



**“The maintenance of the maritime well-being of the nation”**

is the principal objective of the Navy League of Australia

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## LONSDALE CUP REVIVED

During a presentation at The Royal Victorian Motor Yacht Club (RVMYC), held at the Club House Williamstown headquarters on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2016, the Navy Leagues special events coordinator, CMDR John Wilkins OAM, RFD, in company with RVMYC Senior Officers, Commodore Chris Ackerman, Vice Commodore John Zammit and Rear Commodore Paul Doherty, detailed a brief outline of the history behind the Lonsdale Cup.

Commander Wilkins explained that this 2016 inaugural event was in fact the first revival of the Lonsdale Cup Event since the ninth, and last, annual “Little Ship Club” (LSC) Melbourne Regatta in 1954. But now in 2016 contested for a Perpetual Trophy.

The Lonsdale Cup is named after the RAN’S Base HMAS LONSALE at Port Melbourne, H.Q., of the WW2 Volunteer Naval Auxiliary Patrol (NAP). The Base in turn was named after Navy’s torpedo boat, HMVS-HMAS Lonsdale, and Captain William Lonsdale, appointed Chief Government Agent for the new Port Philip district in 1836.

In 2015 the RVMYC approved the holding of a new annual Lonsdale Cup as a contest of navigational skills event to honour the RAN by celebrating the foundation of the RAN on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1901, and to remember the wartime service of NAP members, many of whom were from the RVMYC and other Port Phillip Motor Yacht Clubs. The contest is held spanning a two hour period on Port Phillip Bay.

The Little Ship Club was formed at the end of WW2 when Commodore Harry Showers RAN, on the occasion of the N.A.P. being placed in reserve suggested that a club comprising its elements should be formed to retain this group in case of a future emergency, and so the LSC was formed.

During his naval career, Commodore Harry Showers, (later Rear Admiral CBE), was Commanding Officer of three WW2 RAN Cruisers, HMA Ships ADELAIDE, HOBART and SHROPSHIRE. In addition to RADM Showers service in WW2, RADM Harry Showers also saw service during WW1 at the Battle of Heligoland Bight in HMS GLORIOUS.

Following his retirement from the RAN in 1955, the Melbourne born and bred RADM Showers was elected Federal President of the Navy League of Australia serving from 1956 to 1968 having followed Vice Admiral John Collins KBE, CB, RAN in that same role.

Coming back to 2016 it is pleasing to report that the March 6<sup>th</sup> Lonsdale Cup event was a most successful occasion. The contest was won by the RVMYC member Bob Battye in his vessel EVENTIDE. The Perpetual Lonsdale Cup has been provided by the Navy League with the RVMYC as the Cup custodian. Presentations included those made by Ms Cecelia Newman, Great great granddaughter of Captain Wm Lonsdale accompanied by Mr. Chris Newman.

Others in attendance at the luncheon presentation included **Chief of Navy's** representative Captain Gary Holgate RAN, Senior Naval Officer Victoria representative Commander Rachael Thompson RAN and Commander Graeme Furlonger RANR who officiated in his role as the Leagues yachting events liaison Officer. Fifteen navy recruits from HMAS CERBERUS also participated in the event as sea-riders in the twelve club vessels involved in the event.

As would be expected, many RVMYC members were in attendance at this inaugural event, joined also by many Navy League of Australia members and their supporters, including Rosemary Creswell, Mary Waters and John Bird, John kindly proposed the toasts of the day.

A quick glance through the Lonsdale Cup history book reveals the ongoing strong connections between the Royal Australian Navy, The Royal Victorian Motor Yacht Club and The Navy League of Australia,

The following images of the event, kindly provided by Navy League Executive Member Jane Teasdale, reflect the most enjoyable time had by all at the club luncheon which followed the presentation of the 2016 Lonsdale Cup.



JOHN BIRD & MARY WATERS WATERS



GRAEME FURLONGER WITH HIS MOTHER LOIS



CAPTAIN GARY HOLGATE & CDRE CHRIS ACKERMAN



WINNER ARE GRINNERS WITH CAPTAIN GARY HOLGATE RAN



RAN NAVY RECRUITS HMAS CERBERUS



ROSEMARY CRESWELL WITH JOHN & JUDY WILKINS



COMMADORE ACKERMAN & CECELIA NEWMAN

## AS IT WAS

Once again we invite you to join us as we take a look at more recent naval history at items that involved, or caught the eye of Navy League over the years on our **"Keep Watch"** brief. This time we go back 10 years as we browse through our records and reports of April 2006. We note that we reported on the following:-

- Armidale Patrol Boats
- Seasprite Helicopters
- AHS CENTAUR

### ARMIDALE CLASS PATROL BOATS

With the recent launching of Patrol Boats ALBANY and PIRIE the number of Armidale Class boats afloat now totals five.

Nuships ALBANY and PIRIE joined with Armidale LARRAKIA and BATHURST and will be followed by BUNDABERG, MAITLAND, ARARAT, LAUNCESTON, WOOLONGONG, CHILDERS and BROOME.

The only Victorian name amongst the 12 original boats is ARARAT (as mentioned by CN Vice Admiral Russ Shalders AO, CSC,RAN., during his 2006 Creswell Oration), however, two additional as yet unnamed boats, are to be added to the Armidale fleet to achieve a total of 14 boats, which with a multi-crew arrangement in place equates to 21 boats.

It will be of interest to learn of the two new names, perhaps another Victorian name will be selected.

### SEASPRITE HELICOPTER PROBLEMS

A Melbourne newspaper report indicates that the Defence Department may have made a mistake by placing an order for old Seasprite Helicopters.

**The Seasprite Helicopters were intended for the RAN'S Anzac Frigates, ordered in 1997 at \$100 million each they may see full service by 2007.**

Some of the Seasprite airframes are 50 years old, and date back to the Vietnam war era.

It may be interesting to know how the RNZN., are faring with their Seasprites purchased at about the same time as the RAN batch.

### THE LOSS OF THE AHS CENTAUR

May 14<sup>th</sup> 2006 mark the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the loss of the hospital ship CENTAUR.

The sinking of the Australian hospital ship CENTAUR resulted in the loss of 268 lives. A Japanese submarine off the Queensland coast torpedoed the CENTAUR at 0400 hours on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1943. The 64 survivors of the sinking were rescued 36 hours later by the USN destroyer USS MUGFORD. CENTAUR a motor passenger ship of 3275 tonnes, owned by the Ocean Steamship Company Ltd., and registered at Liverpool England, had formerly been in the West Australia-Singapore trade. She was made available by the Ministry of War Transport for conversion to a hospital ship on January 1943 for use in the New Guinea area.

## AS IT WAS C'TND

The CENTAUR was converted to a hospital ship at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard Melbourne in early 1943. She left Melbourne on her maiden voyage as an Australian hospital ship on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1943. It was on CENTAUR'S second voyage to New Guinea when she was 2 days out from Sydney, that she was attacked by a unit of the Japanese first submarine squadron and sunk, resulting in the biggest individual loss of life from a Japanese torpedo suffered in Australia waters during the war. Those who perished in the CENTAUR were **45 members of the ship's crew including Master Captain G.A. Murray; and 223 medical personnel, including 11 nurses.** Many of the medical personnel were members of the 2/12 Field Ambulance.

## NAVAL HISTORY

The month of April is a memorable period in terms of Naval History. A brief detail of some of the events that occurred during the month of April are listed in the following:-

APRIL 1856 The Williamstown Division of the Victorian Maritime Artillery Corp., was formed in the same year that the **"Sloop of War" HMVS Victoria arrived in Port Phillip Bay.**

APRIL 1871 HMVS CERBERUS arrived in Port Phillip Bay on her maiden voyage.

APRIL 1915 Anzacs landed at Gallipoli and in the same month the RAN lost their second WWI submarine **AE2 in Turkey's Sea of Marmora under the command of LCDR Henry "Darcre" Stoker. The crew were captured and spent the remainder of WWI as Turkish prisoners of war.**

APRIL 1933 Marked the death of the father of Australian Navy Vice Admiral Creswell at the age of 80.

APRIL 1941 We recall the naval evacuation by the RAN of troops from Greece in HMA ships PERTH, STUART, VENDETTA, VAMPIRE, VOYAGER and WATERHEN.

APRIL 1942 **The loss of the RAN'S destroyer HMAS VAMPIRE and the RN'S Carrier HMS HERMES.**

APRIL 1943 The 8 inch gun Heavy Cruiser SHROPSHIRE was presented by the RN to the RAN as a gift to replace HMAS CANBERRA lost at the Battle of Savo Island in 1942. HMAS SHROPSHIRE was commissioned for RAN service at Chatham on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1943.

APRIL 1956 The aircraft carrier HMAS MELBOURNE sailed from Glasgow on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1956 and reached Australian waters for the first time, arriving at the Port of Fremantle on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1956.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### HMAS CANBERRA BACK HOME

The RAN'S Flagship, HMAS CANBERRA L02 returned to Home Base in Sydney recently following her first deployment providing help and aid during operation *FIJI ASSIST* to that Nation ravaged by cyclone Winston. HMAS CANBERRA arrived back at Fleet Base East during early April, after her month long deployment. HMAS CANBERRA, plus aircraft of the RAAF, transported much needed humanitarian aid and assistance in the wake of the cyclone following a request from the Fijian Government.

Commenting on the operation Chief of Joint Operations VADM David Johnston AM, RAN., said that navy, airforce and army personnel had completed a remarkable effort while deployed to this disaster relief mission.

**Rumours are currently circulating that Melbourne may be in line for a visit from HMAS CANBERRA'S sister ship, the RAN'S most recent acquisition the second Landing Helicopter Dock Ship (LHD) HMAS ADELAIDE L01.**

Depending on upon operational requirements HMAS ADELAIDE may visit Melbourne during the latter part of October 2016.

### REPORT TO Navy League Meeting Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2016

#### 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries and the Battle of the Coral Sea.

In November of this year 2016 we will remember the 1941 loss of HMAS Sydney (II) **with all 645 ship's company** following action with the German Armed Merchant Cruiser Kormoran which was also lost during this same engagement.

19<sup>th</sup> November 2016 will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this tragic event. Further into next year 2017 will also mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of perhaps the RAN darkest days of World War 2, as we will recall the loss of many more **courageous officers and sailors of the RAN, along with fine ships of the Royal Australian Navy's fleet.**

Included in the following listing are ships of the RAN with brief details of their loss in 1942:-HMAS Perth, cruiser 1<sup>st</sup> March 1942, sunk by a Japanese naval force in the Battle of Sunda Strait.

HMAS Yarra, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1942 sunk by a Japanese Naval Force south of Java.

HMAS Vampire, destroyer, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1942 sunk by Japanese aircraft E-S-E of Ceylon.

HMAS Kuttabul, depot ship sunk by a Japanese Midget Submarine in Sydney harbour.

HMAS Nestor, destroyer, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1942 lost to German Air attack in the Mediterranean.

HMAS Canberra, cruiser, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1942 lost to Japanese Naval force at the battle of Savo Island.

HMAS Voyager, destroyer 25<sup>th</sup> September 1942 lost at Timor.

HMAS Armidale, corvette 1<sup>st</sup> December 1942 sunk by Japanese aircraft off Timor.

In July 1942 we will also remember the sinking of the Japanese transport SS Montevideo Maru, torpedoed by a United States Submarine unaware of the transports cargo of 845 Lark Force prisoners of war, plus 209 civilian internees, all of whom perished.

A faint glimmer of hope began to shine in May 1942, when the Japanese Navy were checked at the Battle of the Coral Sea by the United States Navy and the Royal Australian Navy, the RAN being well represented by the Cruisers HMAS Australia and HMAS Hobart. The victory by the USN against the Japanese fleet in the following month of June, at the Battle of Midway spelt the turning point of the War in the Pacific leading to Japans eventual defeat.

The Battle of the Coral Sea will also be remembered next year as the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. In 1992 the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Coral Sea Battle was commemorated in Melbourne by the Victoria Division of the Navy League together with the American Australian Association. An evening reception was held in the restored Barque Polly Woodside, over 200 attended the reception **including the League's Victoria Division** President LCDR John Bird RNVR LM, plus the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, the Mayors of Port Melbourne and Williamstown, the Consuls General of the United

Kingdom and United States, the Naval Officer Commanding the Victoria Area (SNOVIC), and the Commanding Officers of the visiting USN Frigate USS Ruben James, and the RAN destroyer HMAS Brisbane.

My own memories go back to 1954 when on the 7<sup>th</sup> May the USN Admiral Halsey, with Victorian Governor, Sir Dallas Brooks **took the salute in front of Melbourne's Town Hall when approximately 3,000 marchers from Australia's current services and ex-service personnel marched through Melbourne's streets to commemorate the 12<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea.** Included amongst the 3,000 marchers were 750 crew members **from the visiting US navy ships, the Aircraft Carrier USS Tarawa and the Fletcher Class destroyer USS O'Bannon.** These Commemorative Services continued on each May through the 1960s and 1970s but there after began to dwindle in Melbourne. It is heartening however to record the sterling efforts by the Naval Commemoration Committee of Victoria, and their supporters in keeping the memory alive and encouraging ongoing support during **each May at Melbourne's Shrine Services.**

It is perhaps understandable that New South Wales and Queensland gain stronger support in terms of keeping the memory alive of each anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea due to their close proximity to the conflict zone. However, Melbourne should not be forgotten as it most likely, and highly probable that Melbourne played a very important role from the initial stages of the Battle of the Coral Sea by supplying intelligence reports, detailing the **likelihood of Japan's** intentions towards Port Moresby at that time one of their prime targets.

As such Melbourne was involved in the Coral Sea Battle from the very first when a locally based Signals Intelligence unit made a significant contribution in the early detection of the Japanese thrust. Combining this information with that obtained from Coastwatchers and aerial reconnaissance the combined Australian- US operational intelligence centre located in Melbourne, issued an assessment on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1942 that a Japanese operation to occupy Port Moresby was imminent.

Thus the code breakers in Melbourne provided invaluable information concerning the Japanese timetable and the order of Battle for the invasion of Port Moresby up to the very eve of the battle, fought from the 4<sup>th</sup> May to the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1942.

Perhaps a visit to Melbourne in May of 2017 by a ship of the RAN, and a ship of the USN, could be arranged to help Melbourne further mark the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea in company with the ever supportive presence of personnel from HMAS Cerberus, including Senior Naval Officer Victoria.

Although it is unlikely that we will ever see numbers such as the many thousands in attendance and participating **60 years ago in the 1954 'Battle of the Coral Sea' commemoration,** or for that matter the years closely following that time, nevertheless if those attending numbered in hundreds rather than thousands, it would still be a fine and fitting tribute to the officers and sailors of the United States Navy and the Royal Australian Navy who fought this battle. A fine tribute also in memory of the many hundreds of Allied servicemen, who made the supreme sacrifice **whilst engaged in this strategic naval battle 74 years ago on Australia's doorstep, the "Battle of the Coral Sea".**

They have no grave, no flowers lay at their head  
A rusting hulk is their tombstone, avast on the ocean bed  
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

**"Lest we forget"**

Frank McCarthy  
Senior Vice President  
Navy League of Australia  
Victoria-Tasmania Division  
April-May 2016

## Membership

Any person with an interest in maritime affairs, or who wishes to acquire an interest in, or knowledge of, maritime affairs and who wishes to support the objectives of the League, is invited to join.

### OBJECTIVES

**The principal objective of the Navy League of Australia is” The maintenance of the maritime well-being of the Nation” by:**

- Keeping before the Australian people the fact that we are a maritime nation and that a strong Navy supported by maritime elements of the Air Force and Army and other Government Maritime agencies are indispensable elements of our national well-being and vital to the freedom of Australia.
- Promoting defence self-reliance by supporting maritime research, defence industry, Australian shipping, ship-building, port and transport infrastructure and off shore resource exploration and development.
- Promoting and encouraging the interest and training of youth in the sea.

### ACTIVITIES

The Navy League of Australia works towards its objectives in a number of ways:

- By including in its membership leading representatives of the many elements which form the maritime community.
- Through soundly- based contributions by members to journals and newspapers, and other media comment.
- By publishing *The Navy*, a quarterly journal reporting on local and overseas maritime happenings, past, present, and projected.
- By organizing symposia, ship visits and various other functions of maritime interests throughout the years.
- By supporting Australian Navy Cadets, and assisting in the provision of training facilities.

Member participation is encouraged in all these activities.

### POLICY

The policy of the League can be found at the back of *The Navy*.

## Joining the League

To become a Member of The League, you do not need to have had any previous maritime experience. You merely need an interest in maritime affairs. Simply complete the Application Form below, and post it, together with your first annual subscription of \$35.00 (which includes the four quarterly editions of The Navy), to the Hon Secretary of the Division of the Navy League in the State in which you reside, the address of which are as follows:

**New South Wales Division:** GPO Box 1719, Sydney, NSW 2001.  
**Victorian Division:** PO Box 2340, Mt Waverley, Vic 3149.  
**Queensland Division:** GPO Box 1481, Brisbane, QLD 4001.  
**South Australian Division:** PO Box 3008, Unley, SA 5061.  
**West Australian Division:** 3 Prosser Way, Myaree, WA 6154.

*If you live in Tasmania, please post the form to the Hon Secretary of the Victorian Division. If you live in the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory, please post the form to the Hon Secretary of the New South Wales or South Australian Division respectively.*

Subscriptions are due on 1 July in each year, and your membership will be current to 30 June immediately following the date on which you join the League, except that if your first subscription is received during the period 1 April to 30 June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30 June in the following year.

<b>THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA</b>		
<b>APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP</b>		
To: The Hon. Secretary The Navy League of Australia		
Division _____		
I wish to join the Navy League of Australia, the objectives of which I support, and I enclose a remittance for \$35.00 (including \$3.18 GST) being my first annual subscription to 30 June next.		
Name: [ Mr ] [ Mrs ] [ Ms ] [ Rank ] _____		
<small>PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY</small>		
Street _____		
Suburb _____	State _____	P/code _____
Phone _____	Mobile _____	
Email _____		
Signature _____		Date _____
<small>Subscriptions are due on 1 July in each year and your membership will be current to 30 June immediately following the date on which you join the League, except that if your first subscription is received during the period 1 April to 30 June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30 June in the following year.</small>		