I’ll look after the missus and kids”. This became known as The Promise. After leaving France, the Torch Relay participants continued on to Belgium and then to London where the Legacy Flame received a Royal Welcome from King Charles III at Buckingham Palace.



His Majesty attended the event to watch the Torch bearers light the flame outside Buckingham Palace to mark the start of the relay in London. He was joined by veterans, widows and children from the London Legacy Club as well as volunteers who help support these families. **Australian Victoria Cross recipient Daniel Keighran** presented His Majesty with a Legacy Centenary Commemorative Torch to thank him for the support.

After visiting Buckingham Palace, the flame made its way to the Victoria Embankment Gardens before travelling through the historic streets of London, past Big Ben and the Cenotaph before finishing at the Australian War Memorial in Hyde Park Corner Then on to Australia. The torch will travel over 50,000 km, through 100 stops, including 45 Legacy Clubs stops world-wide and carried by approximately 1,500 torch bearers to raise over AUD10 million. The final destination is Melbourne on 12 October 2023, where it all began 100 years ago.



Adelaide's Legacy Centennial Torch Bearers at State War Memorial

**REMINDER: NAVY LEAGUE – SA DIVISION ANNUAL LUNCH SUNDAY 16 JULY 2023
COMBINED EX SERVICES MESS, TORRENS PARADE GROUND ADELAIDE**

12 for 12:30 pm Cost \$50 pp “Chrisstmas in July” menu

Bookings Essential: contact Secretary: Jean <jeanqill2@bigpond.com> (08)8272-6435

If Paying by Cheque: Please detach and return to:

The Secretary, The Navy League of Australia- SA Division, PO Box 3008, Unley SA 5061

I/We will attend the Navy League Luncheon on Sunday 16 July 2023

\$

Name/names:

If Paying by EFT: *Electronic Transfer please add your name in ref area*

\$

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HMAS ENCOUNTER III FIRST BIRTHDAY MARITIME MUSEUM PORT ADELAIDE



Hosted by Commander Emma McDonald-Kerr ADC RAN, Commanding Officer, 150 *Encounter* personnel and Navy friends, were treated to fab music from RAN band (in the gallery), mobile pizza kitchen to feed the hungry on a cold night, bar and of course “The cake” – an privilege and honour to be cut by a Navy League member and her cousin AB Marine Technician Josh Hull. A superb event. **BZ HMAS *Encounter*.**

