

AMC/LSI Association of Vic

Armed Merchant Cruiser / Landing Ship Infantry

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Patrons: Bruce Candy, Hiram Ristrom & Norm Tame.



75th
ANNIVERSARY

AMC/LSI ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA
WREATH LAYING CEREMONY AT THE SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE
SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER, 2018, 11:00am

This service is held on the Saturday prior to 15 December, which marks the first major landing operation by an Australian Landing Ship Infantry during the Second World War in 1943

Please join us for the ceremony where we gather to honour and remember those who served on HMAS WESTRALIA, KANIMBLA, MANOORA and ASSAULT. Following the service we proceed to Bentleigh RSL for Christmas lunch.

To reserve your place please RSVP to Chris 0412390686 or Mac 0418666694 or by sending an email to amclsivic@gmail.com

Please RSVP by 17th November, 2018

Mission Statement

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

Damien Parer Onboard HMAS Westralia 1943



Damien Parer was born on the 1st August, 1912 at Malvern, Melbourne. Youngest of eight children of John Arthur and Teresa Parer. Damien Parer became Australia's most famous war photographer of World War 2. In January 1940, he sailed for the Middle East with the AIF. He filmed the bombardment of Bardia from HMAS Ladybird on the 2 January 1941. Working with Frank Hurley he covered the Australian assault on Tobruk on 21-22 January 1941; the Greek and Syrian campaigns from April to June and the siege of Tobruk April - December. This made him one of the most outstanding motion picture and cameraman in Australian war time history.

When Japan entered World War II, Damien Parer returned to Australia and sailed to New Guinea and filmed the withdrawal on the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. On Goodenough Island on the 6th December 1943, HMAS Westralia met the troops she was to carry on her first invasion as a Landing Ship Infantry. The atmosphere was electric as the convoy of thirty-six ships and 25,000 Allied soldiers prepared to sail for the invasion of Arawe, New Britain. On the wharf that afternoon, General Douglas MacArthur shook hands with Brigadier General Cunningham commanding the ARAWE task force. Lord Louis Mountbatten was expected the next day. Waiting to go onboard HMAS Westralia was Damien Parer, the famous Australian Newsreel cameraman.

Everyman knew the big push was on at last. HMAS Westralia had the distinction of being the first Australian ship of a class to be actively engaged in an amphibious operation. She had been converted to a Landing Ship Infantry and trained at HMAS Assault with HMAS Kanimbla and HMAS Manoora for amphibious landing operation in the South-East Pacific with the US 7th Fleet. HMAS Westralia landed her assault troops at 7am on the 15th December 1943 on Orange Beach, Arawe, New Britain. Through a small and narrow gap in the coral reef, a bulldozer was brought in, which carved a roadway in for the L.C.V.P. to land her troops on the beach.

The beachmaster on Orange Beach that day was a Navy Beach Commando Lt Commander Filipin US Navy whose coolness and efficiency under fire was decorated with the Silver Star for gallantry at Arawe. By midday, the US troops had occupied the peninsula after a seven hour battle pushing the enemy inland and wiping out small pockets of enemy resistance and consolidating their position.

As Japanese aircraft were bombing the beach head, Australia and American Warships were landed from HMAS Westralia which helped defend the beach.

L to R

Mick Sparks
Martin Fischer (USA)
Ken Egan (NSW)
D.Huffman (USA)
Jack Weston (QLD)
Bruce Candy (VIC)

Sources: Trove Newspapers, Spearheads of Invasion, National Archives of Australia and Bruce Candy.



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OUR OLD DUCK

Story by Petty Officer R. Cooper,
HMAS MANOORA



Resplendent in her full title, she is a Supermarine Seagull A2. To us, she is known as “Our Old Duck”. Noisy, ungainly, and often much maligned, she is never the less a true thoroughbred; and she was built by the same firm that later built the now famous Spitfire.

Her speed was practically negligible; endurance just enough; duties many and varied, truly a maid of all work. But her successor has yet to be built. Come with me for a trip in her. On the catapult everything has been made ready. The ground crew has thoroughly serviced her and signed her to the airworthiness certificate, without which no aircraft may be flown. The catapult’s crew has made every last minute adjustment and the “charge” is in the breech. We climb in, and you sit alongside the pilot, on the starboard side of the small glassed-in cabin. Under the watchful eye of the pilot and observer you adjust your parachute harness, make yourself comfortable in your seat and, finally, put on your safety belt.

The order comes from the bridge to start up. The pilot makes his switches, presses a lever which operates the gas starter and the engine bursts into life, not with a steady purr, as do most engines but with a spluttering, popping sound, as if it were undecided whether to run or not. After a few moments, when the engine is warm, the throttle is fully advanced and the ignition switches tested. Satisfied, the pilot throttles back and gives the “thumbs up” to the catapult officer standing on the deck below.

All we are waiting for now is the order to go. It comes. The engine is run up to full revs and, with a quick “OK” to the crew, the pilot “thumbs up” again, holds the wheel firmly in both hands. Now the moment for which you have been waiting for what seems an eternity. The catapult officer drops his flag and “whoosh” we’re off. A terrific push in the back, a jumbled view of masts, funnels and staring faces, and you have successfully done your first catapult launch. Seagull A2 is airborne & ready to proceed. Climbing steadily we circle twice, a signaling lamp blinks from the ships, which now seems small and insignificant below us, and we head out to sea. We are on an anti-submarine patrol, hoping it will be our luck to spot one, and to have a smack at it. Many times before the crew has done this routine flight, sometimes over the same water, but it is all new and very exciting. Who knows, you might bring them luck and give them the opportunity to get in that long awaited smack.

After a few minutes the ship is left well astern and we commence our zigzag tracks, eagerly scanning the slightly ruffled surface of the sea for that tell-tale “feather” of a periscope, or that suspicious smudge of oil. Minutes turn into hours and still nothing is sighted, but you go on looking and hoping. It may turn up, you argue. There has got to be a first time. A vast expanse of sea and sky surrounds you on every side, with nothing to relieve to the monotony, not even the comforting sight of your own ship. And that reminds you, where is the ship?. You try to figure it out. First you turn to starboard, then to port until completely amazed you give it up. Turning round to observer you shout, “Where are we? He point to a position on his chart and shouts “us”, points to another position and shouts “ship”. You nod and smile, not very much the wiser, but you’ve assured yourself that at least he knows.

After consulting with the observer, the pilot now decides to turn back. We’ve completed our time on patrol and must return before the petrol is expended. Round we go, and a course is set to intercept the ship. After a quarter of an hour we sight a smudge on the horizon. Binoculars are brought to bear and the smudge turns out to be her. Closing rapidly, we identify ourselves as friendly, circle around and wait for permission to land. Up goes a flag at the ship’s masthead. “That us” says the pilot. He throttle back and makes a perfect landing alongside the ship.

The crane is swung out over the side. We taxi up to it, “hook on”, and are slowly hoisted inboard. Carefully we are lowered on the catapult and secured. Another flight over. Up to the bridge we go, to make our report to the captain. “ Nothing to report, sir.”

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[Great Day at HMAS Cerberus by Max Tozer.](#)

For some years now, members of AMC/LSI Association of Victoria have been attending as guests of the RAN for the graduation ceremonies held at the Royal Australian Navy Recruit School EMMS Division at HMAS Cerberus. Its always an honour to witness the passing out parade within the historic grounds of this training establishment; but this day, May 25th, 2018, held significant importance to our organization for two other reasons. One, the opening of the HMAS Australia II room within the confines of the Navy museum at HMAS Cerberus, a room dedicated to the ship HMAS Australia II. Secondly, there was also the launch of the book "Hiram in the Navy" written by our Honorary Committee member Gaye Lewis.

The Graduation Parade, as always, was a proud spectacle of young members of our Navy in the prime of their life celebrating the end of the first stage of their Navy Careers; an inspiration to all as an example of the high achievement attained through the dedication of the officers and staff of the Australian Navy. At the conclusion of the ceremony we were treated to refreshments safe in the knowledge that our Navy will be protecting us in the future.

Invited guests were then assembled in the room dedicated to the H.M.A.S. Australia II, the heavy 8 inch Cruiser and Flagship of the RAN launched in 1927. The room proudly displays memorabilia related to the records and original artefacts reminding us of the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for King & Country.

The third event of the day was the launch of the book, "Hiram in the Navy"; a book on the life and war-time history of our patron Harold (Hiram) Ristrom. This book demanded of its author, Gaye Lewis, many hours of dedicated research gaining our admiration and respect. This book is a true representation of the high esteem we hold for our patron, a copy of which will remain at the museum for future generation and Hiram's brave deeds and good life will never be forgotten. Thank you Gaye.

Doug Hooley was singled out as a generous financial benefactor of the Museum of HMAS Cerberus and son of HMAS Westralia Veteran & Secretary of the Westralia Association of Victoria **Alan Hooley**. All at AMC/LSI Association of Victoria wish to thank his outstanding generosity and the donation of a print of **HMAS Arunta & Westralia 1945 to the Museum. Thank you Doug and Ross Hooley.**



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In the darkness of the early hours of the morning of 9 August, 1942, the heavy Cruiser HMAS Canberra was severely damaged off Guadalcanal (Solomon Island) in a surprise attack by a powerful Japanese Naval force in an action that became known as the Battle of Savo Island. HMAS Canberra was hit 24 times in less than two minutes and 84 of her crew were killed including Captain Frank Getting. Following an order to abandon ship the Canberra was sunk the next day by a torpedo from a US Destroyer.

At the time of the action, HMAS Canberra had formed part of the US Navy & Royal Australian Navy force screening American transports during the landing operation of US Marines 1st Division at Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomon's Islands, which began on 7 August 1942.

A failure of Allied Intelligence resulted in the screening force being surprised by a determined group of seven Japanese Cruisers and a destroyer near Savo Island just before 2am on the morning of the 9th August 1942. HMAS Canberra as the lead ship of the screening force was the first to be attacked and received the full force of the Japanese barrage of 8 & 6 inch guns. It destroyed all electrical power through out the ship. HMAS Canberra could not bring her guns to bear or start her water pumps she was dead in the water. In the darkness and confusion the rampaging Japanese attackers wreaked havoc with other Allied vessels before withdrawing. However, despite this significant setback landing operations at Guadalcanal continued.

The Japanese called it the **Battle of the Sitting Ducks**. Eight cruisers, including HMAS Australia II, HMAS Canberra, HMAS Hobart II, with eight destroyers commanded by British Admiral Victor Crutchley VC protected the transport and troops ashore. A Japanese task force of seven cruisers and one destroyer, commanded by Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa sailed down New Georgia Sound, known as the Slot, to attack the Allied Fleet. The Japanese task force was spotted by reconnaissance aircraft and Coastwatcher's, but poor reporting and message handling delays obscured the significance of the intelligence reports.

Early on 9 August, the Japanese cruiser entered the channel between Savo Island and Guadalcanal. And opened fire at 1.43 am and ceased fire at 2.13am, sinking the cruiser USS Quincey, USS Vincennes, USS Astoria eventually sank HMAS Canberra. Admiral Turner ordered her to be abandoned and sunk if she could not raise steam. She was towed to Savo Island and USS Selfridge fired 263, 5-inch shells and 4 torpedoes at her but she would not sink. The next day, the USS destroyer Ellet fired one torpedo which sent her to the bottom. RAN suffered 193 casualties, 84 killed or died of wounds; US Navy suffered 1, 593 casualties, 939 killed or died of wounds.

Sources: Australian War Memorial, navy.gov.au, National Archives of Australia & Trove newspapers.

by Chris Harvey and Max Tozer

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July: Bruce Candy, Jim Davison, Frank Barrile, Ronald Dixie Lee, Don Eglinton, Allan Booth, Des O'Connell Jack Austin, Keith Brown, John Hooper.

August: Reg Baggs, Rod Kleinig.

September: Tom Fowler, Arthur Lunan, Cecil Browning, Les "Snowy" Barton, Ern Tyler, Bill Robinson, Norm Tame, David Nelson, Bill Baird.

October: Graham Knight, Reg May, Sam Aitchison, Ken Kemp, Cyril Bayley-Pike.

And to those we may have missed— please let us know and we wish you a "Very Happy Birthday"

THANK YOU

For your DONATION

We wish to thank & acknowledge the following generous donations received from our members.

- ◆ **Brian Sullivan**
- ◆ **Ian Gardner**
- ◆ **Sue Rock father Harry Stirk, 5 books on RAN.**

**New Address for AMC/LSI
Association of Victoria
2 Clyde Street Oakleigh Vic 3166**

VALE

We wish to advise of the passing of the following Veterans and / or their wives. Our sincere condolence go to their family and friends.

PO Barry McKillop Oakleigh Vic, 25 June 18 age 87 .

Connie Perry wife of Ken Perry Kew Vic, 2 July 18.

Commando Bernard McMullan Vic, 2 Sept 18 age 93.

If you wish to donate to AMC/LSI Association of Vic you can send a cheque to: **2 Clyde St Oakleigh 3166** or
Transfer funds to **Westpac Bank**
BSB No 033 070 Account No 42 2541
In the Description Box State Donate & your name please.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT: This newsletter has been a collaboration of team work from the AMC/LSI Association of Vic Committee Carol Zeuschner, Mac Hay, Max Tozer, Robert Lewis, Hiram Ristrom and Chris Harvey.

