

# AMC LSI Association of Vic

Armed Merchant Cruiser / Landing Ship Infantry

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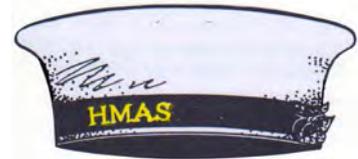


Patrons: Bruce Candy & Hiram Ristrom

President  
Chris Harvey  
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## Our Patron Special Christmas Edition 2017

# Merry Christmas



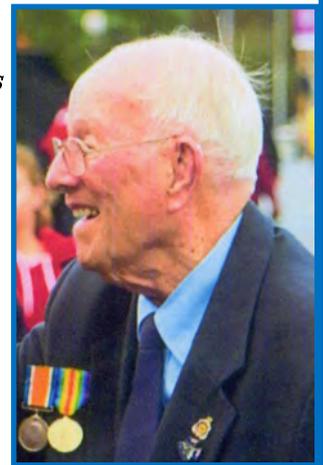
*As Christmas approaches my thoughts of the association turn towards all shipmates past and present of KANIMBLA, MANOORA, WESTRALIA and ASSAULT.*

*We pay our respect to those families who will be missing their old seafaring relative at Christmas time, we honour their service and also the service of those old shipmates still with us.*

*All seafaring men and women have something in common the sea and shipboard experience the commonality of the landing ships efforts in working together gave us a greater bond of brotherhood. We shared it all together as pioneers of the huge landing helicopter dock ships we have in the fleet today.*

*May you all have a great festive season.*

*Hiram Ristrom Co-Patron*



HIRAM on ANZAC DAY 2017

*I would like to send a very Special Christmas greeting and wishes to all my ship mate's who I served with on HMAS WESTRALIA and ASSAULT, to the committee and member's of AMC/LSI Association Australia wide a very merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.*

*Bruce Candy Co-Patron*



AB Bruce Candy 1943



Mission Statement

To honour and remember those who served with the AMC/LSI including but not limited to HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA & ASSAULT.

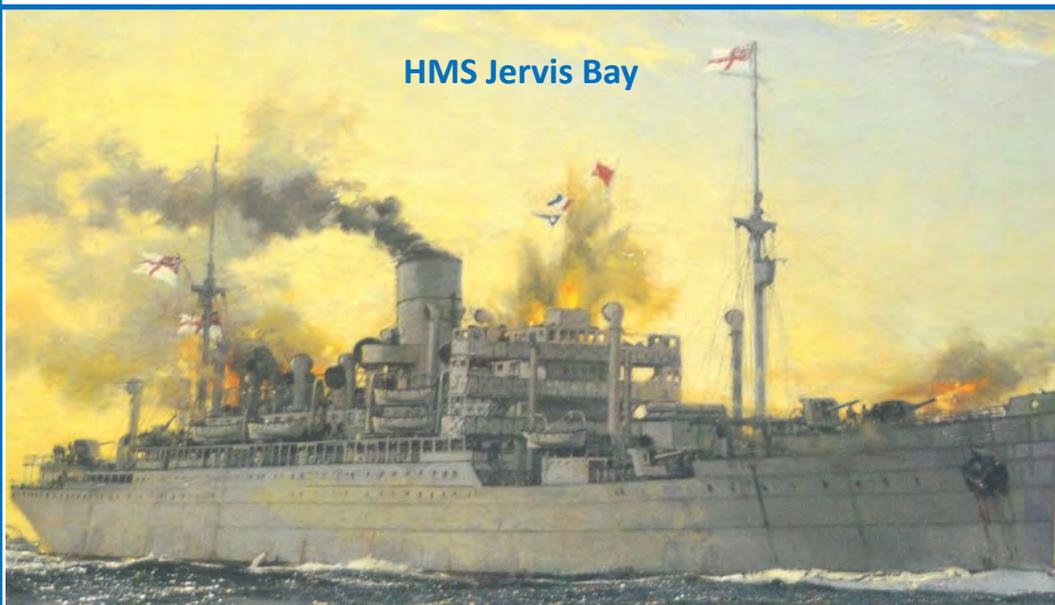
## AMC - ARMED MERCHANT CRUISER



In all wars Merchant Cargo Ship, Cruise Liners or Luxury Liners have played a vital role in all Navy's British, German, Japanese and Australian fleets. In WW1, HMS Alcantara was converted to an AMC with 4.7inch Guns and sent out to patrol the Caribbean and Panama Canal. In September 1914, HMS Carmania met a German AMC off the coast of Brazil and both opened fire with all guns. The German AMC sunk with a large loss of life. In 1915, the HMT Olympic, sister ship to the Titanic, was converted to a troop transporter and on the 12 May 1918 rammed and sunk the German submarine U-103.

In WW2, the AMC HMAS Manoora sunk the Italian AMC Romolo on the 12 June 1940. The AMC HMS Kanimbla lead a flotilla of small ships into the Persian Gulf to capture the port of Bandas Shapur IRAN. This operation

opened a rail link from Iran to Russia. Many lives were saved by not having to use the Arctic seas route to Russia where they were subject to air and submarine attacks.



**THE** best known **AMC** is **HMS Jervis Bay**. On the 28 October 1940 Convoy HX84 with 38 ships weighed anchor and proceeded seawards from Halifax, under the escort of HMS Jervis

Bay. (7x 6inch + 2 x 3inch guns, speed 15 knots) and 2 Canadian destroyers which escorted the convoy for 2 days before turning back. She was built by Vickers for the Australian Government Commonwealth Line in 1922 and constructed with a heavy deck so she could be converted to an Armed Merchant Cruiser in time of war. She was sold in 1933 and commissioned on 30 August 1939 as an Armed Merchant Cruiser Royal Navy.

German pocket battleship **ADMIRAL SCHEER** (6 x 11inch and 8 x 5.9 inch guns, speed 28 knots ) fired an Arado reconnaissance seaplane which was catapulted into the sky, on the 5th November 1940. On her second search she sighted a British convoy 88 miles south. The Admiral Scheer turned making all speed towards the convoy. The convoy was sighted on the horizon, at 4.55 pm Admiral Scheer opened fire, **Captain Edward Fegen of HMS Jervis Bay** ordered the convoy to scatter with the utmost speed; he sounded "Action Stations" and set a course at full speed of 15 knots towards the German pocket Battleship and ordered **OPEN FIRE** hoping to give time for the convoy to retreat to safety.

The **HMS Jervis Bay** an AMC took on one of the most powerful and deadly war ship in the German navy. Outgunned by 11inch gun's, outranged and with twice the speed, an 11 inch shell hit the **HMS Jervis Bay** exploding on the foredeck and bridge and knocking out the gun director, range finder, telephone and electric power to the guns. Now that the German pocket-battle ship had the range of the AMC, all guns were brought to bear to destroy HMS Jervis Bay. She was set on fire and sunk. Out of a crew of 254 there were only 68 survivors. Captain Fegen was awarded a posthumous **Victoria Cross**.

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## Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVP) or Higgins boat.



HMAS Westralia

The Higgins boat was designed by Andrew Higgins, a boat builder in the lumber transport business that went bankrupt in 1930. His boat was used by trappers, oil drillers and smuggling illegal liquor into the USA. The US Marine Corps was always looking for a better amphibious landing craft and expressed interest in the Higgins boat. In 1939 the US Navy and Marine Corps tested the Higgins Eureka boat. It out performed Naval boats in service at the time, the only drawback was men disembarked over the sides thus exposing them to fire in a combat zone. It was known as the U or R boat

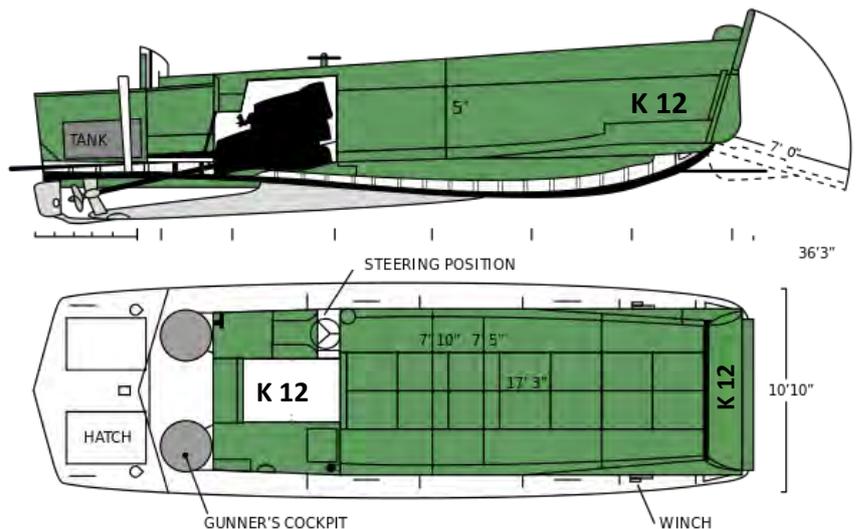
and used in Commando raids by the British in 1939/42, the Bruneval Raid Normandie was one.

The Japanese had been using ramp bowed landing craft since 1937. Higgins, on seeing a photo of the craft in 1941, started building and testing a ramp-bow Eureka boat in Lake Pontchartrain. With the machine gun positions in the front of the boat, causing a bottleneck for troop and vehicles such as Jeeps exiting the boat, this was the first of a new breed of seagoing amphibious landing craft designed by Higgins.

The machine guns (2 x 50 cal) were moved to the rear of the boat and the ramp was fully widened so troops could move more freely and small vehicle could be carried. This new landing craft became known as **Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel**. It was 36 ft or 11m long X 11 ft or 3.4 m wide and had a 225 hp diesel engine and cruised at 12 knots and could hold 36 troopers or a Jeep with 12 soldiers, or 3.6 tons of cargo and it was designed to deliver troops and equipment onshore to the beach.

Its sides and rear were made of plywood that offered no protection from enemy fire; the front ramp was made of steel and therefore the only protection. It could be lowered quickly to swiftly disembark troops and cargo onto the beach. The **LCVP** was used in many amphibious assault landings in Europe, D-Day, North Africa, Sicily, Italy as well as the Pacific. Guadalcanal, Arawe, Hollandia, Tarawa, Philippines, Borneo, Iwo Jima and Okinawa - the landing craft became the work horse of our Royal Australian Navy Ships Westralia, Kanimbla and Manoora.

The ships were the first amphibious Landing Ships Infantry of the Royal Australian Navy and have a very proud and outstanding history of being the spearheads of invasion in the South West Pacific Ocean under the Command of General Douglas MacArthur US 7th Fleet.



LCVP / Higgins boat



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*Port Stephens, Nelson Bay, Fly Point is the home of HMAS ASSAULT where our fathers and grandfathers trained for Amphibious Landing Assault and Navy Special Service Beach Commandos trained to serve on HMAS Westralia, Manoora and Kanimbla during World War II. This is a story on the background of Port Stephens from HMAS Assault Newsletter date unknown.*

## Resort kept navy at bay



Beautiful Port Stephens has an awesome maritime past stretching back to 1770 when Captain James Cook spotted the towering headlands Yacaaba (north head) and Tomaree (south head), of what is now a holiday playground on the NSW Mid-North Coast.

Many grand plans for Port Stephens included it being a possible site for the national capital. Yet, despite the potential of its harbour, the port changed little until the 1950s because the Federal Government refused to let it be developed. At the beginning of the 20th century, on a peninsula on the northern side of the bay, North Arm Cove was chosen as the site for a future Port Stephens grand city. It was drawn up by renowned architect Walter Burley Griffin, who was certain Port Stephens would become the main seaport for NSW. He planned 60m-wide boulevards and two railway stations.

In 1911, British Admiral Reginald Henderson, had recommended that Port Stephens be used as a submarine base. About 1250ha was resumed by the Commonwealth at Salamander Bay, on the southern foreshore of Port Stephens, in 1916 for naval use. Then in 1919, Admiral John Jellicoe, British First Sea Lord and hero of the 1916 Battle of Jutland, came to Port Stephens to advise on defence against Japan's expanding fleet.

In talks over whether Port Stephens should become a naval base or a deep water international port, Jellicoe advised: "Every consideration points to Port Stephens as the most; indeed, almost the only suitable place for the primary naval base on the east coast of Australia, and the principal navy ship-building yard in Australia". Of course, it didn't happen—but in World War II, US commander Douglas MacArthur took control of Port Stephens as a training base. Nelson Bay became known as **HMAS ASSAULT**. "*The Yanks flowed in like a king tide and the population of the small village of Nelson Bay skyrocketed,*" says historian *John Armstrong*. Exercises from landing craft on the beaches went on day and night. About 20,000 personnel at a time were training at Port Stephens to move directly into key Pacific operations. RAN Special Service Beach Commandos were among them.

Tomaree Head became Fort Tomaree, with radar, gun emplacements and a signal station. Residents were issued with permits to pass in and out of their homes. Despite tight censorship, General MacArthur was seen photographed on local Fingal Bay. Thousands of men were sent from here to stop the Japanese invasions. In 1955 the Federal Government passed the prime water front of Salamander Bay back to Port Stephens Shire Council for just \$100,000. The naval base concept finally died.

- ◆ Acknowledgments to Yacaaba and Tomaree, A History of Port Stephens, by John Armstrong, 1996 and Port Stephens Historical Society NSW.

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