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**THE THREE-HEADED DOG**

Newsletter of the  
Naval Historical Society of Australia Inc.  
Victoria Chapter

October, 2021 Volume 42 – No 49

PATRON : CHIEF of NAVY

Editor: Frank Cronin Tel. 98742134 ISSN-1446-6767  
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**VALE: ELIZABETH IRMA SEVIOR (nee CRESWELL)**

**ELIZABETH IRMA SEVIOR 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1931 – 25<sup>TH</sup> SEP 2021**

**AGED 90 YEARS, PASSED PEACEFULLY,**

She was the Grand Daughter of Vice-Admiral Sir William Rooke Creswell, RAN, commonly considered to be the “father” and the driving force behind the establishment of the Royal Australian Navy.

Mrs Seviore was the devoted wife of Maurice (dec.) and loving mother, mother-in-law and friend of Janet, Martin, Trudi, Madeleine, John, Charles, Anne and Lynne. Adored and inspiring Granny and Step-Granny of Emma and Matt, Nicole, Jack, Molly, Tara and Jacque, Luke, Lachlan and Annabelle.

Will always be remembered as caring, independent, unique and quirky.

Her family says she will be remembered to them –

**TENDING GOD’S NATIVE GARDEN**

The Funeral Service for Mrs. Seviore took place at St. Timothy’s Anglican Church, Bulleen on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

Mrs Seviore was a regular attender of our Victoria Chapter’s Monthly Meetings when they were held at our previous meeting place in Toorak Road, South Yarra.

## PRESIDENT'S REMARKS -



**Flag Kilo** (I wish to communicate with you)

While Victoria sadly continues to struggle with high numbers of COVID cases throughout the state, it appears we are on track to reach the vaccination targets which will allow some easing of present restrictions in early-mid November.

Ever optimistic, we have therefore progressed planning for our Annual Christmas Celebration dinner and monthly meeting on Monday 22 November at the Waverley RSL. Our Guest of Honour and Speaker will be the Senior Naval Officer Victoria, CDRE Greg Yorke, CSC, RAN. A flyer publicising this event is included in this edition – hopefully, we'll get a good turnout to also celebrate our release from lockdown. I remind those attending of the need to show proof of their COVID vaccination status in order to enter the RSL.

As advised in my earlier email to all Victorian members, the NHSA National AGM will be conducted by Zoom meeting on Thu 18 Nov. The email explains the process for registering to participate in or observe the meeting and I encourage those interested to join in. As a reminder, I'd welcome any comments that you feel worthy of raising at the AGM, either for inclusion in my summary brief of our Chapter activities, or as other business. Any input to me would be appreciated by Monday 8 November.

Our Victoria Chapter AGM has been deferred until 28 February 2022, as a prelude to our meeting that evening. This will include selection of officer bearers for the coming year and would be followed by the guest speaker presentation.

Members might also wish to note the impending launch of three new NHSA books:

- "50 Years Honouring History: The Story Behind the Naval Historical Society of Australia" compiled by an editorial team of 27 members
- "Ikara: Australia's Cold War Wonder Weapon" by Angus Britts
- "Australia's Colonial Navies" by Ross Gillett (updated from his 1982 edition).

These will be advertised for sale in early November, through the NHSA Shop. Prices for the first two are \$10 for an e-pub version or \$34 for a print copy mailed within Australia. The Colonial Navies book will be \$20 for a PDF or \$30 for a print copy (sales will be limited).

My thanks go to John Douglas who recently identified the need to update some inaccuracies in the NHSA website on the J-Class Submarines and where they were finally scuttled. These have now been rectified. In the process, the correct reference for our magnificent harbour port was made clear to me – it's Port Phillip, as reflected on authorised charts and nautical publications, and not Port Phillip Bay.

For those wishing to while away a few more Lockdown hours, I have a few suggestions. (Links are activated by highlighting and pressing Control:Click.) I was delighted last year to meet 95-year-old former SBLT Jim Paizis, a proud Victorian who told me of his wartime service in the RAN, and particularly as Gunnery Officer in HMAS *Colac* when shelled by the Japanese in the Solomon Islands in 1945. I later discovered his podcast interview created in 2020, as part of commemorations for the end of WW2. This can be accessed at <https://www.iathome.com.au/jp.html>. A fascinating tale from this very alert gentleman.

In 1963 I was privileged to join the RAN College at Jervis Bay with the sons of the previous and serving RAN Chiefs of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Sir Henry Burrell and VADM Sir Hastings Harrington respectively. Naturally as a 15-year-old I knew nothing of their distinguished careers at the time but learned more over the years.

I was reminded of this when I recently read the biographical article written by Dr. Tom Lewis OAM about Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Burrell, KBE, CB, who was Chief of Naval Staff from 1959-62. His story is quite remarkable and his influence on our Navy – even to this day – was profound. I met him after his retirement on his farm near Braidwood, and eventually read his compelling autobiography “Mermaids Do Exist”. Tom Lewis’ article covers the important aspects of his life and achievements and is well worth reading. It can be accessed at

<https://www.navalofficer.com.au/naval-hero-vice-admiral-sir-henry-burrell-kbe-cb/>.

In the same week, I became aware of the recent Navy History Podcast on ‘Operation Marmalade’ undertaken by HMAS Yarra & HMS Kanimbla in the Gulf in 1941. At the time Yarra was commanded by LCDR Hastings ‘Arch’ Harrington. In the podcast his son RADM Simon Harrington and grandson CMDR Bart Harrington, with others, talk of this little-known but very important and adventurous phase of the war in protecting allied access to oil fields in Iran and supplies in the Middle East. It really is worth listening to, and ideally with a map handy to better understand the geography.

Access is via <https://soundcloud.com/australian-naval-history/s6e05-the-ran-in-the-gulf-1941-operation-marmalade>.

Our most distinguished member, CDRE Jim Dickson, AM, MBE, has recently contributed a thought-provoking essay that considers certain aspects of the ADF’s future employment as we move from experiences of the past into the uncertain territory of future warfare, self-defence and civil support. While located on the Naval Officers Club website, he has agreed to its wider distribution to our members – see <https://www.navalofficer.com.au/adf-employment-an-essay/>

On a sad note, I must advise that our highly regarded member, World War 2 veteran Sub Lieutenant Des Shinkfield RANVR, aged 96 years, is in failing health. His service life included time in HMAS Bundaberg on convoy duties, and in HMAS Australia when under kamikaze attack, which he recounted in his book and oil paintings now held in the Cerberus Museum. Though I’d just met him, I recall he was delighted to be seated with the Chief of Navy at our Christmas event in 2019. Des was interviewed in 2004 about his life and career - his colourful story can be seen at <https://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1724-desmond-shinkfield>.

Our stalwart member and former Treasurer George Bird is also presently ‘under the weather’. Best wishes go to him, his wife Betty and son Bruce as he battles on.

As the COVID lockdown draws to a close, I hope all our members remain safe and well and are looking forward to once again enjoying the simple things which we have come to cherish. For many of us, the Christmas function on 22 November will be our first social event for many months – let’s make it a great one! I look forward to spending time with you, to hearing what you’ve been doing during lockdown, and to sharing some early Christmas cheer! If there is anyone who wishes to attend but is unable due to transport difficulties, please let me know.

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)

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*Naval Historical Society of Australia – Victoria Chapter*

*Cordially invites you to*

Our November Meeting

&

**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATORY DINNER**

**Guest of Honour and Speaker**

Commodore Greg Yorke, CSC, RAN

*Senior Naval Officer – Victoria*

**Monday 22 November 2021**

17:45 for 18:00 (5:45 pm for 6:00pm) to Closing

**Waverley RSL – Sunset Room**

161 Coleman Parade, Glen Waverley

The annual Raffle returns to celebrate the end of Lockdown and prizes include Linda's fabulous Christmas Cake!

**Tickets:** \$30 per head for two course meal

*(numbers are limited so please book early)*

**PAYMENT:**

Direct Debit – BSB: 633000; Account: 118958503

**(please print your name as identification)**

Or,

Cheque: made payable to the:

“Naval Historical Society Victoria Chapter”

and posted to:

Marty Grogan

549 Nepean Highway

Frankston VIC 3199

**Direct Debit is preferable**

**\*\*Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination status will be required to gain entry\*\***

## Not many marinas can boast a 100-year-old submarine, but this one does

By [Tim Callanan](#)

Posted Sun 26 Sep 2021 at 7:11 am, updated Sun 26 Sep 2021 at 10:21 am



This submarine has been a fixture at the Sandringham Yacht Club since 1930. (ABC News: [Billy Draper](#))

By the time Australia gets the first of its next fleet of submarines, J-7 will be 113 years old, and won't have sailed anywhere in a century.

J-7 may be a familiar sight to dozens of sailors who stride past her every day at Sandringham Yacht Club, but most Melburnians won't even know she's there.

Once one of the fastest submarines in the world, the only place she's going these days is deeper into the mud.

"She was quite remarkable," the Sandringham Yacht Club's historian Graeme Disney said.

"She had a range of 5,000 miles. That's extraordinary for First World War times."

So how did this once cutting-edge submarine built for the British Navy end up rusting away next to fancy yachts and speed boats in a marina in Melbourne? Because everything new eventually becomes obsolete, and then you have to either throw it away or find some other use for it.

In J-7's case, it was a bit of both.

### The fastest thing under the water



One of the J-class submarines under construction in Plymouth. (Supplied: State Library of Victoria)

In the early days of World War I, Britain heard rumours that the Germans were building a fleet of U-boats capable of speeds much greater than any British submarine.

The rumours turned out to be false, but the British built a new class of submarines anyway.

The J-class submarines were capable of speeds of up to 19 knots at the surface, making them the fastest submarine in the world at the time.

They didn't see a lot of action during the war, but did manage to sink a U-boat and damage a couple of warships.

One of the subs, J-6, was accidentally sunk by a British ship after the captain mistook the J on the vessel's conning tower for a U and assumed it was a German submarine.

At the end of the war, Britain gave the six remaining J-class submarines to Australia as a gift.

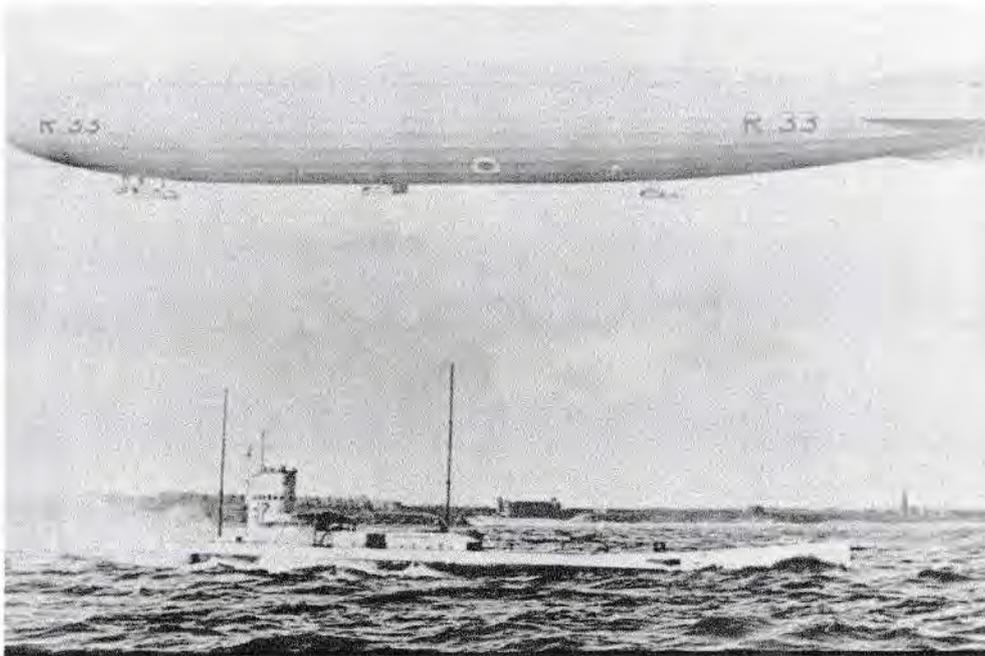
Australia hadn't had much luck with submarines to that point, losing the only two it had during World War I within a year of their construction.

If the Australian government thought they were getting a great deal, they must've been remarkably disappointed when the J-class fleet limped into Australian waters in July 1919.

### **Never look a gift sub in the mouth**

After a three-month voyage, during which several of the submarines broke down, they were found to be almost unusable.

One of the subs was unable to dive, which was something of an issue for a vessel that was supposed to spend much of its time underwater.

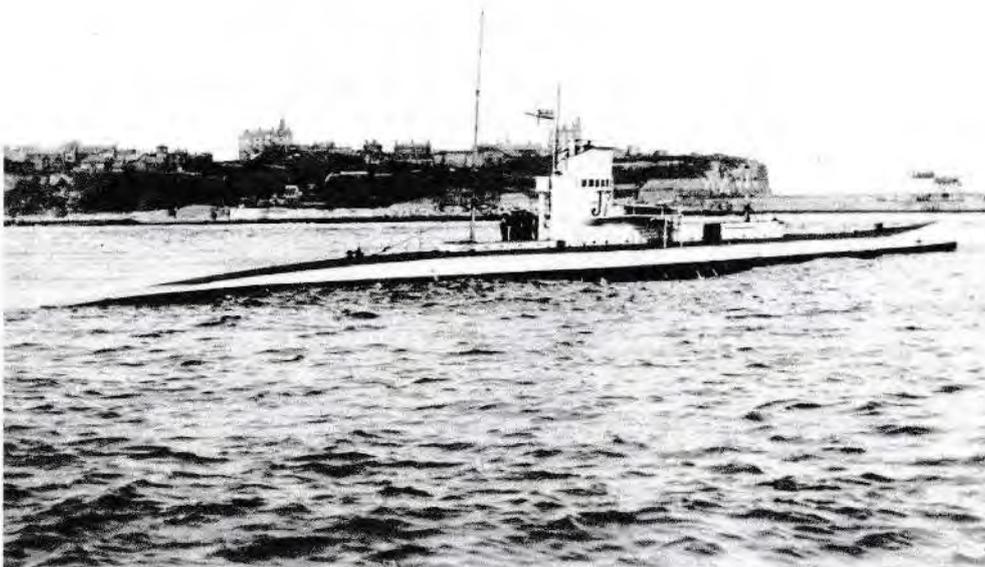


The J-7 submarine beneath Britain's R33 airship before sailing to Australia in 1919.  
(Supplied: Australian War Memorial)

After an expensive refit, the submarines were put into service, with four of them based at Osborne House in Geelong, and two in Sydney.

The six submarines lasted just a few years in the Royal Australian Navy, with big cuts to defence spending sealing their fate in 1922.

The subs were expensive to run and the general feeling in the government was that the country didn't really need them. The enemy was defeated, who were they protecting us from? Dolphins?

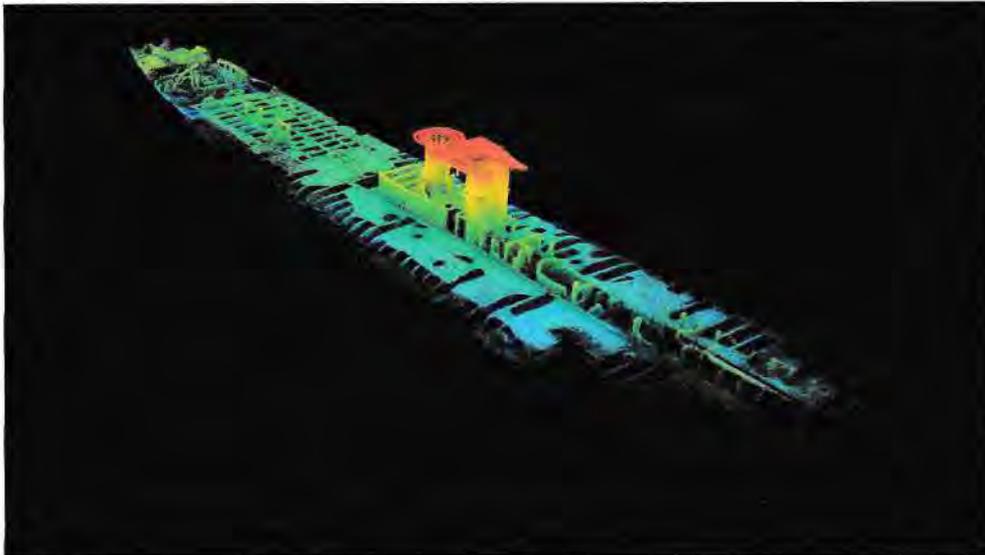


The J-7 submarine saw limited service in the British Navy before it was gifted to Australia in 1919. (Supplied: Australian War Memorial)

The decision to sell the submarines for scrap did not go down well with everyone. The former district naval officer for Victoria, Captain J.T. Richardson, was very cranky indeed.

"To scrap the six J-class submarines would be criminal," he said in February 1923.

But, the decision was made and the subs were put up for sale, with two conditions: that whoever bought them would remove them within 42 days of purchase, and would destroy them within 18 months of purchase.



A three-dimensional image of the J-3 submarine wreck, which lies in water off Swan Island, near Queenscliff. (Supplied: CSIRO)

The Melbourne Salvage Company bought four of them, which were used for bombing practice outside Port Phillip Heads by Australian aircraft in 1926.

The pilots must've needed the practice as it was reported in *The Argus* that no direct hits were made, but no bomb landed "more than about 200 feet away".

The wrecks of those four submarines are popular dive sites. Another of the J-class submarines lies in about 6 metres of water at Swan Island, near Queenscliff.

## J-7 finds a permanent home at Sandringham

THANK YOU ABC NEWS

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### ANOTHER LITTLE GILBERTIAN NAUTICAL SPACE FILLER

**I am the Captain of the Pinafore, And a right good Captain too!  
You're very very good, and be it understood I command a right good crew.  
We're very very good and be it understood, He commands a right good crew.  
Though related to a Peer, I can hand, reef, and steer, And ship a selvagee;  
I am never known to quail at the fury of a gale And I'm never, never sick at sea!  
What, Never? No, Never! What never? Well, Hardly ever!  
He's hardly ever sick at sea!  
Then give three cheers and one cheer more, for the hardy Captain of the Pinafore.  
Then give three cheers, and one cheer more – FOR THE CAPTAIN OF THE PINAFORE!**

**HMS PINAFORE, 1878**

# Did H.M.V.S. *Albert*, and not Fort Nepean, capture S.S. *Pfalz* in 1914?

**ACT OF WAR AT THE HEADS.**

**GERMAN VESSEL FORCED TO RETURN TO MELBOURNE.**

**TINY 'ALBERT'S' CAPTURE.**

The story of Fort Nepean firing the first shots of the First World War when it forced the German commercial ship S.S. *Pfalz* to come to a stop as it was attempting to leave Port Phillip is well known. What is not well known though is that it may only be half the story. According to a report in the Geelong Advertiser\* of the 6th of August 1914, the day after the incident, S.S. *Pfalz* actually ignored the shots fired from Fort Nepean and continued steaming, passing outbound through the entrance to Port Phillip and past Fort Queenscliff towards international waters.

Although it was assumed that *Pfalz* had got away, some time later she eventually reappeared escorted by the ex Victorian gunboat H.M.V.S. *Albert*. According to the Geelong Advertiser, *Albert* "had been with her little gun keeping watch at the three-mile limit. It is not known whether she received notification from the lighthouse that the German steamer was escaping or whether the captain acted on his own initiative, but the fact is that the *Albert* held up the German steamer and ordered her back to Melbourne."

As the capture of *Pfalz* occurred on the first day of the war, and *Albert* is described as belonging to the Victorian Ports and Harbours Department, it is likely that *Albert*, like other Victorian Government ships, would still have been designated as H.M.V.S.. If this is the case, then as an armed vessel with either one little gun, or as reported by the Ballarat Star on August 6, as having three little guns, then should *Albert* be described as an armed vessel, or as she was once accurately described, as a Man of War. Was this the first naval action of the First World War, and if so, was it carried out by an armed vessel of the Victorian Government, also known as the Victorian Navy?

It should be noted that the above explanation of the capture of the S.S. *Pfalz* is not indisputable. It is after all based

on one newspaper article, albeit reprinted in numerous regional, interstate and at least one overseas newspaper over the next few months. Another account of the incident\*\* mentioned that there were two conflicting reports of the capture of S.S. *Pfalz*. The previously described account of the capture by the ex-Victorian gunboat *Albert* was given, as was a second and conflicting account by a member of the pilot service who stated that S.S. *Pfalz* surrendered to the examining naval guard as soon as she reached the Heads. One could ask if war was declared while the S.S. *Pfalz* was steaming down the bay, why was *Albert* patrolling anywhere, let alone outside Port Phillip.

The capture of S.S. *Pfalz* on the first day of World War One, was soon eclipsed by events of far greater significance than the capture of one German commercial ship. This meant that conflicting claims were not followed up in the press in the light of far more momentous events.

\* [Geelong Advertiser, 6 August 1914, p. 3.](#)

\*\* [Daily Telegraph \(Tasmania\), 6 August 1914, p. 6.](#)

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## The Cerberus Earthquake.

In light of the earthquake that occurred in Melbourne on the 22nd of September 2021 and described as the severest in Victoria since the arrival of Europeans, it is interesting to read of the Cerberus Earthquake in 1875 which was described as "one of the severest earthquakes ever recorded in Melbourne".

### The Cerberus Earthquake - 1875

"One of the severest earthquakes ever recorded in Melbourne was experienced this evening. The first shock occurred at the Observatory about a minute before 9h. 7m. 55s, when the second shock was observed; about a minute after this a third shock was noticed; at about 9h. 10m. 5s. a fourth shock happened, and the fifth shock was felt at 9h. 11m." The Argus, 6 August 1875

### The Supposed Earthquake

"The shocks referred to in yesterday's paper as those of an earthquake have proved to be due to the reverberations of sound from the guns of the Cerberus at Point Nepean." The Argus, 7 August 1875 (Point Nepean is approximately 56 kms in a straight line from Melbourne.)

[Full Details](#)

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John Rogers  
Fleet Engineer (Victorian Navy)  
website, research & *Friends of the Cerberus* President.

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THANK YOU - FRIENDS OF THE CERBERUS

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# SEA POWER SEMAPHORE



Issue 8, 2021

## Nuclear Powered Submarines for the RAN

John Perryman

Director Naval History

The announcement on Thursday 16 September that Australia had cancelled the *Attack* class submarine project in favour of pursuing a nuclear powered option better suited to our nation's strategic interests has sparked a frenzy of reporting in the press and stimulated vigorous discussions throughout the community.

A number of friends and relatives have sought my insights concerning just what a nuclear option means for the navy and the nation. In those discussions it became clear to me that many people don't seem to have a clear understanding of how a nuclear powered vessel works and most were surprised to learn of the part that good old fashioned steam plays in the equation. Some also failed to appreciate the distinction between acquiring nuclear powered vessels and nuclear weapons, the latter of which is not a consideration.

In the minds of most I spoke with, a nuclear power plant was a mysterious piece of glowing green equipment that emits energy that is somehow used to propel a vessel through the water. Notwithstanding the green glow reference, it is not too far from reality and the purpose of this short paper is to provide a simple explanation concerning how a nuclear powered submarine works. It is not my intent to comment on strategic sensitivities except to say that the new AUKUS alliance is central to achieving a nuclear powered submarine option.

### Los Angeles 688 Class Submarines

In 1992 I was fortunate to be part of a group of sailors from HMAS *Tobruk* (II) that undertook a tour of the *Los Angeles* class submarine USS *Pasadena*, SSN 752, which at that time was visiting an Australian port.

We were welcomed on board and each of us received an unclassified brochure that served to take much of the mystery out of how and what the vessel was capable of. Of great interest to me was 'how did this nuclear powered vessel work?' and I was delighted to see included in my brochure a simplistic and useful explanation, with an illustration, that I have included in this paper.

### The Power Plant

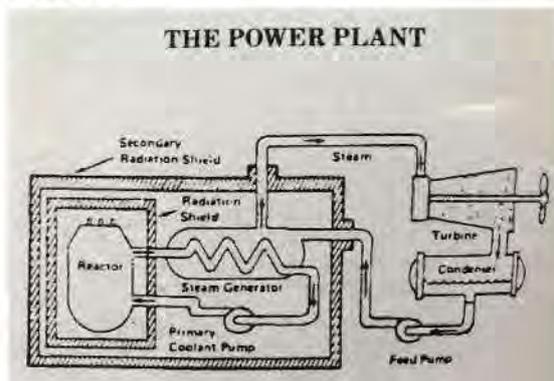
The power plant of a nuclear powered ship or submarine recruits a nuclear reactor to provide heat. The heat comes from the fissioning of nuclear fuel contained within the reactor. Since the fissioning process also produces radiation, shields are placed around the reactor so that the crew is protected.

A typical nuclear propulsion plant, such as those found in the *Los Angeles* class submarines, uses a pressurised water reactor design that has two basic systems; a primary system and a secondary system.

The primary system circulates ordinary water and consists of the reactor, piping loops, pumps and steam generators.

The heat produced in the reactor is transferred to the water under high pressure so it does not boil. This water is pumped through the steam generators and back into the reactor for reheating.

In the secondary system, the steam flows from the steam generators to drive a turbine and generators that supply the vessel with electricity and to the main propulsion turbines that drive the propeller.



A basic diagram of the two separate closed systems that interact to propel a submarine through the water.

After passing through the turbines, the steam is condensed into water that is fed back to the steam generators by the feed pumps. Thus, both the primary and secondary systems are closed systems where water is recirculated and reused.

There is no step in the generation of this power that requires the presence of air or oxygen. This allows the vessel to operate completely

# SEA POWER SEMAPHORE



Issue 8, 2021

independent from the earth's atmosphere for extended periods of time.

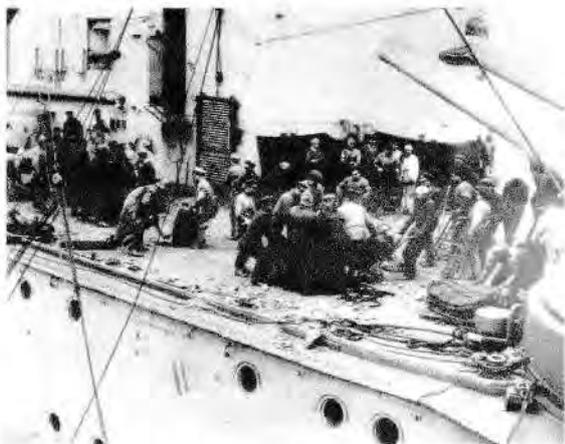
### What does this mean?

In simplistic terms the power plant is a large kettle used to heat water to create high pressure steam that drives the propulsion system and turns the propeller. This concept has been in use for hundreds of years and the steam powered locomotive is perhaps the most recognisable form of transport, that most would be familiar with, that burnt coal in a furnace as a source to create energy.

Ships too have made use of steam for more than a hundred years. The first of these were themselves powered by coal and it was the lament of many a sailor involved in the backbreaking and dirty work of coaling ship.

Later, furnace fuel oil and diesel oil were used as a cleaner alternate energy source to heat boilers and create steam, resulting in greater range, speed and efficiency.

Today of course many of our ships use diesel engines and gas turbine propulsion systems.



*Coaling the RAN battle cruiser HMAS Australia (I) was an all ship evolution involving most of the ship's company to bring the vital energy source on board. It was a laborious and frequently undertaken task limiting range and endurance.*

### Range and Endurance of Nuclear Powered Submarines

Submarines powered by nuclear propulsion enjoy almost unlimited range and endurance meaning they can deploy for long periods of time over great

distances. They can attain speeds in excess of 25 knots, which is comparable to many surface ships, enabling them to steam many hundreds of nautical miles in a 24 hour period. They are stealthy and unhindered by the need to replenish at sea or in port as their reactors have a 30-year life span.

This makes this option particularly attractive to Australia as a nation that sits between two of the world's great oceans, the Indian and Pacific, in which it is invested in contributing to and maintaining regional maritime security interests.



*HMAS Rankin and the Los Angeles class fast attack submarine USS Albuquerque operating together in Australian Waters.*

In order for future Royal Australian Navy submarines to be effective, they will need to have the 'legs' to travel vast distances to get to where they are needed most, the endurance to remain deployed for many months at a time, and be able to carry a payload commensurate with the mission. This is something that is infinitely harder to achieve in conventionally powered diesel-electric submarines.

### Conclusion

This Semaphore is not intended to provide a deep understanding of the workings of a modern nuclear powered submarine. It is, however, hoped that it will take some of the mystery out of what makes them work and what the benefits of adopting this class of vessel will be to Australia's future maritime security interests.

THANK YOU - RAN SEA POWER

CONTINUED FROM SEPTEMBER'S THREE-HEADED DOG

"skyscraper." Originally, a "skyscraper" or "skyraker" was any sail above the fore, main, or mizzen royal. It was so high that it was only natural that architects borrowed the term to describe a ten-story building built in Chicago, in 1884 and the first structure to be called a skyscraper.

Sailing ships and their own particular language and lore have always fascinated everyone for as long as man has sailed the seven seas. None have ever captured the imagination as much as those swift American ships of the 1700s and 1800s, with their long hulls, sweeping bows and towering tiers of canvas, known as schooners and clipper ships.

The schooner was designed to meet the demands of the lucrative China trade, and the first was built in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1713, by Andrew Robinson. According to various accounts, Robinson had not yet named his new rig when she was launched, but as she left the ways, a bystander yelled out, "See how she scoons" (from the Swedish *skunna* or *scoon* meaning to skim over the water). Upon hearing the cry, Robinson immediately decided, "A schooner she shall be."

Then came the great clipper ships; the fastest, largest, and most beautiful sailing ships the world had ever known. Samuel Eliot Morrison wrote in *The Maritime History of Massachusetts*, in 1921: "Never, in these United States, has the brain of man conceived, or the hand of man fashioned so perfect a thing as the clipper ship." Its very name, "clipper," came from the English word *clip*, which meant trim or shipshape but after the clipper ships, the word came to mean "very fast."

Now, here is a potpourri of nautical words and customs, and their origins.

Perhaps, one of the oldest and most distinctive items of nautical gear is the "Boatswain's Pipe." Originally, naval vessels were commanded not by captains but by *batsuens*. The Saxon word *swein* meant a boy or servant, *bat* meant boat, and from a combination of the two words we arrived at "boatswain"—a boat boy or steerer of the boat.

From earliest times, a boatswain utilized a pipe or flute to signal members of the crew. Galley slaves, in the glory days of the Greeks and Romans, rowed to a rhythm set by a boatswain's pipe or flute. During the Crusade of 1248, English crossbowmen were signaled to the deck by a boatswain's pipe. Shakespeare mentioned it in the *The Tempest* and Samuel Pepys, the English diarist, wrote of it in his *Naval Notes*.

At one time, the pipe was made of gold and was worn as a badge of office or honor and was carried on a chain around the neck. The present form—a whistle—was adopted in commemoration of the English victory over the notorious Scotch pirate, Andrew Barton. Lord Edward Howard took the whistle from the body of Barton, and later when Howard was proclaimed Lord High Admiral, he established the whistle as the official and only signal piece of the Boatswain.

The "coxswain" or "cockswain" has a similar origin. From *cock* (a small boat) and *swain* (servant), cockswain or coxswain was born. Originally, the title meant one who had charge of a boat and crew in the absence of an officer.

While we are on the subject of rank, let's look at the rank of "Commodore" which was originally a Dutch title, created during the Dutch wars of 1652 when there were not enough admirals to command ships. The rank was adopted by and eventually officially recognized by the British navy in 1806. The American navy used the rank as an honorary title during the American Revolution.

The word "ensign" came to us direct from the Norman *enseigne*, which meant flag or signal. The British navy bor-





rowed the word from the army in the sixteenth century when a large flag was hoisted on the poop of ships. An "ensign bearer," called "ensign," was first a young officer in the French army and then introduced as a naval rank in the French navy. The British navy adopted it as a rank in 1861 to designate sub-lieutenant, which replaced the rank of mate. The U.S. Navy adopted the rank in 1862 to denote midshipmen who had graduated from their training period. Originally, however, ensign was—as it is today—a flag or banner used to indicate nationality.

The "Blue Peter" is another flag of interest flown by vessels about to leave port. There are several versions of how the "Blue Peter" received its name. One story suggests that between 1793 and 1799, when Admiral Sir Peter Parker was Chief of Command of the British navy, convoys sailing from St. Helens could not depart until they received a signal from Parker, in Portsmouth. The signal was a blue flag and was hoisted on the admiral's direct order—thereby giving us the "Blue Peter."

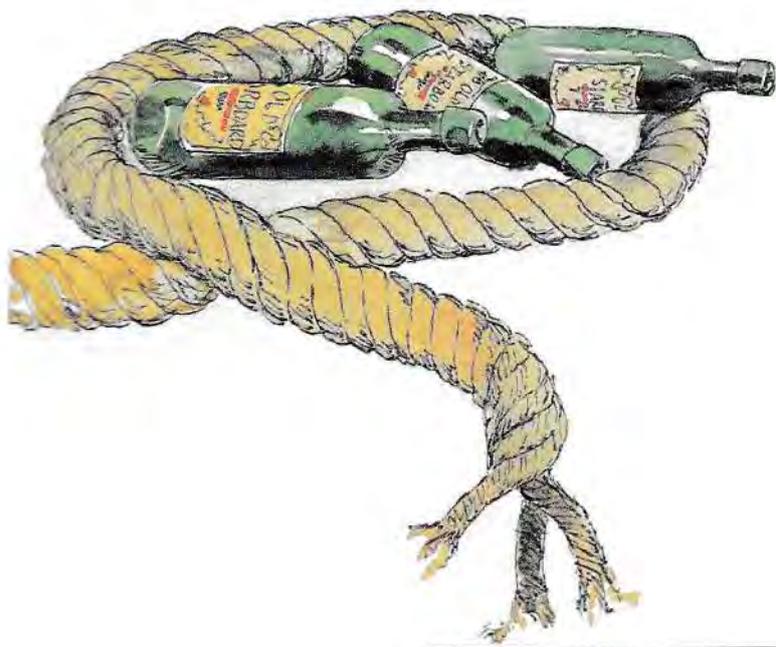
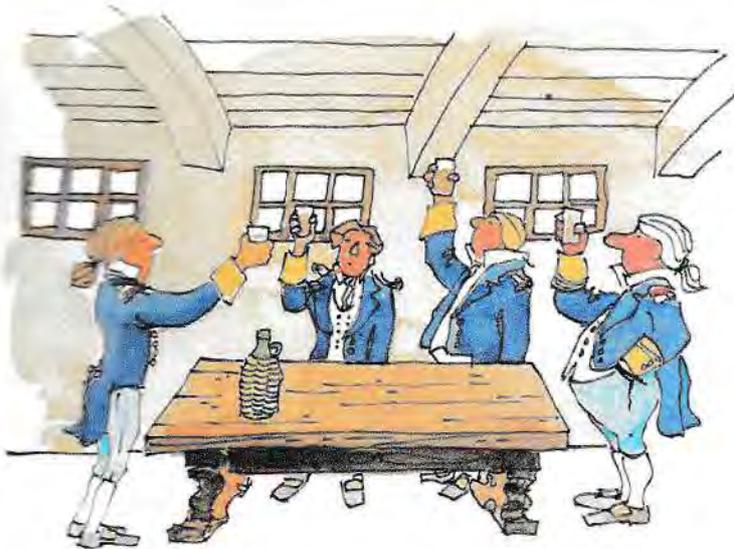
Another version suggests that originally (in the 1750s), a blue flag with six white balls was utilized to signal other ships to prepare to leave port. From a distance, however, the six white balls were hard to distinguish. Consequently, Sir Edward Hawke had the flag replaced by one described as "blue pierced with white." A lack of clear enunciation on the part of the ship's crew members gave us the "Blue Peter," from a corruption or mispronunciation of the "Blue Pierced."

The flying of a flag at half-mast, an international sign of mourning, is a custom derived directly from naval tradition. The practice had its origin in early naval battles when a defeated vessel was required not only to lower its flag, but its top sail as well (half-way) in order that the victor's flag could take its place and signify its superiority. In later years, passing ships dipped the flag as a gesture of courtesy, and eventually, in a time of mourning, the flag was hoisted to the top and then lowered half-way, or half-mast, as a sign of respect and homage.

Whenever a ship does fly its flag at half-mast, it is not uncommon for the officers to gather in the "wardroom" to raise a toast to the departed. Originally, the "wardroom" was called the "wardrobe," and it was a small compartment below the cabin which was utilized as a storage room for valuables captured in battle. The officers' staterooms were located near-by, and it became their practice to meet in the "wardrobe" to eat their meals and to pass the time. In time, this compartment was used entirely as an officers' messroom and the name was changed to "wardroom."

More than just a few "dead marines" have resulted from social gatherings in the wardroom and this expression, of course, refers to an empty bottle. According to the story, William IV, then Duke of Clarence and Lord High Admiral, at an official dinner, is said to have pointed at some empty liquor bottles and declared, "Take away those marines." A major of the marines immediately rose from the table and said, "May I respectfully ask why your Royal Highness applies the name of the corps to an empty bottle?" The Duke, with tact and grace, replied, "I call them marines because they are good fellows who have done their duty and are ready to do it again."

And so this yarn has reached its end. As stated earlier, the naval vocabulary is truly colorful, and it is hoped that this examination of a few words and customs has provided not only an increased appreciation of naval tradition, but also has provided a little enjoyment as well.





Collins Class submarine, HMAS Sheean. ABC Fact Check takes a look at the history of Australian submarines. *(Commonwealth of Australia: Navy Imagery Unit)*

### **COLLINS CLASS SUBMARINE HMAS SHEEAN**

10/18/21, 1:55 PM

HMAS Sheean | Royal Australian Navy



*HMAS Sheean passes the historic United States Navy Iowa Class battleship, USS Missouri (BB-63), as she makes her way into Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2014.*

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VICTORIA CHAPTER



Based at [Fleet Base West](#) in Western Australia, HMAS Sheean is the fifth of the six [Collins Class submarines](#) to enter service in the Royal Australian Navy. These submarines are a formidable element in Australia's defence capability.

Sheean was launched in Adelaide, South Australia by Ordinary Seaman Sheean's sister, Mrs Ivy Hayes on 1 May 1999 and - commissioned in Fremantle, Western Australia on 23 February 2001 along with the fourth Collins Class submarine, [HMAS Dechaineux](#).



HMAS Sheean