



PRESIDENT

Capt Andrew Mackinnon CSC,
RAN (RET)
8 Gleneagles Court,
CROYDON, 3136
Mob. 0429 096 911
andrewmackinnon0404@gmail.com

TREASURER

Mr Martin Grogan, OAM
26 Forbes Drive,
Aspendale Gardens, 3195
Tel: 0417 377 763

VICE PRESIDENT

LCDR John Redman, RAN (RET)
PO Box 655
TEMPLESTOWE, 3106

V.PRES/EDITOR THD

Mr. Frank Cronin,
88 Purches Street,
MITCHAM, 3132
TEL: 9874 2134

HON.SECRETARY

Mr. Rodney Phillips,
79 Fordholm Road,
HAMPTON PARK, 3976
Tel: 9702 8528
Mob: 0466 983 313

LIBRARY LIAISON

LCDR Roger Buxton, RCN,
(RET)
TEL: 9755 0403
bzsm1590@cosmos.net.au

HISTORIAN

Ms Jan Roberts Billett, MA,
0413 013 292
3/109 Power Street,
Williamstown, Vic. 3016
janrobbill@bigpond.com

VIDEO RECORDIST

Mr. Brian Surtees

RECORDING TECHNICIAN

Mr. Laurie Pegler

THE THREE-HEADED DOG

Newsletter of the
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Victoria Chapter

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email franxx@optusnet.com.au

WELCOME

Welcome to the August 2021 issue of the Three-Headed Dog. I hope it provides a little enjoyment and interest to all our readers. The days of Victoria's Wintery Lockdown have become more and more wearysome – it is good therefore for us to "strike out" towards Springtime when I am sure brighter days will be upon us.

So let's look forward to September and hope and pray that the days of the dreaded COVID 19 are at least on the way to drawing to a close.

This August issue will, I hope, give our readers plenty to think about and enjoy as we aim to cover a wide spectrum of historical naval experience. You will find things of interest spanning from the days of Lord Nelson, through pre and post World War I days right up to present happenings in the current world of Naval service.

It is my hope that our little newsletter will bring some solace and enjoyment at this time of Lockdown and maybe encourage our members and other readers to partake more fully of the benefits of membership of the NAVAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA .

Frank Cronin, Editor



PRESIDENT'S REMARKS -



Flag Kilo (I wish to communicate with you)

All members were undoubtedly disappointed that COVID lockdown measures last month prevented us holding our planned meeting, and particularly we missed hearing from CAPT Ainsley Morthorpe CSM RAN (CO *Cerberus*) on the early European settlement in WA. I'm confident he'll be willing to reprise his presentation, ideally in early 2022.

I'm hoping that our latest lockdown extension will end in time for us to hold our next meeting on Monday 23 August. This will probably not be known until 19 August and will depend on whether the Waverley RSL can accept our anticipated attendees. Either way, I'll send out a group email to all members to advise what's happening.

Being an optimist, I'm looking forward to hearing from one of our members - Captain Jorgen Berg – an experienced and widely travelled Merchant Navy officer who served in seagoing roles as an officer in the Royal Danish Navy. Jorgen will share his experience of voyages in Danish polar support ships and the navigation and cargo supply challenges of moving critical cargo ashore onto the ice at Antarctic bases Dumont d'Urville, Casey and Macquarie Island, among others.

Thereafter our guest speaker list for the remainder of the year is now as follows:

- Mon 27 Sep – “Exploration and Hydrography in the Arctic” (Roger Buxton)
- Mon 25 Oct – “Sydney-Emden battle and aftermath” (John Redman)
- Mon 22 Nov – Christmas Function (Speaker – CDRE Greg Yorke CSC RAN)
- Mon 22 Feb 22- “CAPT James Stirling RN” (CAPT Ainsley Morthorpe CSM RAN – CO *Cerberus*) – to be confirmed
- I'm looking to identify speakers until mid-2022 - suggestions are welcome.

The Reinvigoration Strategy Workshop planned to be held at the Mission to Seafarers in July was also postponed due to COVID restrictions. This will now occur on Saturday 16 October.

In collaboration with other principals in the ex-Navy Community in Victoria, our Chapter continues to be involved in discussions with the Council of Greater Geelong regarding the future preservation of Osborne House and its place in the history of the Royal Australian Navy. We are also expressing our views regarding the appropriate cataloguing, curation, preservation and display of the former Maritime Museum contents, many of which appear to have naval heritage value. Whilst making it clear to the Council that Navy has no funds to support this, I understand that the Chief of Navy is supportive of our continued involvement and has agreed to our production of a short video that emphasises our key points of interest and concern. CDRE Yorke has kindly agreed to be the on-screen presenter.

I have recently updated our list of Victorian-resident NHSA members and established a group email for all (while preserving individual's privacy). I will use this list to communicate specific issues worthy of notice. This communication will not duplicate the valuable information which is available to those who receive the Three Headed Dog or who become a member of the Navy Victoria Network (NVN).

I'm delighted that Brian Surtees and Laurie Pegler have successfully collaborated to provide a full video recording of each of our Guest Speaker presentations on the NVN website. This will replace the posting of sound recordings and allow a wider audience to access the sessions. The full presentation by our June Speaker Robert Hadler – "Mutiny, Murder and Political Controversy" is now up on the NVN site. Well done Brian and Laurie!

The NVN provides a wide range of current and historic Navy newsworthy articles all too numerous to mention here. The website includes access to the FREE Broadside magazine that provides fascinating information. For example, the July edition provides a great account of the 1st RAN Bridging Train that served under fire at Gallipoli. The NVN also provides a valuable list of forthcoming events of naval interest in Victoria. Our Chapter is listed under the Associations section.

I encourage all of our Chapter members to join the NVN – at <http://www.navyvic.net>. You can also access the site on a mobile device via this QR Code:



Some new NHSA publications are awaiting printing and anticipated formal launch in Sydney on 5 November. I imagine they will be available for sale through the NHSA shop thereafter. These will be:

- IKARA – Australia's Cold War Wonder Weapon
- 50 Years Honouring History – The Story Behind The Naval Historical Association of Australia
- Australia's Colonial Navies – Revised and Expanded Edition.

Finally, I hope everyone is safe and coping with the latest COVID lockdowns, which hopefully will end soon. I empathise with those who are separated from loved ones, or who have travel plans, entertainment, dinners and other enjoyments impacted by the restrictions. I feel especially for the small businesses who have tried to function with reduced customers and a stop-start economy. I hope we soon get a chance to help them return to some form of normality. Personally, I think the pandemic has taught us a greater resilience, and reminded us of how our forebears managed to get through the tough times they faced by connecting with their communities and caring for each other.

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

Join us for our upcoming Zoom Presentation:

NELSON – An Admiral Led astray to Victory

Thursday 19th August 1100, 2021



Overview

Revolution in America and France was instrumental in the progress of the Royal Navy in the 18th and 19th centuries and we should be conscious of these circumstances in studying the career of Horatio Nelson.

This story starts by looking into the life of an ambitious, vain, and cash-strapped young officer seeking advancement through the naval hierarchy. Serving in the West Indies we come into contact with the slave trade. Nelson marries a wealthy widow whose fortune comes from this trade and all should have been well, but instead this turns to misery.

During a Mediterranean interlude the now up and coming Admiral meets the intellectually gifted Sir William Hamilton and his pretty young wife, with an unusual past, Lady Emma Hamilton. This threesome is inseparable and eventually set up house together outside London, near present day Wimbledon.

Now settled to domesticity Nelson is persuaded to take a Grand Tour across England to the far coast of Wales. The main reason is to visit Sir William's

Welsh estates over which he is seeking Nelson's support in persuading the Admiralty to build a major naval dockyard on Hamilton land.

During the tour we visit many sites and interesting personalities, from iron works where the great guns that arm the fleet are made, copper works which help protect ships from the ravages of tropical parasites, forests and timber merchants who supply the vital oak to build and repair the fleet. We hear rumblings that all is not well with another admiral refusing to engage an enemy fleet because of the poor state of his ships, and about an attempted invasion and incitement to revolution on British soil.

Overall the tour is a great success with the celebrity status of Horatio and Emma ensuring them of constant mainstream adulation but at the higher levels of society they are shunned. The lengthy tour however takes its toll and the ravages of time cannot be erased. When Nelson is recalled to duty it is a rather subdued and sad figure that takes his place on his final immortal voyage. This largely unknown story calls us to ponder upon Emma's role in the Admiral's ultimate victory.



Presenter – Walter Burroughs CMDR RAN Rtd.

Walter Burroughs served as a cadet in the merchant service before joining the RNZN and later transferring to the RAN. He served as Gunnery Officer in HMAS *Sydney* on her trooping deployments to Viet Nam and in HMAS

Parramatta during her service in the Far East Strategic Reserve and in the training ship HMAS *Duchess*. Shore appointments included gunnery duties in the Sydney Command and at Navy Office. He completed the RAN Staff College and served as Executive Officer of HMAS *Derwent*.

He later served on exchange with the Royal Navy as Executive Officer of the shore establishment HMS *Vernon* during the Falklands War. His final RAN posting was as Project Director for the Modernisation of Garden Island Dockyard.

After completing an honours degree in Design Science at the University of Sydney he served in project management roles commissioning new public and private sector buildings. For the past few years he has contributed to articles on naval history and edits the *Naval Historical Review*.

Details

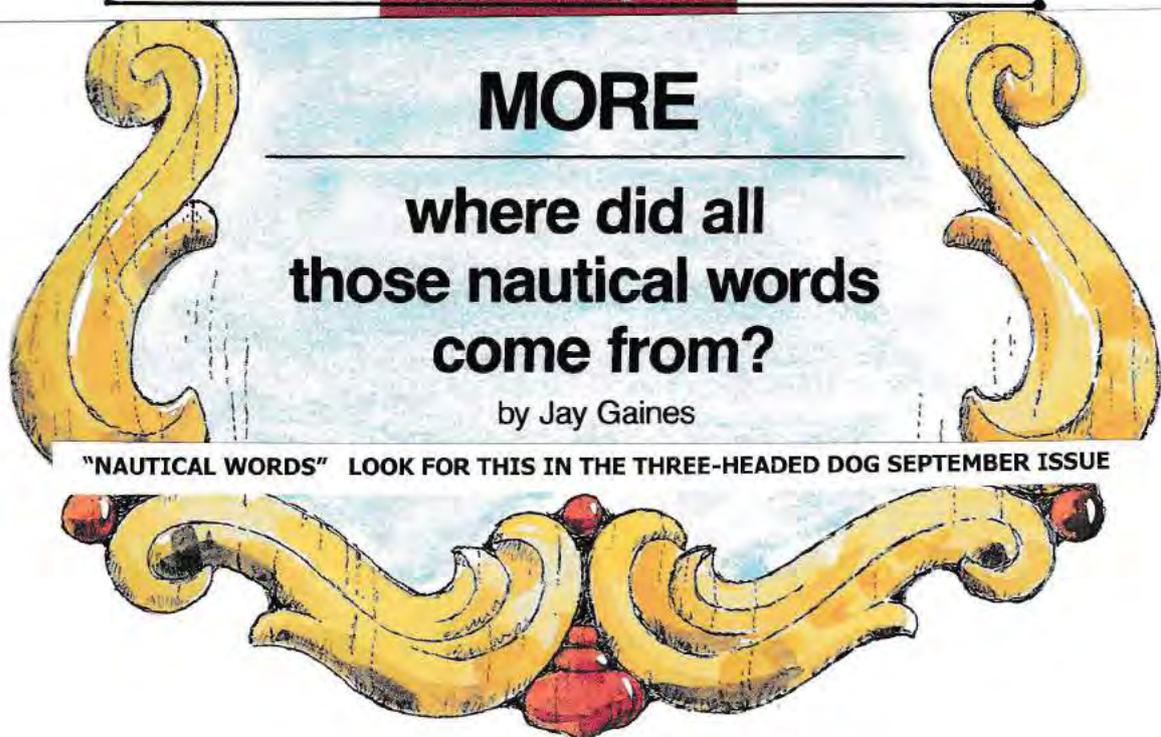
Aug 19, 2021 11:00 AM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Zoom access

Meeting ID: 829 4855 2648

Passcode: 715098

Zoom meeting link





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RUSIV Occasional

Celebrating our 131st Year

A weekly e-newsletter relating to our security & defence

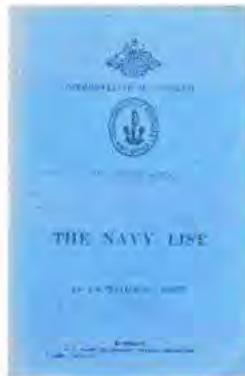
Member contributions are always welcome.

Royal United Services Institute of
Victoria
rusivic.org.au
secretary@rusivic.org.au
Library Catalogue:
www.thecollectingbug.com/rusivictoria/

Forthcoming Anniversaries

9 August 1915: Six Victoria Crosses awarded for the Battle of Lone Pine, Gallipoli
9 August 1918: Posthumous award of VC for Pte Robert Beatham, 8th Battalion, for his actions at Rossieres, east of Amiens
9 August 1942: HMAS Canberra sunk in Battle of Savo Island
9 August 1945: Atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki
12 August 1916: Pte Martin O'Meara, 16th Battalion awarded VC for action at Pozieres
12 August 1918: Sgt Percy Stratton, 40th Battalion, awarded VC for action at Proyart, France
13 August 1900: Tasmanians capture Boer leader Commandant Erasmus
15 August 1945: VJ Day
18 August 1966: Battle of Long Tan. D Coy 6 RAR awarded US Presidential Unit Citation

Military Lists



The **Navy List** traditionally contains details of the officers of the Royal Australian Navy. We have a good number of copies in our Library, this one being from 1927. It is an authoritative reference to the officers of the Navy, the ships and shore establishments to which they were posted as well as their dates of birth and seniority. There is no publically-available equivalent for naval ratings.

We also have some Royal Navy lists, an early biographical dictionary of the RN (1849) and a few Australian Colonial Navy Lists. We always look for more!

It is worthwhile to know that past editions have been digitised and placed in the public domain as part of the Sea Power Centre - Australia's digitisation project. The aim of this project is to make historic records and information more readily available to members of the public. Additional editions of Navy Lists will be added throughout the life of the project as the 30 year disclosure period expires.

Like Army and Air Force lists, these documents are perhaps boring and factual but are an important primary tool for researchers.

Key to internet references: (M) - magazine or website; (N) - newspaper; (F) - film clip; (P) - podcast

Defence

Australia's opportunity to manufacture rare-earth magnets: [\(M\)AspiStrategist](#)

Cyber Security and Resilience: [\(F\)RUSINSW](#)

Setting clear priorities for the ADF requires ruthless decisions on the force we build: [\(M\)AspiStrategist](#)

Recommended: Defence Data Strategy 2021-2023: [\(M\)Defence](#)

Ethics

Recommended: Afghanistan Inquiry Reform Plan: Delivering the Defence Response to the IGADF
Afghanistan Inquiry: [\(M\)Defence](#)

Navy

Royal Australian Navy Clearance Divers - "United & Undaunted" | Old Dog New Tricks:
[\(F\)StrategicObservations](#)

Army

Next-generation Infantry Fighting Vehicle - Project Land 400 Phase 3: [\(F\)Defence](#)

Indian Ocean

Evidence points to secret Indian navy base on Mauritian island: [\(M\)Aljazeera](#)

New Zealand

New Zealand to increase NZDF commitment to UN Command, Republic of Korea:
[\(M\)MirageNews](#)

HMNZS *Wellington* sails rough seas: [\(F\)NZDF](#)

Singapore

US has 'no plans right now' to increase littoral combat ships presence in Singapore, says Navy chief: [\(M\)DefenseNews](#)

Joint Statement by United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and Singapore Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen: [\(M\)USDoD](#)

Indonesia

Indonesia commits to South China Sea defence with US as India and Germany send warships to the region: [\(M\)AbcNews](#)

Military History

The Battle of Gemas 14 January 1942: [\(F\)StormofSteel](#)

Boer War to World War: Tactics and Training in the British Army 1902 - 1914:
[\(F\)WesternFrontAssociation](#)

China

South China Sea: British warships 'didn't sail near' Chinese artificial islands:
[\(M\)SouthChinaMorningPost](#)

UK

Royal Navy group: hijackers have left vessel off UAE coast: [\(M\)Military.com](#)

Carrier Strike Group in the South China Sea: [\(F\)NavyLookout](#)

US

U.S. seizes oil tanker used to evade North Korea sanctions: [\(M\)Deptofjustice](#)

Please pass this newsletter to your friends and invite them to join RUSI Victoria

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THANK YOU RUSIV



British Carrier Joins Forces With U.S. Flattop And Amphibious Assault Ship In Gulf Of Aden

HMS Queen Elizabeth joined American and Dutch warships in the Gulf of Aden, an important maritime crossroads.

BY JOSEPH TREVITHICK JULY 12, 2021

THE WAR ZONE



End came swiftly for crew as WWI sub imploded



EXCLUSIVE

STEPHEN FITZPATRICK

Crew members of doomed World War I Australian submarine AE1 were locked in a battle to make their vessel resurface when it suffered a catastrophic failure off the Duke of York Islands in 1914, a report into the disaster has found.

Key trim settings were changed but the attempts were complicated by the fact only one of the boat's twin props was operating, which the report found would have been insufficient to arrest the descent once it began.

Crew mistakes could have contributed, with the report identifying "a design failure, material failure, operator error or combinations thereof" as being responsible for the vessel's bow tipping forwards and down.

As the sub gathered speed and slid past about 100m, a forward section imploded, generating a powerful shockwave that would have killed the 35 men instantly.

Rear Admiral Peter Briggs, who led the expedition that finally found AE1 last December in Papua New Guinea waters, said it would have been like a "truck-bomb going off in the middle of the control room" and that there was at least some comfort the men "didn't know what hit them".

"From the available evidence, it is clear that the crew met their end swiftly and did not die a slow, lingering death on the sea floor," the report finds, noting that a further expedition would be required if the cause of the loss were to be ascertained — and even then, final answers are not guaranteed.

The report was delivered in Sydney last night to crew descendants including Vera Ryan, whose uncle Jack Messenger served on AE1, and Robyn Rosenstraus, whose great-uncle James Fettes also died in the accident.

Commissioned by the Find AE1 organisation, which conducted the successful search, it recommends against any attempt to



'It is clear that the crew met their end swiftly and did not die a slow, lingering death on the sea floor'

AE1 REPORT

enter the hull since it is the men's final resting place and "deserves the sanctity due to a gravesite".

It paints a compelling picture of their attempt to avoid disaster, with the sub's hydroplanes set "hard to rise", meaning it "had forward way and was endeavouring to return to the surface".

"This would have to have been



The AE1 sank in September 1914 with the loss of 35 lives after crew were unable to arrest its descent

a deliberate action," the report says. "Operated by a rack-and-pinion mechanism and designed to operate against maximum design speed, the planes could not have drifted into their current positions."

The report says it is possible the boat had been undertaking a late-afternoon practice dive while heading home to Rabaul, and that although her crew had been operating together for more than a year, "their opportunity to practise dived operations (ballasting, trimming, depth-keeping etc) had been limited".

That lack of practice, as well as the mechanical defect to the starboard main engine clutch "which

limited the power available to her when dived" provided a combination of circumstances which "would alone have been sufficient to lead to her loss", it finds.

Various alternative scenarios for the loss have now been ruled out, with the "diving accident" explanation being deemed "the most probable cause".

"She failed to catch a good trim on diving, for which there could be a number of explanations, and, with only one shaft available to arrest the dive, she then carried on down," it finds. Mr Briggs cautioned last night that with an operating depth of 30m and a vessel length of 54m, there was "not much room for error".

Last year's search aboard the offshore oil and gas survey ship MV Fugro Equator employed sophisticated underwater camera gear and an automated underwater vehicle to locate the sub at a depth of more than 300m in a still-unspecified location.

Mr Briggs said further surveys would use even more advanced equipment.

The report warns that now the sub has been found, "the clock is ... ticking against the fame seekers and treasure hunters who will attempt to exploit the wreck or achieve notoriety by obtaining world first images".

It says measures should immediately be implemented to prevent ships from anchoring, mooring or trawling in the area, that a permit system requiring the permission of both Australian and Papua New Guinea authorities for any further activity involving the wreck be implemented, and that a surveillance camera be installed on nearby Mioko Island.

It also calls for the War Graves Act to be amended to recognise wrecks representing the last known resting place of Australian servicemen and women.



Sailing into history

Kathleen M. Burns
looks at the 1908
voyage of the US
Navy's Great White
Fleet to Australia, as
seen through the eyes
of the media.

As we celebrate the centennial of this globe-girdling voyage, it is interesting to observe the many parallels between the attitudes in 1908 and 2008, when viewed on the world stage.

This was no ordinary trip. Sixteen battleships and 14,000 men began the first circumnavigation of the globe by a fleet of this magnitude as they sailed out of Norfolk, Virginia, harbour on December 16, 1907. Few on board knew the ultimate destination of the cruise. When the trip ended, the fleet would have covered 74,000 kilometres over a 14-month period, and established the US Navy's reputation as an international sea power.

Both US President Teddy Roosevelt and Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin had specific goals in mind for this voyage. They included aspects of domestic politics, economics, international finance, diplomacy, pragmatism and security. The backdrop was a world—then as now—that was faced with global unrest, threats of war, ethnic racism, political posturing and competition for military spending.

One hundred years ago, both leaders were also waging a battle for symbolism: to garner prestige, to actively shape public opinion and to win support for their policies. Roosevelt had no qualms about censorship and handpicked the embedded media who would give the coverage and he muzzled the seamen and officers who offered any dissent. There were threats of

presidential impeachment by Congress for the costs and for the manpower that would be shifted from US shores to overseas for a lengthy period of time.

The trip also served as an incubator for future Navy talent during World War I and II, with several Ensigns eventually rising to the rank of Admiral. This included: Husband E. Kimmel, who became chief of the Pacific Fleet; Harold R. Stark, who became Chief of Naval Operations and Kimmel's supervisor; and Raymond A. Spruance and William Halsey who became two of the Navy's most famous and respected Fleet commanders in the Pacific War against the Japanese that would occur more than 30 years later.

The Chesapeake farewell had the air of a festive national holiday. Reporters described the circus-like environment as 'splendid cacophony,' with 21-gun salutes, military bands and wild cheering. In addition to its human passengers, the fleet resembled Noah's ark with 70 animals on board, including 25 goats, 32 dogs, 12 parrots and a donkey, who would serve as mascots for the different ships.

One Baptist preacher proclaimed in his New York City sermon that the day heralded 'the most momentous event in this country since the Civil War.'

Such hyperbole was focused on the ships, lined up in a three-mile-long parade formation, prior to departure. The hulls, glistening in the sunshine, were

Ships of the Great White Fleet in Sydney Harbour, 1908.



painted white for the occasion. (It had not been dubbed the Great White Fleet from the onset. 'Only long after the cruise had ended would someone hit upon the catchy name which caught the public's fancy and stuck. In contrast with the usual secrecy that surrounds movements of war ships, this fleet's voyage was designed to attract the maximum notice of the news media,' according to historian Kennethimmel.)

Initially, it was only announced that the Navy armada was to sail around South America and then stop in San Francisco. It was not until the cruise was well underway that the crew was told of the extensive nature of the trip.

For Roosevelt, standing on the deck of the presidential yacht, the *Mayflower*, to observe the departure from the Hampton Roads harbour, this was a moment to be savoured. The magnificent fleet was almost entirely his creation, tangible evidence of his devotion to the US Navy and his untiring years of service devoted to its strengthening and modernisation. Prior to departure, Roosevelt quietly spoke to Rear Admiral Robley Evans, commander of the Atlantic Fleet, away from the media's attention. Both were aware of the international tensions bubbling below the surface on the eve of this historic venture. Said Roosevelt, as commander-in-chief, 'Your cruise is a peaceful one, but you realize your responsibility if it should turn out otherwise.'

In his public face, the fleet commander, dubbed by the media as 'quotable Evans' and described as 'a favorite with the newsmen,' told his eager media audience: 'You will not be disappointed with the fleet, whether it proves a feast, a frolic or a fight.'

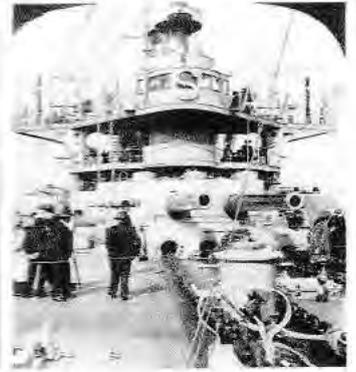
Setting the scene

Some media observers saw the cruise as a masquerade, with the ships sailing in peacetime but being fully cognizant of the portents of war that could engulf them in the course of the lengthy voyage. Divided opinions prevailed. As reported in the *New York Herald* of Dec. 25, 1907, a Baptist minister claimed that 'God has led us into the Pacific...I could see it in America's assertion of her right to control the Pacific in the interest of civilization and humanity.' But the *New York Times* of Dec. 26, 1907, cited a contradictory opinion from the Catholic Archbishop of St. Louis who noted that the cruise underway was 'hypocritical... carrying the palm of peace in one hand while the other holds the key to wherein is stored the 35 million pounds of ammunition for the 'fight or frolic.'

Journalist John Scott Merrilweather wrote: 'No one in these last hours is aware of the massive destructive power of this fleet. The band plays, the ladies and gentlemen promenade and talk, the blue jackets make merry during the last hours in a home port and all this time the ships are ready to let loose a storm of destruction such as never before has been wrought by man on the face of the waters.'

Globally, the world was in a state of unrest.

Naval expansions were underway by Great Britain (then the dominant fleet) as well as by Germany, France, Russia, Austria, Italy and Japan—the latter was



emerging as the undisputed great power in the Pacific.

Kaiser Wilhelm II had coined the term 'Yellow Peril,' to define Japan's ambitions after the defeat of Russia in 1904-05. The phrase had ominous significance for West Coast Americans as well as for Australia, Europe and Asia.

In May 1907, Roosevelt spoke out against anti-Japanese riots in San Francisco and chastised 'certain journalists' and editors who passed off rumours as fact. He added that 'I shall continue to do everything I can by politeness and consideration to the Japanese to offset the worse than criminal stupidity of the San Franciscan mob, the San Francisco press and such papers as the *New York Herald*.'

Said Roosevelt, 'My own judgment is that the only thing that will prevent war is the Japanese feeling that we shall not be beaten, and this feeling we can only excite by keeping and making our navy efficient in the highest degree.'

A major player on the world stage

Daring, individualistic, self-confident, determined, bigger than life, domineering, at times belligerent, Roosevelt was an adventurer and sportsman, beholden to no one. When he assumed the presidency in 1901, the military in general and the Navy in particular were to be among the centerpieces for his administration.

For two years, Roosevelt secretly planned the launch of his Great White Fleet, sharing little with the Congress or his Cabinet. It was not until the spring of 1907 that he began to discuss his strategy more openly with his military advisers.

Roosevelt had very specific goals in mind for this historic trip:



Voyage around the world

The Great White Fleet departed Hampton Roads December 16, 1907, and returned there on February 22, 1909, having visited...

- Punta Arenas – Feb 1-7, 1908
- Honolulu – Jul 16 to 23, 1908
- Auckland – Aug 8-15, 1908
- Sydney – Aug 20-27, 1908
- Melbourne – Aug 29 to Sep 3, 1908
- Albany – Sep 11-17, 1908
- Yokohama – Oct 19-23, 1908
- Colombo – Dec 14-20, 1908
- Port Said – Jan 5-7, 1909
- Gibraltar – Feb 6, 1909

Above left: A set of cards picturing the captains and the ships of the Great White Fleet at the time of departure from Hampton Roads were created by the American newspaper *The Evening Post*.

Above right: A photo of the 12-inch guns on the *USS Louisiana*, issued as a postcard.

Left: Crowds watching the Fleet from Centennial Park in Sydney.

Right: *USS Minnesota* seen from Cremorne Heights.





Postcards celebrating the Great White Fleet visit in 1908.

‘Mark Twain wrote that it was ‘all for show’ to make a great noise that would satisfy the president.’

Politically—to influence the 1908 US elections on behalf of his party and to generate increased moral and financial support in Congress for funding for the Navy, so he could gain a dozen or so new battleships.

Financially—to calm the panic that had ensued in 1907 when a stock market sell off had plunged values by \$2 billion, and triggered credit speculation, overexpansion and the unsound banking conditions. International banking panic was also occurring in London, Paris and Berlin.

Internationally—to create a diverting foreign adventure, such as the fleet’s trip, to take the public’s mind off the Depression, which had begun in 1907.

Economically—to focus on the fleet would be a boon for the US shipbuilding industry and a salvo to Wall Street magnates who were in steel and other similar industries.

Diplomatically—to arrange courtesy calls by the fleet to Japan and China would help temper some of the simmering racial conflicts in the United States related to those countries.

Security-wise—to impress other countries with the might and power of the US fleet and to stave off swirling war sentiments while generating good will among allies such as Australia and New Zealand.

Geographically—to emphasise America’s interests in the Atlantic and Pacific and to reinforce the expectation that the United States was to be considered a major player.

Patriotically—to generate a groundswell of domestic support and to drown out critics and muckraking journalists.

Public Relations—the strongest reason for Roosevelt was to garner prestige and to significantly influence public opinion. ‘One disliked admitting he wanted prestige for its own sake, would pay millions of dollars for it and risked thousands of lives and 16 battleships to gain it. For prestige adhered best as a byproduct, the unsought dividend of solid achievement,’ noted historian Robert Hart.

In the battle for symbolism in 1907, a battleship was the ultimate weapon. Hart described it as ‘a paradox of power and beauty [that] demanded attention—pride and affection of people whose flag it flew and the envy and fear of adversaries. Why hide it in a stock pile? Why not place it on display as one usually does with costly and beautiful possessions? The meaning of prestige was quite clear to anyone who watched a parade of ships.’ It was a proclamation to the world of such intangible virtues of honor, dignity, strength and respect.

And the harbinger of that prestige was tightly controlled positive publicity. Roosevelt was taking no chances. Censorship was an absolute necessity -- never

mind the First Amendment.

Mindful of some descriptions of the ‘highly exaggerated or even pure fiction’ of the jingoist coverage inspired by Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer during the Spanish American War of 1898, Roosevelt harpiked the reporters who would travel on board the Great White Fleet. A press center was created aboard the ship, Connecticut, ‘to cater to the needs of a pool of newsmen invited to sail as passengers.’

Roosevelt declared that ‘It is absolutely essential to have men whom we can trust entirely on such a trip, and, of course, every article they send must be submitted to an admiral... We will take no one whom we do not entirely approve.’ While he was willing to consult with the major press organisations about suggested names, he reserved the right to reject any name suggested.

Beyond the press, he also muzzled the Navy, with any officer threatened with a court martial who criticised the trip ‘as a waste of time.’

Under Roosevelt’s scenario, the voyage ‘was plotted as a romantic success story. No flaw or failure, no matter how minor, must be allowed to mar its inspiring effect upon America and the world,’ wrote Hart. Eager for international approval for its commanding fleet, Americans devoured the news coverage. ‘Never before had so much energy and money been invested in a search for prestige,’ echoed historian Kenneth Wimmel.

Some writers not on board spoke frankly, such as American humorist Mark Twain, who wrote that it was ‘all for show’ to make a great noise that would satisfy the president. *Harper’s Weekly* called it ‘an extravagant display of force’ which caused uneasiness among its readers. A bit over the top, the *US Navy League Journal* called the cruise the ‘most remarkable [voyage] ever undertaken in the history of the world.’

Historian Hart related the dire media predictions made during August and September 1907, when ‘almost all Eastern editors criticised Theodore Roosevelt [for the cruise.] Some even demanded an impeachment trial for sponsoring a project which would leave the Atlantic Coast unprotected. Cities would be bombarded and the White House burned. Storms, rocky coasts and hidden enemies would finish off the fleet long before it reached the Pacific.’ A *N.Y. Herald* poll revealed that ‘one-seventh of the American press was hostile to the cruise (largely for political reasons).’

Adding to the media frenzy were the openly ‘yellow press’ and books on the ‘yellow peril.’ In May and June of 1907, both the *New York Times* and *Colliers Weekly* published fiction serials which described future fighting around Hawaii and the Philippines, while *Banzai*, a German novel, gave a fictional account of how ‘Japanese ships, equipped with secret weapons, would wipe out the US Navy in half an hour of battle and then land an army in California.’

Another book, *The World’s Awakening*, published in early 1908, described a hypothetical world war in 192 triggered by a visit by the Japanese fleet to Sydney. The fictional sailors caused a riot in the city, and then

The Great White Fleet arriving in Port Phillip Bay, Melbourne on August 29, 1908. Courtesy RAN.



their fleet shelled the Sydney crowds. Next, Japan and Germany, bound by 'an unholy alliance,' invaded England. The book fueled Australia's growing sense of vulnerability and isolation in the Pacific.

The journalists who accompanied the Great White fleet in order to tell Roosevelt's story all insisted that 'they were reporters, not publicity men.' Henry Reuter Dahl, described as 'a muckraker in disguise,' came on board as an artist because his paintings of mighty ships were well known throughout the country. He was also the American editor for the British publication, *Jane's Fighting Ships*. Four days after he sailed with the fleet, his investigative article on 'The Needs of Our Navy' appeared in the January 1908 issue of *McClure's Magazine* and was sold out in hours. Roosevelt, who had coined the term 'muckraker,' was furious when he found out Reuter Dahl was on board and had him kicked off the ship when it arrived in Peru.

Seven of the reporters, 'either because of fatigue or disgust,' asked their papers to replace them before the end of the voyage. The Navy kicked out two others and 'a jaded United Press colleague' also left.

It wasn't just the reporters who ran into problems on this voyage. Five of the 16 captains for the ships either died or were fired and 'Roosevelt wanted these dismissals kept quiet. They were justified, he felt, but might not read well in the papers,' noted historian Hart.

Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin

Halfway around the world, Roosevelt found an enthusiastic and vocal supporter of the American fleet. 'A lawyer by training, a journalist by profession and a philosopher by inclination,' Deakin was the chief architect of the Australian defense and foreign policy framework from 1903 to 1910.

He shared Roosevelt's security concerns, noting that Australia's location was within striking distance of no less than 16 naval stations.'

The countries headed by Roosevelt and Deakin also shared racial biases in the quest to spotlight the white race. 'Yellow Peril' fears were rampant on both sides of the Pacific.

Australia and America also shared a bias against the black races, and this was reflected in the response to the US cruise's crew selection, with stories appearing in the Dec. 12 and 14, 1908, *N.Y. Herald*: 'Negro volunteers, who had joined the Navy in good faith, were chosen to fill the gap as bus boys and stewards to replace the Japanese [sailors], some of whom had those jobs for 20 to 30 years and were let go prior to the voyage of the Great White Fleet, rather than sail into these foreign ports with Japanese recruits.'

US invasion of Australia's favoured shores

Australia was the 13th stop of the lengthy itinerary of the Great White Fleet, which came to Sydney Harbor Aug. 20-28; Melbourne Aug. 29-Sept. 5; and Albany (Western Australia) Sept. 11-17, 1908.

It was an impressive convoy with the 16 ships carrying 360 guns. 'Firing a single salvo from all the guns would have cost \$50,000, which many reporters noted, happened to be the size of the president's salary for one year. Cost for constructing the fleet was estimated at \$100 million (almost 100 years ago!) Weighing in at 250



million tons, the fleet was described as five times more powerful than any fleet America had yet assembled.

On shore, Australia's population had turned out for the historic moment. The government proclaimed two public holidays and many businesses also closed down. Sydney trams carried almost one million passengers on Aug. 20 alone. The city was decked out in elaborate decorations, flags, bunting, banners and lights. According to Australian Sen. E. Findley, it was a triumph for 'gush, gore and guzzle!'

On the front page of Aug. 20, 1908, *New York Times*, an unidentified reporter wrote: 'So intense was the interest in the American ships of war that half the populace had remained awake the entire night and thousands upon thousands of them long before the night was over were on their way to the hill tops outside the city limits, where they massed seemingly in unbroken lines along the coast from Bondi Beach to Manly... Hundreds of craft of all kinds moved up and down even at that early hour (5:30 a.m.), all the waters... being dotted with little and big vessels decorated in every conceivable manner with flags and buntings.' The sight of the fleet 'stirred Australians like a call to arms,' the reporter noted.

Throughout its many pages, the *Sydney Morning Herald* of Aug. 21, 1908, covered the event with similar enthusiasm. 'Never has Sydney Harbour presented such a picture by night. Each visiting battleship, together with the auxiliary ships attached to the fleet, were outlined in electric lights, and as they occupied a wide range of space, the scene was as extensive as it was brilliant.'

And everyone was on their best behaviour. 'There was an absence of rowdiness. No ear-splitting yells made the night hideous, and there was no interference with women.' (This was a welcome relief since there had been riots at the previous stop in New Zealand between US sailors who wanted to stay versus the US Navy shore patrol who wanted them to leave—with local mobs taking sides. It received much newspaper coverage, including in the Aug. 15, 1908, *New York Sun* and the Jan. 16, 1909, *London Times*.)

Franklin Matthews, a correspondent for the *New York Sun*, regaled his readers back home with tales of the Sydney welcome. He estimated the crowds to be three times as large as those they had encountered in San Francisco: 'no such enthusiasm has been witnessed by Americans in any

USS John S. McCain participated in the 100th anniversary of the Great White Fleet entry into Sydney Harbour 1908-08.

ADF photo.

Below: Midshipman Isabelle Collins, Second Class Petty Officer Boatswain's Mate John Parkowski and Leading Seaman Naval Police Coxswain Jamie Bowman study a map to find out Albany's hot spots, during the Great White Fleet re-enactment visit of 2008.

Bottom: USS John S. McCain Commanding Officer, Commander John Banigan and his ships were welcomed to Melbourne by the traditional land owners, the Boon Wurrung people. ADF photos.



300 sailors
went AWOL
in Australia
and 221
successfully
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ships. 9

parade since the day George Dewey [American naval hero for battles in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War] came sailing back to New York and his sailors and marines went swinging down Fifth Avenue.'

Matthews coined the term, 'Fleetitis,' to describe the outpouring of emotion toward the fleet. 'It is almost impossible to put in cold print anything that will tell fittingly the stories of enthusiasm and the sentiment that inspire a demonstration which simply overwhelmed not only those who received it but those who gave it... Fleetitis is raging all over the Antipodes now.'

There was almost a 'coverage competition,' according to author Robert Hart, who added that 'Sydney's newspapers claimed that the welcome was bigger, better and noisier than anything, California efforts included, thus far experienced by the Americans.'

Hart notes that 'American newspapers reported tremendous gains in prestige...Editorialists assured Australians that they would some day be part of a new American empire' with the *New York Sun* going so far as to suggest that America admit Australia 'as a state within our federal union.'

But the media was not unanimous in its support of the Australian love feast. The *US Navy League Journal*, quoted in the *New York Times* of Aug. 21, 1908, stated: 'We watch the success of President Roosevelt's mammoth Hurray Party with benevolence and amusement' even though 'it consorts ill with the present engagements of the Empire.' The *London Daily Graphic* (quoted in the *New York Times* of Aug. 21, 1908) saw the trip as contributing to international tensions and the *London Times* (Sept. 1, 1908) expressed fears that a 'spectacular display has valuable uses in impressing the masses, who will remember the sight for years and draw important political deductions therefrom.'

What Matthews didn't write about were the things that went wrong, including the seven people injured who had been trampled in the streets or had fallen off buildings while watching the parades or fell when the grandstands collapsed. Two US sailors were killed by a rampaging trolley 'whose motormen seemed infected by the general madness' and the victims couldn't be buried because Melbourne had declared there were to

be no funerals 'to mar the happiness of the visit.'

In his public dispatches back home, Matthews failed to disclose that 'many of the lads fell under the influence of Melbourne's uninhibited ways. Often they went off to live with the girls who had kissed them. Others turned the week into a drunken spree which shore patrols could not control. A half a million Australians watched the disastrous parade of Aug. 31...Trumpet notes wavered and broke and trombones meandered over history's worst playing of 'Columbia the Gem of the Ocean'...Bleary-eyed seamen lurched, reeled and collided...An infuriated Roosevelt took a personal interest in the courts-martial which followed, stiffening punishments already imposed by the Navy.' Indeed 300 sailors went AWOL in Australia and 221 successfully eluded return to the US ships. 'Several dozen' also stayed behind in Auckland.

For Roosevelt, he never doubted that the Fleet's visit to Australia and the other stops would be anything but an unqualified success. The journey had lasted 434 days, without a serious breakdown, and returned to home port on Feb. 22, 1909. He succinctly stated: 'My purpose was to impress the American people. This purpose was achieved.' Another goal was generating favorable media coverage from his handpicked writers and that also occurred.

Less optimistic in his overall assessment of the Great White Fleet's voyage, author Hart noted that 'while the fleet was a study in sound and fury in its progress from nation to nation, it was a failure as an instrument of diplomacy. Where practical international issues were concerned, it lost more than it gained.' Roosevelt certainly would have disagreed. ↓

This article was adapted from remarks presented by Kathleen M. Burns on September 29, 2008, in Canberra, on behalf of the Australian Naval Institute.



A writer and academic based in Washington, DC, Ms. Kathleen Burns spent five years in Canberra as a reporter accredited to the Parliamentary Press Gallery. Returning to the USA, she was the inaugural programme director for the Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies at Georgetown University and served the first four directors.



Around Aussie Waters



The RAN tanker HMAS Sirius pictured recently in Sydney Harbour.
Photo by Tony Woodland.

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