



# THE THREE-HEADED DOG

## Newsletter of the Victoria Chapter



### Naval Historical Society of Australia

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#### SPOTLIGHT

Senior officer  
appointments  
and promotions  
announced

Passing of ex-  
CPOWTR George  
Bird

*Cerberus* Open  
Day planned for  
19 March 2023

A WWII survivor  
of two RAN ship  
sinkings in four  
months – Able  
Seaman Eric  
Millhouse

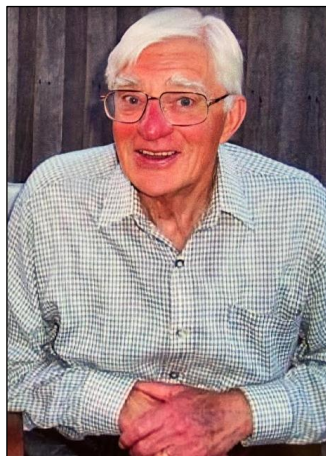
Navy's first  
WWII casualties  
on Australian  
soil

Victoria Chapter  
"Show and Tell"  
meeting on  
Monday 22  
August at  
Waverley RSL

Welcome to our Victorian members and other friends and supporters of our Chapter.

I appreciate the positive responses I've received to our last "Three-Headed Dog" Newsletter in its new format. I therefore intend to proceed with this format for future editions.

Later in this edition, readers will see the latest senior RAN officer appointments and postings. This large number of changes seems to reflect the dynamic nature of our growing Navy, as the leadership team under our new Chief of Navy is set in place. While not of direct historical relevance at present, it is nonetheless useful to understand some of the changes in the Navy's leadership that will guide the years ahead.



Many readers would know by now that a long-serving member of the NHSA, ex-Chief Petty Officer Writer George Evan Bird R27796, crossed the bar in late July, after a prolonged illness. He was aged 94.

George joined the RAN in October 1945 and served in a variety of sea and shore postings, including in HMA Ships *Australia*, *Shropshire* and *Quiberon*, plus 12 months ashore in Korea from 1953-54. He paid off in 1957 from HMAS *Lonsdale* in order to settle in Melbourne.

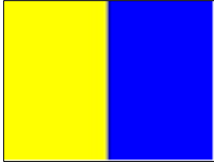
Until approximately 10 years ago, George was the Treasurer of our Victoria Chapter, and was inducted as a Life Member of the NHSA by the Chief of Navy in December 2019.

He was the father of LCDR Bruce Bird, who passed away earlier this year. His wife Betty survives him, as do two other sons. His funeral on 4 August was very well attended. Various speakers made clear that George was a highly respected man, always fond of the Navy and a great contributor to his community and the Navy family. Vale George.

Members are encouraged to submit items they consider of interest for inclusion in this Newsletter.

**Andrew Mackinnon - Editor**

# PRESIDENT'S REMARKS



## Flag KILO

\* International Marine Signal Flags are used by ships at sea. The code flag K "KILO" nowadays means 'I wish to communicate with you'.

I always enjoy hearing stories from our veterans and their families. So it was that on 9 August I attended the Shrine service commemorating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of HMAS *Canberra* following the Battle of Savo Island in 1942.



At this event, I was delighted to meet Ms. Geraldine Hare, the daughter of one of the *Canberra* survivors, and proudly wearing the medals awarded to her dad - Able Seaman Eric Millhouse.

Eric was born in Port Lincoln, SA in 1922. His sister was a nurse and his brother served in the RAAF.



Here is a fine picture of young Eric, probably newly joined and wearing his HMAS *Canberra* cap tally.

I learned that Eric was a true survivor. After being returned to Australia following *Canberra's* sinking, he was soon posted to HMAS *Armidale*, which had commissioned on 11 June 1942 and worked up over the coming months.

He had only been in *Armidale* a few months when she was attacked and sunk by Japanese aircraft northwest of Darwin on 2 December 1942. Full details of this action are found on the Navy website [here](#).

He was fortunate to be one of the 16 *Armidale* crew and some Dutch service personnel who made it into the ship's motor boat. Other survivors were aboard the damaged ship's whaler, a Carley float, and a raft. The motor boat was sighted by a reconnaissance aircraft on 5 December, roughly 150 miles WNW of Darwin. This sighting was the first confirmation that *Armidale* had been lost. HMAS *Kalgoorlie* left Darwin that day and late on 6 December found the motor boat with now only 20 men onboard. They were landed in Darwin the next day. Able Seaman Eric Millhouse had survived his second ship sinking in four months!

I appreciate that the *Armidale* story has been told many times, a good insight to the story is [here](#).

Nonetheless, meeting Eric's daughter added a personal touch to this, which might encourage those less familiar with the story to read more about it.



To round out Eric's story, after a well-deserved period ashore, he joined the commissioning crew of HMAS *Bataan*, under Commander (later Vice Admiral Sir Henry) Burrell. The ship headed north to the Philippines in July 1945 – thus he was awarded the Philippines Liberation medal – and was then sent to Tokyo to be present for the Japanese surrender ceremony on 2 September.

Eric paid off in 1946 and returned to Adelaide, where he worked as a carpenter. He passed away there in 1988.

Geraldine confided at the end of our chat that her mother had occasionally said to Eric - "*The Japs couldn't get you, but the cigarettes and beer will!*" Sadly, that proved true.

One wonders how he coped as a young man with a succession of traumatic events which could give rise to what is nowadays diagnosed as PTSD.

While my earlier plea for a volunteer to help develop the history of HMAS *Lonsdale* has so far gone unanswered, I remain hopeful that one of our members might see this as a chance to provide a valued contribution to our Society.

We have been fortunate to obtain a grant from the Melbourne Naval Committee to cover the costs of the group visit to Williamstown on 4 November. The event will therefore be fully subsidised, at no cost to participants. We currently have around 20 nominations for this tour. More can be included as late as 28 September, when final bookings must be made. See Upcoming Events for the schedule of the day's activities.

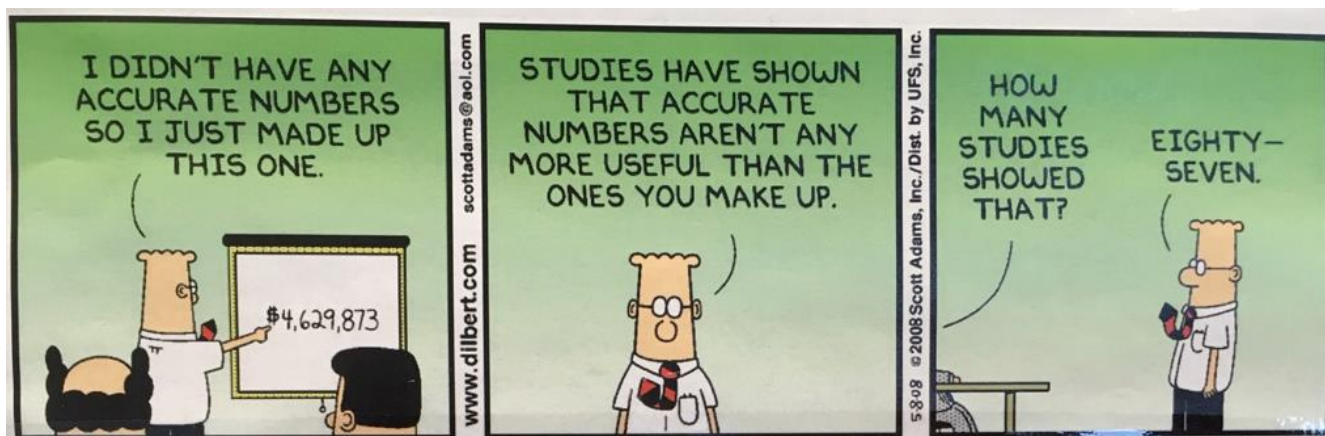
Consideration of potential topics and Guest Speakers for our monthly meetings next year is underway. Further details will be provided in next month's Newsletter. If any member has an idea of someone they feel could tell a good story, please let me know.

Best wishes go to our former President Rex Williams, who is currently 'in dock' at the Epworth Hospital in Richmond. With a heart valve operation due around 24 August, I'm sure all members and friends wish him a speedy and full recovery.

I hope as many members and guests as possible will attend our "Show & Tell" meeting on 22 August. I anticipate it will be both fascinating and fun! Those wishing to gather for dinner at the Waverley RSL beforehand are asked to advise Secretary Rodney Phillips (0466 983 313 or 77minstrel@gmail.com) so that we can book sufficient table space.

As always, I'd welcome ideas to help strengthen our organisation, increase our membership, and to better serve our members – [andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com](mailto:andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com).

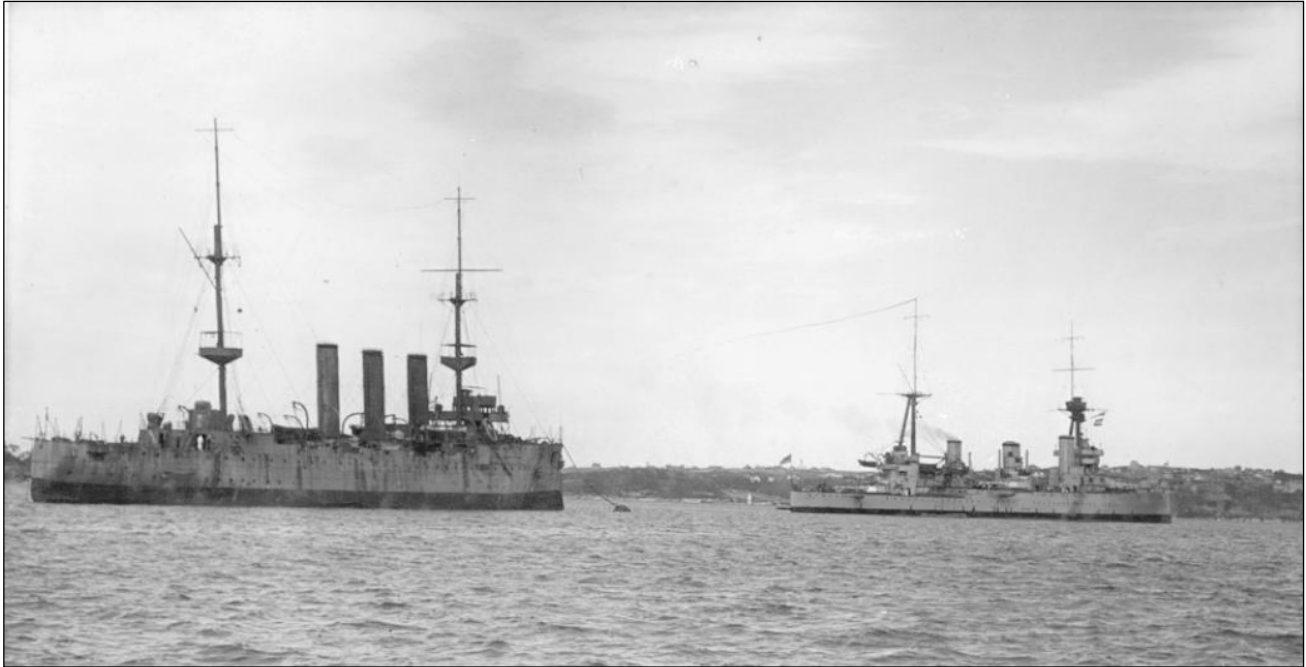
Correction: The date of the planned 2023 Open Day at HMAS *Cerberus* was incorrectly stated in last month's issue. It will occur on **19 March 2023**.



## What Ships & Where?

This segment will seek to include an interesting photo that might test recognition ability and/or naval history. The answer will be found on the back page.

Here's the next one. Which ships are these and where was this photo taken? A clue – end of two eras.



## Oddities – Do You Know?

- The Garden Island naval base in Sydney was commissioned as HMAS *Kuttabul* after the sinking of its namesake during the Japanese midget submarine attack in 1942. What was is called beforehand?
- Why do sailors have a separate blue uniform collar?
- What was HMAS *Gilolo*?

Answers on the back page.

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## JUST WONDERING



Following on from Question 2 above, I wonder if any would disagree with the following description of the former sailors' uniform when bell-bottomed trousers were worn.

The bell-bottom trousers enabled them to be rolled up easily for scrubbing decks and removed rapidly for use as a life buoy if the wearer fell overboard, by tying off the ankle ends to trap air inside. The seven horizontal creases ironed in each trouser leg enabled the garment to be concertinaed and rolled, inside out, so that they remained clean, taking up little room in lockers or kit bags. The number of horizontal creases was incidental, though a popular belief emerged that the number represented the seven seas. The three white stripes around the collar are decorative (and worn in other navies) – they do not commemorate Nelson's victories at Copenhagen, the Nile, and Trafalgar. The black headscarf once used to absorb sweat in crowded gun decks, is today worn only as a strip of black silk secured by tapes and a bow to the front of the jumper. Also now decorative is the white lanyard to which a seaman's knife was once secured and which could tuck into a pocket inside the jacket.

## Recent Events

- Following announcement of a number of senior ADF appointments and promotions, the gist of CN's signal is provided below for your information.
- A. REAR ADMIRAL SJ HUGHES, CSC, RAN appointed as HEAD NAVY CAPABILITY from DEC 22
- B. REAR ADMIRAL SE SHARKEY, AM, CSC, RAN extended as COMMANDER JOINT HEALTH COMMAND to DEC 23
- C. REAR ADMIRAL CE SMITH, CSM, RAN appointed as COMMANDER AUSTRALIAN FLEET from DEC 22
- D. REAR ADMIRAL BS WOLSKI, AM, RAN extended as HEAD AFGHAN INQUIRY REVIEW TASK FORCE to DEC 23
- E. COMMODORE RJ BOULTON, AM, RAN appointed as HEAD MILITARY STRATEGIC PLANNING on promotion to REAR ADMIRAL from DEC 22
- F. COMMODORE JP EARLEY, CSC, RAN appointed as COMMANDER AUSTRALIAN FLEET on promotion to REAR ADMIRAL FROM JUL 22 and as DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVY from DEC 22
- G. COMMODORE DP MANN, CSC, RAN appointed as HEAD JOINT CAPABILITIES on promotion to REAR ADMIRAL from DEC 22
- H. COMMODORE NM CURTIS, RAN extended as DIRECTOR GENERAL GARRISON HEALTH OPERATIONS to DEC 23
- I. COMMODORE RH ELLIOTT, CSC, RAN extended as DIRECTOR GENERAL MARITIME INTEGRATED WARFARE SYSTEMS to JUL 23
- J. COMMODORE SL GLASSOCK, CSC, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL SUPPLY CHAIN from DEC 23
- K. COMMODORE AM KLENTSIS, CSC, RAN extended as DIRECTOR GENERAL FUTURE NAVY WORKFORCE to DEC 24
- L. COMMODORE RJ LEGGATT, AM, CSC, RAN appointed as DEPUTY COMMANDER AUSTRALIAN FLEET from DEC 22
- M. COMMODORE SJ LOCKEY, CSC, RAN extended as DIRECTOR GENERAL SHIP ACQUISITION SURFACE COMBATANTS to DEC 24
- N. COMMODORE DJ RAE, OAM, RAN extended as DIRECTOR GENERAL NAVY AVIATION SYSTEMS to DEC 23
- O. COMMODORE J STAVRIDIS, CSC, RAN appointed as COMMODORE TRAINING from DEC 22
- P. CAPTAIN MJ BARNES, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL ENTERPRISE REFORM PLANNING - NAVY on promotion to COMMODORE FROM DEC 22
- Q. CAPTAIN TM MORRISON, DSM, RAN appointed as COMMANDER SURFACE FORCE on promotion to COMMODORE from DEC 22
- R. CAPTAIN AM PAPP, CSC, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL LITTORAL on promotion to COMMODORE from DEC 22
- S. CAPTAIN CE RHODES, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL LOGISTICS SYSTEMS on promotion to COMMODORE from DEC 22
- T. CAPTAIN HJ ROBERTSON, CSC, RAN appointed as COMMANDER SHORE FORCE on promotion to COMMODORE FROM DEC 22
- U. CAPTAIN JS SEARS, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL MARITIME SUPPORT on promotion to COMMODORE from DEC 22
- V. CAPTAIN LD VAN STRALEN, AM, CSC, RAN appointed as CHIEF OF STAFF NAVY HEADQUARTERS on promotion to COMMODORE FROM DEC 22
- W. CAPTAIN SJ WATTERS, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL JOINT COMMAND AND CONTROL on promotion to COMMODORE FROM DEC 22
- X. CAPTAIN AM WESTWOOD, RAN appointed as DIRECTOR GENERAL JOINT INFORMATION WARFARE on promotion to COMMODORE from DEC 22

Additionally, the following appointment and promotion were announced on 27 June:

- A. COMMODORE FP SNEATH, RAN extended as DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL ADF to DEC 23
- B. CAPTAIN DP LANDON, CSM, RAN on promotion to COMMODORE appointed as NUCLEAR POWERED SUBMARINE TASK FORCE LIAISON OFFICER USA from DEC 22

## Upcoming Events

**Visit to Williamstown.** The visit for our Chapter members to Williamstown remains planned for Friday 4 November. The outline of the day remains as follows:

- 0945: Muster at Melbourne River Cruises, Southbank Promenade Berth 2
- 1000-1100: Ferry from Southbank to Williamstown
- 1115-1230: Visit/tour of ex-HMAS *Castlemaine* Museum ship at Gem Pier (celebrating her 80th commissioning anniversary this year)
- 1245-1345: Lunch at nearby venue (ideally Customs House hotel)
- 1400-1445: Visit SEAWORKS Museum
- 1500-1600: Ferry to Southbank - disperse on completion

Additional members who decide they would like to join this group should advise the President by email at [andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com](mailto:andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com). The list will close in late September, to finalise bookings.

### **Monthly Meeting - Monday 22 August.**

Our next meeting will be a "Show and Tell" evening, when members are invited to bring along items that would interest others and which could be described in a few minutes.

Contributions can be serious or humorous, physical objects, musical ditties – in fact almost anything that will hopefully delight other attendees. The evening will also include an important ceremony to return a prized possession to its rightful owners! See the Flyer later in this Newsletter

### **Future Meetings**

Our meetings for the remainder of this year are planned as follows:

Mon 26 Sep "Quiz Night" - an evening of frivolity, fun and prizes.

Mon 24 Oct Annual General Meeting, followed by "The Yachtsman Scheme" (Jan Roberts-Billet MA)

Mon 28 Nov Christmas Function – Guest Speaker RADM Simon Harrington AM RAN (Rtd) - "Hands Across the Trenches - Centenary of Gallipoli".

### **"Quiz Night" – Mon 26 September**

Although six weeks away, members might like to know a broad outline of this event, which will take place in the Sunset Room at the Waverley RSL.

The evening will happen in teams of six at each table. Hopefully we'll get sufficient takers to make up six to eight tables. Guests will be most welcome. The Bar will be open and free nibbles available.

There will be four rounds of ten questions, covering Australian History, World History, General Knowledge and Naval History. The Quiz will be run with a simple, easy to use computerised scoring system, requiring just one person on each table to submit their team answers via a mobile phone. This will give a clear view on the big screen of questions, answers and progressive team results.

This is not an examination! It's intended to be a fun night and prizes will be awarded.

To assist in planning, it would be helpful if members could now start indicating their intention to attend. Please advise our Secretary Rodney Phillips if you plan to be there – ideally via email at [77minstrel@gmail.com](mailto:77minstrel@gmail.com)

### **Commemorative Events**

The Calendar on the NVN site (see Links) provides a list of the commemorative events being held this year at the Shrine of Remembrance or elsewhere. It's always good to have a NHSA presence at these.

## Navy's first WW2 casualties on Australian soil

We recently passed the 81<sup>st</sup> anniversary of a tragic event during WWII that resulted in the deaths of two RAN sailors. It is believed they were the first WWII casualties on Australian soil resulting from enemy action. This shocked the nation and brought our involvement in World War II much closer to home.

Around 12 July 1941, two cray fishermen spotted what was clearly a mine about 12km offshore at Beachport on the Limestone Coast in South Australia. They immediately raised the alarm, and a responding 'Rendering Mines Safe' team made the trip from HMAS *Torrens* in Adelaide.

This team was led by Lieutenant Commander Arthur Greening, accompanied by Able Seaman Thomas Todd and Able Seaman William Danswan.

AB Todd



AB Danswan



The mine was somehow brought ashore for inspection by the two sailors and their officer-in-charge, with help from the crews of four fishing boats.

It was evident that this was a German mine which had broken free from a minefield laid at the Western end of the Investigator Strait, most likely by the German raider *Penguin* in late 1940.

At more than 1 metre in diameter, the sphere was packed with up to 300 kilograms of explosives known as hexanite.

After the decision was made to destroy the mine, it was towed to a stretch of beach away from the town and the Navy three-man 'Rendering Mines Safe' team began the demolition process.



*A group of unknown men surround the mine towed ashore at Beachport in 1941*

By 14 July they had laid around 800m of demolition cable from the mine, such that they could detonate it remotely.

Shortly after the above image was taken, a rogue wave lifted the mine up onto the beach – where it fell onto its detonators and exploded, with the two able seamen only a few metres away. Both men were killed. Lieutenant Commander Greening narrowly escaped the blast, the shockwave from which was felt 30 kilometres away.

In the months that followed their deaths, six more mines washed up on southeast South Australian shores, between Sleaford and Port MacDonnell.

A memorial has been erected at Beachport, where a commemorative service was held in 2021 to mark this tragic event.



*Beachport mine memorial*

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**Australian Naval History Podcast Series.** For those with a little time on their hands, and an interest in learning more about the history of the RAN, I highly recommend you access the critically acclaimed Australian Naval History podcast series. These programs are produced by the Naval Studies Group in conjunction with the Submarine Institute of Australia, the Australian Naval Institute, Naval Historical Society, and the RAN Seapower Centre. The programs discuss notable events in the history of the Royal Australian Navy. The range of topics is fascinating. See <https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/hass/our-research/naval-studies-group>

# Naval Historical Society of Australia – Victoria Chapter

Cordially invites you to

**Our Monthly Meeting at 1900 on Monday 22 August 2022**

At Waverley RSL – Sunset Room

161 Coleman Parade, Glen Waverley

## **“Show & Tell”**

This “Show & Tell” evening breaks with our normal monthly meeting practice of listening to a Guest Speaker. It provides an opportunity for attendees to bring along items which they consider of likely interest to others in our Chapter, and to describe their relevance in just a few minutes.

In effect this provides a dozen or more Guest Speakers, each presenting a short vignette. There are no limits to what members can offer to the evening, with the only constraint being a limit of five minutes in which to convey their message

So rummage around in those old cupboards, sea chests, photo albums, and sock drawers – or even songbooks – to help bring this evening alive.

Past events of this nature have proven to be most entertaining, with a smattering of humorous topics among others of a more serious nature. Our President will do his best to maintain “good order and discipline” by running the proceedings. It would be helpful if those intending to speak would advise him by email beforehand – at [andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com](mailto:andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com).

As noted in our last “Three Headed Dog” newsletter, the evening will include a short ceremony to hand over the prize-winner’s Belt awarded to Stoker Leonard “Len” Stanley Hill who won the Heavyweight Division of the Mediterranean Fleet Championships in 1936. This encased belt will be on display before being presented to his son for future safe keeping in the family.

**Members and Guests are most welcome**

**A relaxing meal and drink beforehand in the RSL’s delightful Warramunga Room  
is always a pleasant prelude to the 1900 meeting**

*Democracy is the worst system devised by wit of man, except for all the others.*

Winston Churchill

## Key Links

This section aims to provide links to other information sources that members may find of interest and might choose to access. The choice is yours.

**NHSA(V) website:** Our local website is found via the NVN at <http://www.nhsavic.navyvic.net/>. Members who wish to access previous Guest Speaker presentations will find these by clicking 'Recordings'.

**Navy Victoria Network:** This site provides a wealth of information on current activities within Victoria, including a forecast Calendar of Events -

<https://navyvic.net/>. By joining this free network, members are provided with the monthly "Broadside" Newsletter which includes the monthly 'Navy Hero' article and other items of topical interest.

**Military History & Heritage Victoria (MHHV):** This group provides opportunity to hear a range of topics as their title suggests. A modest charge is required to access a range of highly regarded speakers.

<https://www.mhhv.org.au/>

**Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network:** This group seeks to foster greater recognition of, and knowledge about, Melbourne's rich maritime heritage and maritime industry sector – past, present and future. Receiving their informative free newsletter requires an email registration, or can be accessed through the NVN site.

<https://mmhn.org.au/>

**Navy News:** This is Navy's flagship newspaper; the site provides access to the latest fortnightly news plus historic editions from 1958 to the present

<https://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/navy-news>

**History Guild:** This volunteer organisation publishes a wide range of historic articles of interest – a great site

<https://historyguild.org/military-history/>

**Ex-HMAS Castlemaine Museum:**

<https://hmascastlemaine.org.au/>

**HMAS Cerberus Museum:**

<https://www.navy.gov.au/heritage/museums/museum-hmas-cerberus>

**SEAWORKS Museum:**

<https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/visit/Experience/Things-to-do/Seaworks-Maritime-Precinct>

**Queenscliff Maritime Museum:**

<https://maritimequeenscliffe.org.au/>

**Polly Woodside Museum:**

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/polly-woodside/>

## Victoria Chapter Committee

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### **VIDEO RECORDIST**

Mr Brian Surtees

### **RECORDING TECHNICIAN**

Mr Laurie Pegler

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### **ANSWERS:**

#### **What Ships & Where –**

At left, HMAS *Encounter* (decommissioned) and HMAS *Australia* (flying her de-commissioning pennant) in 1920 – in Sydney.

#### **Oddities -**

1. *Penguin* (Garden Island) was Navy's main base in Sydney in 1939. At outbreak of war, additional support bases were established in Newcastle, Brisbane and Darwin and each of these was also named *Penguin*.
2. When sailors sported pigtails, bound with yarn and a coating of tar, this stained the neck of their clothing, which had to be protected by a loose, washable cloth. While pigtails have gone, the blue collar remains.
3. **HMAS *Gilolo***. This was an RAN base on the island of Gilolo (now Halmahera) in the Maluku group of the former Dutch East Indies – now Indonesia. It operated only from 1945-46. Little information seems available about the purpose of this base. If anyone knows more, please let me know.