

Foreword

In *Ready to Haul, Ready to Fight*, David Bruhn has again produced a fascinating book which throws light on a subject which, for far too long, has tended to be ignored in the annals of naval history. As David points out, 'U.S. Navy cargo ships, among the most unglamorous military vessels, kept the supply lines running through the incredible expanses of the Pacific battle zones in World War II.' Without the support offered by these 'second tier' ships, the fighting ships could never have successfully completed their role. The majority went in harm's way while supporting the fleet and combat forces ashore.

Another aspect drawn out in the book is the incredible distances involved. The landings and naval battles at Leyte Gulf in October 1944, for example, demonstrated the utility of maritime forces in power projection operations. Amphibious ships moved troops 500 nautical miles to landing beaches. Logistics ships moved vital stores, ammunition and rations, directly and indirectly, over 5,000 nautical miles to maintain land and naval forces in the area of operations. Sea-based air power provided essential air cover to the fleet and land forces in operations beyond the range of Allied land-based aircraft.

From the Australian perspective, the Pacific war saw an expansion of the infrastructure necessary to support wide ranging naval operations. Defensive minefields were laid in Australian, New Zealand and New Guinea waters. Harbour defence systems were established around Australia and forward operating bases provided logistic support to ships close to the combat areas. Shipbuilding, repair and maintenance facilities were greatly expanded, including the construction of the Captain Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island, Sydney. In addition, the RAN began requisitioning merchant vessels to supplement the fleet. These vessels, of which many were commissioned into the RAN, served as coastal patrol vessels, stores-issuing ships, amphibious landing ships and other roles in support of RAN operations. The RAN Reserve played a major role in manning the expanding fleet.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 the RAN mobilised and drew heavily on its reserve forces. When the RAN mobilised, active personnel expanded rapidly from the September 1st permanent forces total of 5,440 to

10,300. There were three types of RAN reserves at the time: RANR, RANR (Seagoing) and Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve.

The RANR were the traditional reservists who undertook regular training during peacetime and included both officers and sailors. Reserve training was suspended during the War; all new entry personnel were entered through the RANR and signed an agreement for the duration of hostilities instead of the customary 12-year engagement.

RANR (S) were officers who held professional qualifications (e.g. Master's Certificate) and in peacetime were normally merchant ship officers.

The RANVR officer scheme was established to interest those who participated in maritime activities (e.g. yachtsmen) to take part in naval training. In 1943, a Special Branch of the RANVR was created and all officers appointed since the outbreak of hostilities and engaged in specialised technical and operational duties were transferred to it. These included Radar Officers, Intelligence, Metrology, Cypher Officers, Anti-Submarine and Bomb and Mine Disposal. The Royal Navy (RN) drew most of its loan personnel from Australia, from the ranks of the RANVR. In June 1944, of 500 Australians serving with the RN, more than 400 were members of the RANVR.

Perhaps the most distinguished of the RANVR officers who served in the RN was Lieutenant Commander Stanley Darling (later Captain), an Australian reserve officer commanding the Loch-class frigate, HMS *Loch Killin* who was responsible for the destruction of three U-boats and received the DSC and two bars. Another officer, Lieutenant Commander Leon Goldsworthy, GC, DSC, GM RANVR, became the RAN's most highly decorated member for his extraordinary courage and skill in rendering German mines safe.

In September 1939, the RAN Reserve Forces comprised: RANR, 245 officers, 3,900 sailors; RANR (S), 85 officers; RANVR, 245 officers. When the War ended, the total Reserve Force numbered some 2,900 officers and 29,250 sailors. This represented over 80 percent of the personnel serving in the RAN.

The Reserves were commonly known as the 'Wavy Navy' a popular title arising from the fact that the braid on the officer's uniform sleeve was applied in a waved pattern instead of the straight lines used by the regular navy. This incurred a friendly rivalry in both the RAN and RN,

exemplified by a cartoon appearing in the popular British magazine *Punch*, which was to become a favourite of the Naval Reservists. Walking down a street with a lieutenant RNVR, with two wavy stripes, a young girl notices a Royal Navy commander with three straight stripes on his uniform. The RNVR officer says to the girl, 'Straight stripes? Oh, those are the fellows who run the Navy in peacetime!'

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Reserve shoulder board (left) and regular officer (right); Surgeon Lieutenant K. M. Morris, RANVR, wearing his service jacket with Reserve lace clearly visible on his sleeve (center). (RAN)

The Navy does not exist in a vacuum, but functions as part of a wider defence organisation maintaining the security of the country. The scale and associated risk of maritime operations vary widely between peace and war. The RAN at the beginning of World War II was a prime example. When war was declared the RAN had some 5,440 men and 15 ships, with a further three under construction. By June 1945, at its peak strength, there were some 340 ships, and 39,650 serving men and women of which 80 percent were reservists. As 1943 and 1944 progressed, Australian ships were involved in the campaigns to oust the Japanese from the South West Pacific Area. In the succession of landing operations, the cruisers and destroyers carried out bombardments and provided seaward cover. The corvettes escorted merchant ships through the area. The Landing Ships Infantry HMAS *Manoora*, *Kanimbla* and *Westralia* participated in many of the amphibious operations conducted in New Guinea, the Philippines and Borneo. The cargo ships continued to keep the fleet replenished and able to fight.

David Bruhn's latest book provides a most readable outline of how the war in the Pacific was prosecuted through the eyes of the ships supporting the combat fleet. It commemorates the important role these ships contributed to ultimate victory and acknowledges the debt owed them in a time of severe adversity.

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