

"OPERATION NAVY HELP DARWIN"

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This panorama of Darwin Harbour showing some of the RAN Task Force ships at anchor and in the foreground, some of the damage caused by Cyclone Tracy, was taken by photographers from the Flagship HMAS MELBOURNE.

Governor-General's rare Order commends Defence Force

The Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, Sir John Kerr, following an inspection of devastated Darwin, handed down a rare "Order of the Day to the Defence Force", commending all members engaged in relief operations for their "instant response and willing participation".

Veteran Defence and Navy men could not remember the previous Order of its type.

His Order read:

"I have just completed an inspection of Darwin and have seen at first hand the devastation and loss caused to the city and its people by the recent cyclone.

"I have observed with much personal satisfaction, the efforts that have been made by members of the Defence Force stationed in Darwin to restore their facilities.

"They have now been joined by men from the Fleet and together they are assisting the civil authorities in clearing up and making essential services operative again.

"Elsewhere in Australia many servicemen and women willingly responded to a recall to duty and others voluntarily offered their services to assist in relief operations.

"In many cases this was at much personal inconvenience in the holiday period.

"All Australians will appreciate the ready contribution the services have made to the relief of Darwin, particularly the swift air movements of relief medical teams and casualties, evacuation of people by service aircraft; the ready response by staffs of stores depots in providing relief stores; and the early sailing of a large proportion of the fleet.

"I commend all members of the Defence Force for their instant response and willing participation in the Darwin relief operations.

"I am confident the people of Australia join with me in public recognition of this splendid effort."

NAVY "MAGNIFICENT"

The RAN's response to "Operation Navy Help Darwin" had been "magnificent", the Defence Minister, Mr. Lance Barnard, told Navy News.

On behalf of the Australian Government he expressed thanks to all members of the RAN.

"All the armed services have played their part in the emergency," he said.

"However, the RAN has the capacity to provide a skilled workforce at Darwin without imposing on the city's limited facilities.

"Because of this the Navy has been chosen for the major task of restoring Darwin's essential services and clearing up the worst hit suburbs of Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Casuarina.

"Similarly, in Hobart, the Navy has gone into action helping civil authorities cope with the Tasman Bridge devastation.

"The enthusiasm and dedication being displayed shows the true morale and spirit of today's Navy.

"I wish to express my personal thanks to all those who are contributing to the disaster relief, both in Darwin and Hobart."

A CITY SAYS "THANKS"

A city says "thanks" as Darwin recovers from cyclone Tracy, and takes stock of itself.

People are beginning to say "thank you" to the RAN for all it is doing for the people of Darwin.

The Mayor, "Tiger" Brennan, is fulsome in his praise.

He said: "I will not forget you.

"We owe the Navy the greatest debt of all.

"I don't know how we will repay them."

"Tiger" Brennan said he was very pleased to see civilians and Navy personnel working so happily together.

"We have no complaints at all."

The Mayor said he couldn't praise too highly the work of the Naval Officer Commanding North Australia, Captain Eric Johnston.

"When this man sets his mind to something," the Mayor said, "it gets done."

Rear Admiral D. C. Wells, the Fleet Commander and Commander of the Task Force group in Darwin, said on January 1 the Fleet would stay in the cyclone-ravaged city "As long as it is needed".

"We have no plans at present for any departure date," Rear Admiral Wells said at a press conference a few hours after his arrival in Darwin.

RADM Wells said the operation was proceeding outstandingly.

He said the whole task force group — which totalled about 3000 men — would be either directly or indirectly involved in the cleanup operation.

About 1200 of these would be directly helping on shore.

He was asked how good a response there had been to the recalls on Christmas Day.

RADM Wells said he considered the response was "quite extraordinary."

"By the time we sailed from Sydney on Boxing Day, HMAS MELBOURNE had about seventy percent of her ship's company on board."

He added he was also impressed by the way very single sailor had been anxious to get ashore and start helping.

He said the damage was much worse than he had expected.

He had never seen a civil disaster to match it.

"Operation Navy Help Darwin" was the biggest operation of its kind ever undertaken by the RAN.

"However," he pointed out, "ships of the fleet regularly carry out disaster exercises.

"HMAS MELBOURNE had a disaster exercise in October."

RADM Wells, asked why the Navy was asked to play the key role in the relief operation, said he thought the Navy was become available once again in the city.

Until then, the sailors would all return to their ships every night.

He described the overnight visit to the fleet flagship, HMAS MELBOURNE by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, as simply an "operational one".

There was no ceremony.

Sir John Kerr came aboard MELBOURNE on January 2 and left on January 3.

Navy will stay as long as it is needed says Fleet Commander

brought in because it had the advantage of being totally self-supporting.

"The Navy doesn't need to draw on anything in Darwin," RADM Wells said.

"Also," he went on, "How else can you bring more than one thousand tonnes of food and supplies in one swoop?"

He also said he felt it important that the sailors be given shore leave as soon as possible.

This would be when facilities



RADM Wells

Melbourne & Hobart returning to Sydney

The flagship HMAS MELBOURNE and HMAS HOBART were scheduled to leave Darwin on January 18 to return to Sydney to prepare for exercises with the US Navy in the Pacific early in March.

A decision on the duration of stay of other RAN ships in Darwin was to be made some time in the coming week, after authorities assessed the task still confronting the civil workforce.

The decision to withdraw MELBOURNE and HOBART came in a joint announcement from Defence Minister, Mr. Lance Barnard, and the Minister for the Northern Territory, Dr. Rex Patterson.

Dr. Patterson praised the work of NAVY personnel in clearing residential blocks in Darwin's suburbs.

"The sailors in the ships and ashore were all part of a team," he said.

"They can only be described as magnificent," he added.

Mr. Barnard expressed appreciation for Dr. Patterson's remarks and extended his own admiration for the "selfless zeal" the force had shouldered in Darwin following cyclone Tracy.

'We owe Navy greatest debt of all', says Mayor of cyclone ravaged city

Cyclone Tracy, which struck Darwin and stunned the nation on Xmas Day, left 49 officially dead, thousands homeless, damage totalling at least \$850 million and launched the RAN on its greatest peace-time operation.

The Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, Sir John Kerr, together with government and community leaders, have widely acclaimed the NAVY's role in the ravaged city.

After visiting Darwin, Sir John issued a special commendation in a rare "Order of the Day" to Defence Forces. Defence Minister, Mr. Lance Barnard, described the RAN effort as "magnificent" and Darwin's Mayor "Tiger" Brennan said "we owe the NAVY the greatest debt of all".

In the days following, the nation — and the RAN — counted their losses.

NAVY had lost two personnel and the patrol boat HMAS ARROW sank in Darwin Harbour, three and possibly more members of RAN families were dead. Naval Headquarters had been completely destroyed by the most severe of three major cyclones it had faced in 100 years. The communications centre HMAS COONAWARRA had been savaged and the patrol boat HMAS ATTACK had been holed and driven ashore.

The injured were innumerable, but included five ship's company from ARROW.

Most of Darwin's 43,000 population was left homeless as the strongest winds ever recorded on the Australian mainland swirled in over our most northern "gateway" in Tracy's four-hour stay of death and destruction on a nine-mile path.

The infant National Disasters' Organisation received its "baptism of fire" when first news of the severity of Tracy leaked via the Perth Weather Bureau to NDO's Canberra headquarters at 0620 Xmas Day.

A Darwin police sergeant told NDO Director, Major-General A. B. Stretton, at 0655 . . . "Darwin's been blow to pieces . . . for God's sake send help . . ."

This was the last direct contact with Darwin for some hours because of a communications blackout but was sufficient for Major-General Stretton to trigger off a national emergency relief operation.

HMA ships personnel, on Xmas leave around Australia, heeded the call and left homes and loved ones to answer Darwin's plea for help.

They arrived by aircraft, train and car — often at their own expense — and "OPERATION NAVY HELP DARWIN" was underway.

Sydney's Garden Island took on a wartime atmosphere in those next 24 hours as the Fleet was prepared and mobilised over a 48-hour period.

Some 3000 men in 13 ships were prepared and briefed as they steamed along the North Coast, towards Darwin.

The flagship, the aircraft carrier HMAS MELBOURNE, under the command of Commodore G. R. Griffiths, headed the armada.

Aboard MELBOURNE was the Fleet Commander and Commander of the Naval Task Force in Darwin, Rear Admiral D. C. Wells.

Other ships were the guided-missile destroyer HMAS BRISBANE, under the command of Captain M. W. Hudson; the destroyer escort HMAS STUART (CMDR E.T. Keane); the destroyer tender HMAS STALWART (CAPT. I. M. Burnside); the fleet oiler HMAS SUPPLY (CAPT. J. D. Stevens); guided-missile destroyer HMAS HOBART (CAPT. P. R. Sinclair); the destroyer HMAS VENDETTA (CMDR A. G. Ferris); the survey ship HMAS FLINDERS (LCDR J. J. Doyle) and the five landing craft heavy HMAS BALIKPAPAN, HMAS BETANO, HMAS TARAKAN, HMAS BRUNEI and HMAS WEWAK.

BRISBANE, the first of the Naval Task Force to arrive off Darwin (New Year's Eve), had detached from the first group to set up communications between Darwin and Canberra.

The survey ship, HMAS FLINDERS, which arrived after BRISBANE, surveyed the harbour to allow Task Force ships to enter.

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DARWIN EDITION

As NAVY transport and shore establishments at HMAS KUTTABUL, HMAS PENGUIN and HMAS WATSON in Sydney and HMAS MORETON in Brisbane, began handling the arrival of Darwin evacuees, stories of horror and heroism filtered through with the biggest airlift in Australian history.

Survivors of the patrol boat ARROW told of the Darwin Harbour conditions when Tracy struck, of mountainous seas whipped up by 170 knot winds into "crashing dumpers" and ships sinking all round them.

They told of the horror of leaping for their lives from the ARROW onto the Darwin wharf where room-size cargo containers were being "tossed like children's blocks" by the winds and driving rain.

And, if it is possible to single out particular acts of heroism, the following two readily come to notice:

• Able Seaman Geoffrey Stevenson, who worked frantically on rescue work from HMAS COONAWARRA unaware that Tracy had taken the lives of his wife, Christine, and their two young children, Kenneth (4) and Kylie (six months). He broke the news personally to his wife's parents in Sydney, worked on relief operations at KUTTABUL the same day and then returned to Darwin to continue his role with the NAVY.

Rear Admiral Wells, at his first Darwin press conference, pledged NAVY help to the devastated city "for as long as it is needed".

And of the National Disasters' Organisation, how did it fare only a few months after being established, faced with an unprecedented disorder on a scale never previously known in this country?

As his Deputy Director-General, Mr. R. "Van" Vardanega, put it: "It was a triumph of co-operation and good sense on the part of all those who were involved."



"Darwin's being blown to pieces . . ." and how as this scene taken by CPO PHOT Mal Wilson on Boxing Day. Chief Wilson told "Navy News" that no number of photographs could describe the terrible destruction caused by Cyclone Tracy.

"Darwin's been blown to pieces . . . for God's sake, send help . . ."

This dramatic message gave first news of the Darwin disaster which triggered off a massive nation-wide relief operation.

Cyclone Tracy was first detected by the United States weather satellite SR8 on December 21.

At that stage, Tracy was described as "just an ominous cloud formation" over a warm Timor Sea.

On Sunday, December 22, the Darwin Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre decided that the cloud formation was a "tropical cyclonic circulation".

The centre broadcast its first cyclone warning at 1615 that day.

The Weather Bureau's Darwin office told NAVY NEWS:

"At 1600 on December 21, the first cyclone alert was issued for an area between Maningrida — an aboriginal settlement on the northern coast — and Bathurst Island.

"At 1900 that day, the first gale warning was issued for a 30-mile ocean radius from a point 130 miles north of Croker Island, which is 80 nautical miles north-east of Darwin.

"At 2200 on December 21 it was named Tracy — and became, officially, a cyclone.

"At 2300 on December 21, a

strong wind warning was issued for the western end of Bathurst Island.

"At 1600 on December 22, NAVY forecasts gave first storm warning for waters north of Melville Island.

"At 1615 that day, the first cyclone warning for the island was issued and the first alerting signal — recorded hooters which are played over radio stations.

"At 1600 on December 23, the first strong winds warning was given for Darwin."

At 0700 on Xmas Eve morning, Tracy forced the Darwin Centre to issue a warning, describing her as a severe tropical cyclone.

The Centre warned of "very destructive winds." By then Tracy had ravaged Melville and Bathurst Islands.

"But she wasn't satisfied with this," said one report which went on to describe Tracy then as "a small ball of meteorological fury, tearing herself

and everything else in her path inside out."

The report stated that the cyclone's 100-knot winds were swirling around in tighter and tighter circles, sending zephyrs off at tangents to Peron Island, about 100 kilometres south-west of Darwin and the Cobourg Peninsula, 100 kilometres north-east of Darwin in the other direction.

"By noon on Xmas Eve, it was obvious Tracy had found her destiny and she was zeroing-in on Darwin.

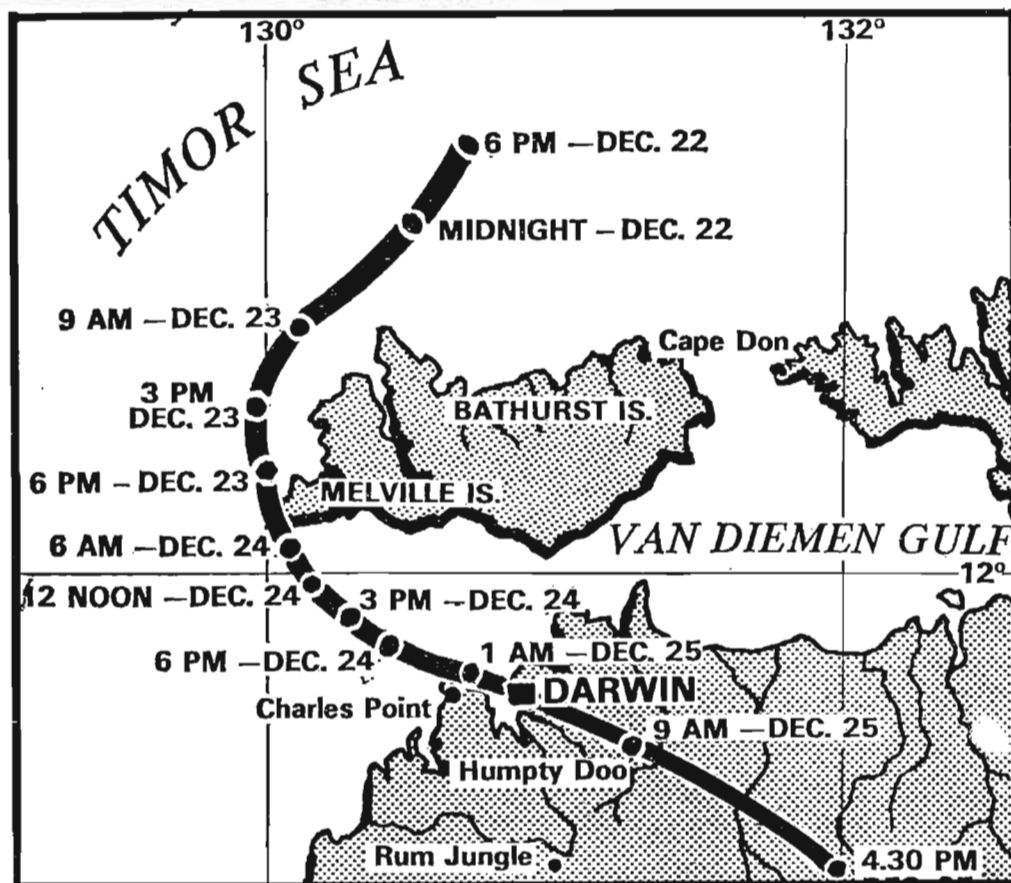
At 12.30 the Centre issued a Flash Cyclone Warning.

"It was telling Darwin's population to batten their hatches because a holocaust was almost upon them."

The weather bureau at Darwin continued:

"Gale and strong wind warnings were issued every six hours.

"Cyclone warnings were issued every three hours from 2200, December 21 to 0100 on December 25.



This map specially prepared by the Weather Bureau, shows the path of the cyclone Tracy over the two and a half days before it wrecked Darwin on Christmas Day.

"Also it was in radar range for a long time.

"Radar warnings were issued from 2100 on December 24 to 0230 December 25.

"That was the last warning we gave because the radio stations went off the air," the Bureau said.

Tracy didn't deviate from her course from that warning to the time she flattened Darwin in the early hours of Xmas morning.

"She vented her terrific spleen on that city's population of 43,000 in a matter of a few hours," said observers.

"By Xmas afternoon, Tracy was an expended sledge-hammer, gasping for her last breath."

Another report said "the cyclone lumbered in across Shoal Bay and seemed to flatten everything in its path.

"Then it turned and doubled-back over the same area."

At Darwin, the swirl around the cyclone's 'eye' had reached a speed of 259 km/h (162 mph) — the highest wind speed ever recorded at ground level on the Australian mainland.

The speed was recorded on a shattered nemograph at Darwin airport.

Outside Darwin, first news of the disaster was received by the recently-established, Canberra-based Natural Disasters' Organisation at 0620 on Xmas Day.

The NDO official log showed that duty officer, Mr. Tony Siebold, received the first call at his home.

The Perth Weather Bureau told him they had taken over issuing of cyclone warnings as

Darwin had been hit by a cyclone.

Only about 50 per cent of the city was standing.

Perth asked him to alert all authorities.

In response to an immediate phone call at 0655, a Darwin police station sergeant told NDO Director Major-General A. B. Stretton "for God's sake send some help. Darwin is being blown to pieces."

The phone then went dead and direct communication with Darwin was lost.

Major-General Stretton immediately reacted to the sergeant's plea and called for the full defence forces facilities, all State police, emergency services and welfare and relief agencies.

Weather men, signals officers, radio and communications officials, logistics experts, welfare and service personnel dashed to the NDO centre.

In the hours following that first alert, Service Chiefs worked with key civilian personnel in co-ordinating a relief operation.

A major problem was communications with Darwin and Servicemen and Post Office signal men worked frantically to make contact.

The local Darwin radio station also had been put out of action.

At 12.25 pm, an authoritative message was received from Darwin through the PMG Communications Centre at Adelaide, from Mr Alan O'Brien, the Secretary of the Department of the Northern Territory.

The message read:
• Darwin completely devas-

tated by cyclone last night. Deaths to date in neighbourhood of 20. 90 per cent of houses completely or seriously damaged.

• Suggest national disaster team flown Darwin immediately.

• Also suggest airlift of essential medical supplies, food, clothing, blankets, etc. commence immediately.

• Two surgical teams complete with supplies needed.

• Return flights may be used to solve probable evacuation problem.

• Director of Health has advised casualties may have to be evacuated.

Darwin Weather Bureau's last message to Perth came from weatherman John Deare who by telex from Darwin said: "From our observation here it is catastrophic."

He was typing the message from the eighth floor "and the whole building is shaking."

He explained later that the Darwin Bureau's cyclone measuring instruments had been unable to cope with Tracy's ferocity.

The wind gauge had failed at 140 knots and the barometer, 950 millibars — and could go no further.

Perth Bureau senior forecaster, Mr. Steve West, said the team of 20 men and women in Darwin had remained at their posts.

"It must have been a nightmare for them with their wives and families at home," he said.

By 1030 Boxing Day, Tracy had travelled 280km south-east of Darwin and had lost intensity by the hour.



The bend in this steel telegraph pole, the uprooted road sign and what is left of these houses, gives some idea of the force of the cyclone.

RAN launches its greatest peacetime operation "NAVY HELP DARWIN"

This excellent aerial photograph taken by LSPH Ian Goodson showing a Navy Wessex helicopter winching a man down to repair high voltage lines, typifies the important roles RAN helicopters are carrying out in "Operation Navy Help Darwin".

On the afternoon of Christmas Day, the word had finally got through to a stunned Australia: DARWIN HAD BEEN DEVASTATED BY A CYCLONE.

The true extent of the devastation — like none ever seen before in Australia — only really became apparent over the next few days as relief help poured in and evacuees poured out of the stricken city. Their tales of horror were chilling.

No cyclone had ever done this to a living Australian city before. No cyclone had ever been predicted that could do this amount of damage in Australia, and those outside Darwin could hardly believe it.

Cyclone Tracy put Australia into the "big league" of the Caribbean. Even now, cyclone specialists are busy rewriting the cyclone book. Tracy has done that.

Almost immediately, the Fleet mobilised.

The sole aim of the naval task group was to provide support to Darwin and assist in the rehabilitation of the city.

As the ships steamed up the coast, the planners got to work. The participating forces of some 3000 Naval personnel consisted of twelve ships, two Naval HS748 aircraft to operate a shuttle service between Darwin and either Sydney, Nowra or Melbourne, the staff of the Naval Officer Commanding North Australia, Captain E. E. Johnston — who was now operating from a temporary headquarters at the RAAF base, Patrol Boats and Clearance Diving Team number one, who flew to Darwin on Boxing Day on the second plane into the city.

In principle, the plan was simple.

HMAS Brisbane detached from the first Naval Task Force on December 27 and was to arrive in the Darwin area on the morning of December 31.

The ship was to establish liaison with NOCNA, including setting up a communications link with Canberra.

Brisbane also was to land sufficient men and materials to assist in the preparation of the helicopter landing site, shore headquarters site and stores area.

BRISBANE also was to conduct a general inspection of the area allocated for clearance by the Naval workforce.

But before BRISBANE could come into the harbour proper, it was necessary for surveys to be completed of the harbour.

This job had already been done initially by teams from the Patrol Boats.

Captain Johnston, who as well as being in command of North Australia, also was Port Controller after the cyclone, wanted to get the port operational again as quickly as possible.

"I consider this task of prime importance," he said. "During the wet season Darwin is completely cut off from the south except by air and sea.

"All our heavy stores come to us by sea. Therefore, it was essential that we survey the harbour and approaches to see whether sandbars had shifted, whether navigation lights were operating correctly and where

From JOHN HERBERT, Navy PRO in Darwin

wrecks and other shipping hazards were located.

"Our own teams worked magnificently."

When the survey ship, HMAS FLINDERS, arrived on the same morning as BRISBANE, she did a check survey, and found the work of NOCNA'S staff to be more or less "spot on".

BRISBANE then came into harbour and dropped anchor about half a mile from the main wharf.

The next day — January 1 — the main body of the Fleet was due to arrive. This consisted of the Flagship, MELBOURNE, with the Fleet Commander, Rear-Admiral D. C. Wells, on board, and HMAS STUART.

At seven o'clock that morning, we all waited outside Naval Headquarters — originally the Commanding Officer's official residence — as the two Wessex helicopters hovered over the hastily cleared helicopter landing site opposite Headquarters.

The Admiral and his staff held an immediate briefing after they arrived, and then made an inspection of some of the damaged areas before flying back to the ship to finish the final organisation.

The next day — January 2 — the Destroyer Tender HMAS STALWART arrived. She came alongside — the only Naval vessel from the Task Force Group to do so.

STALWART was here to provide workshop facilities and electrical power ashore if necessary.

On January 3, the Fleet Oiler HMAS SUPPLY, the Guided Missile Destroyer HMAS HOBART and the Daring Class Destroyer HMAS VENDETTA arrived in the harbour.

The main body of ships was now complete. The Landing Craft, HMAS BETANO, BALIKPAPAN, TARAKAN and BRUNEL, were still to arrive — they were due on January 5. They were to ferry stores and personnel around the harbour.

The main part of the clean-up plan centred on three northern suburbs, Nightcliff, Casuarina and Rapid Creek.

These were the worst hit areas, and seemed to take the full force of both parts of the cyclone.

It was all under the control of the Task Force Commander, Rear Admiral Wells.

Everyone involved in the planning of this giant task is rather modest about his part in it.

Commander T. A. Dadswell, who was the shore-based controller of the operation, said: "The philosophy was all worked out on the way up by the ships . . . all we had to do here in Darwin was amend and refine this general plan."

But it wasn't nearly as simple as this.

As one of the planners told me: "Thank God for Darwin that the Navy recently conducted a Disaster exercise."

The Navy was prepared, as it was only in October that there had been a similar disaster simulated in Jervis Bay.

The disaster co-ordinator on HMAS MELBOURNE is Lieutenant Commander Tim O'Sulli-



van, who also was in charge of the Jervis Bay exercise.

"When we sailed for Darwin we hadn't had any time to do much in the way of planning. So everyone simply accepted the plan we had originally prepared as a result of the October Disaster exercise.

"As soon as I heard the Fleet was being sent, I rang from Sydney, a number of key personnel and also requested immediate delivery of key stores."

During the trip to Darwin, the various ships' companies were inoculated and each ship had a morning Officers' conference at which basic plans and ideas and requirements were hammered out.

The recommendations from this meeting were then sent for approval to a special afternoon meeting of the Admiral and his staff, Commodore G. R. Griffiths, Lieutenant Commanders Tim O'Sullivan and Bill Ritchie.

Every possible contingency was thought about, and in some cases acted on. For example, some of the ships built catamarans, in case they would be needed for offloading people or supplies.

They also built and painted street signs, and set up a general overall organisation for getting onto shore.

On board HMAS MELBOURNE, the men set about the giant task of grouping all the stores for Darwin into 2000 lb. weight bundles — so that the helicopters would just hook onto a bundle and be away.

Each bundle was put ready on the flight deck, and in the hangar.

A complete Disaster Co-Ordination Centre was set up in the Briefing Room onboard the Flagship.

This was where everyone

Editor's tribute to Darwin contributors

"Navy News" is indebted to Mr. John Herbert, Navy Public Relations Officer in Darwin, for his magnificent coverage of the cyclone disaster. John flew to Darwin soon after the cyclone struck and has worked tirelessly and energetically ever since in his dual role as PRO and "Navy News" correspondent. He is to be commended for the co-operation, at all times, in meeting the demands of the Editor and Assistant Editor, in their compilation of this Darwin Edition.

Our gratitude also is extended to the many Navy photographers, to mention a few, Mal Wilson, Ron Batchelor, Dick Briggs, Ian Goodson, Steve Dent, and Mr. Hank Toluzzi, for their pictorial coverage.

—Kevin Warwick, EDITOR
—Allen Walsh, Assist. EDITOR

going ashore from MELBOURNE, and what they were doing, was controlled.

Every day, as the ships steamed up the Queensland coast, there was a close re-examination of special needs of Darwin.

If it was found that there were any requirements for stores which were not onboard, signals were sent back to Sydney and the stores were flown to various pick-up points on the coast.

As the ships passed, the stores were flown to the ships.

A shore command headquarters was set up in Darwin, in the top floor of Captain Johnston's official residence.

The Captain and his wife moved into a small flat underneath.

Commander T. A. Dadswell was put in charge of this headquarters. He was responsible for the overall operation of the headquarters: for liaison with NOCNA regarding the work; and the direction of ships' and special working parties.

The organisation of the shore

headquarters was roughly divided into the following: Planning, Operational, Communications, Transport, Stores, Public Relations, Boat and Air Traffic Control.

From the start it was made quite clear that the only way to operate was through direct requests from the public.

So the Navy only took on jobs which were specifically asked for.

The requests were channelled to Operations, where priorities were decided.

The Planners then fitted each request into the programme — to be done as soon as possible.

Every morning, Captain Johnston and Commander Dadswell went to the daily Town Disaster Central Committee at the Police Station. It was here that policy decisions were taken.

I asked Commander Dadswell where one starts setting up such a complex organisation as the Darwin one: "Well, you think through on an organisational chain — then you imagine some-

thing horrible and see whether it's covered by the organisation.

"If it isn't — you start again until you get it right."

Throughout the whole operation, the Navy has had one role. Captain Johnston put it to me this way: "We must be of maximum help to the civilians of Darwin."

Liaison between the citizens of Darwin and the Navy in the Northern Territory — whose members are also citizens of Darwin," said Captain Johnston, "remains the same excellent basis as before the disaster.

"In fact, I think, if anything, it is better than before, because we are all facing this dreadful tragedy together, side by side."

The sailors streamed ashore almost from the moment HMAS BRISBANE arrived in port on Tuesday, December 31.

By the time the whole Fleet had arrived, there were three thousand sailors in Darwin harbour — twelve hundred of them on shore every day working at the restoration and general cleaning up.

The Navy asked for, and was given, three suburbs to clean up — Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Casuarina — the worst hit areas of the city.

Commander Dadswell, shore-based controller of the relief operation, explains: "The men were divided into teams of about 15 each.

Each team searched the rubble and cleared up generally.

Any valuables are marked and sent to HMAS STALWART for safe keeping."

This operation alone was a mammoth one — like all the Naval operations in "Operation Navy Help Darwin".

STALWART briefed the team leaders who made the initial

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

John Herbert asked personnel serving at the Naval Communication Station, HMAS COONAWARRA, what happened the night Cyclone Tracy struck. This is their story . . .

THE outstanding memory the Executive Officer of HMAS COONAWARRA, Lieutenant Frank Densten has of Christmas Eve 1974 is looking up and seeing an aluminium boat sailing above him 15ft. in the air.

Everyone who was at HMAS COONAWARRA that dreadful night has at least one "pet" memory.

The word to prepare for a possible cyclone came about midday on Christmas Eve. The Commanding Officer of COONAWARRA, the Naval Communication Station and general support establishment, Commander S. Hall, heard the news on the radio. Cyclone Tracy was on her way.

As Commander Hall said, "I thought this could be the big one." Though it was still a long way off, he rang Lieutenant Densten.

The basic organisation had already been prepared for a cyclone scare about a month beforehand.

Christmas Leave was stopped for those who would form the Passive Defence teams. In fact,

very few actually went on leave. Nearly the whole establishment stayed, just in case.

It was decided that if at all possible, all married men should be sent home to their families.

But a number of key married personnel on the base had to remain on duty.

"After all," says Commander Hall, "we're a disciplined Service."

And it was precisely this discipline which kept COONAWARRA and the Navy in Darwin, more or less operational the whole time.

From 2 o'clock onwards, Passive Defence, Welfare, Sick Bay, Rescue and Fire and Repair parties were all set up.

The Executive Officer also detailed seven wardens to patrol the married quarters in both parts of the COONAWARRA base and the naval housing estate at Hidden Valley Road.

"When you hear the fire siren," ordered Lieutenant Densten, "come running".

There's a COONAWARRA tradition: on Christmas morning Father Christmas leaves his reindeer and sleigh at the gates and transfers to the Base fire truck for his "presents" round.

But at about eight o'clock that evening, Father Christmas decided to come to COONAWARRA early this year.

Lieutenant Brian Taylor, Lieutenant Frank Densten and Chief Petty Officer Ron Corridas hopped into the fire truck for a fast unceremonial handout of presents to the children on the base.

The wind was gusting to over seventy knots. Lieutenant McIntyre rang the C.O. "What do you think, sir," he asked.

"At this time," recalls Commander Hall, "it looked grim. So I ordered the organisation to swing into action. I also reported what we had done to the Naval Officer Commanding North Australia, Captain Johnston."

This was the last contact the two officers had for the next 12 hours.

At 9.30, the order went out: "Sound the siren".

The Passive Defence Organisation proper immediately swung into action.

For the rest of the night until the cyclone struck COONAWARRA, its course was plotted on a big map in the Briefing Room.

Information for this plot came from various sources — mainly from the RAAF and ABC.

There was still time for Darwin to be saved. But time was running out. If the cyclone swept to the south of Charles Point on the very tip of Cox Peninsula, all would be well. Darwin would not be hit.

Instead . . . Cyclone Tracy turned NORTH — and was on a direct collision course with Darwin and by midnight, the roads were all but impassable. Debris and fallen trees were everywhere.

The Fire truck was making regular rounds of the establishment, and would continue to do so throughout the night.

About an hour later (the occurrence log kept all night gave the time as 0100) houses at the Transmitter Station started to break up.

Chief "Tex" Gourlay, who was in charge, was told to bring his wife and small baby to the main base together with any

THE NIGHT THE BOATS FLEW AT COONAWARRA

other families who wanted to come.

Shortly afterwards, a convoy of cars led by "Tex" Gourlay moved off to Coonawarra West, the main administrative centre.

The idea was to bring all personnel to the substantial BRICK single quarters on the main establishment.

At 0145, the eye of the cyclone was over the RAAF base, less than four miles away from COONAWARRA. The rain was a bruising, impenetrable curtain. Car headlights were useless. They were simply reflected back into the drivers eyes.

"Tex" Gourlay got the first of the families to the main base and then went out again for those who had initially said they wanted to "stay put".

He made them go to a strong shed near the Transmitter Station.

Structural damage to the base was by now extreme. Houses were simply disintegrating, whole rooms were being lifted into the air and thrown hundreds of yards away.

A repair party was constantly being sent out to try to fix — temporarily — the main damage.

This party was under the control of PO Frank Townsend. Time and again Petty Officer Townsend went into the cyclone on repair work.

The Darwin Met. office was now estimating that the full force of the wind would increase to about 85 knots.

The Old WRANS Block — a two-storey brick building — started to break up. The top floor isn't there any more. The Guard House flooded and the ABC went off the air.

The time was ten minutes to three. At nine minutes to three, the cyclone started to change direction. It was now coming directly for HMAS COONAWARRA.

The ceiling fell in at the transmitter station and all communications were lost with the RAAF base.

About this time it became obvious that the families must be brought from the Housing estate to the central brick buildings.

Lieutenant Densten joined the rescue operations. He took the fire truck.

His story is typical of many cases of rescuing families. "By three o'clock the Naval Housing Estate was a scene of total devastation. The roads, of course, were completely impassable. You had to go cross country. It was the only way.

"I saw a torch flashing. It was the wife and son of Warrant Officer Maurice Schoer."

WO Schoer was the Naval Representative at RAAF Cyclone Ops. room that night. He couldn't get home.

Frank Densten dragged them into the fire truck. Glass, sheets of galvanised iron and other debris were flying everywhere.

Frank's own house — which was just across the road — was almost completely wrecked.

Everything was gone except the bathroom. Frank continues his story: "My wife, Clare, and our two children, Leigh and Iain, were huddled together in the bathroom.

"I kept belting against the door to get in; Clare thought it was the wind and kept slamming the door whenever I started to get it open. In the end I had to kick the door down."

Back in the street, water was three foot deep everywhere. And the Fire Truck wouldn't start. Then the side of a house — the Denstens — landed with a terrific crash in front of the car. Another few feet and the car would have been crushed.

There was nothing for it but to walk. The air was full of flying tin and glass. Trucks and cars were being blown off the road, every vehicle on the base was damaged. Galvanised iron was flying everywhere.

Small groups of people were all trying to get across the paddock on foot to the safety of the main base.

Families, pregnant women and mothers with small children all had to walk through the wind and the rain.

The wind gusts were estimated to be in excess of 170km per hour.

Some made it that night by forming themselves into a human chain, their hands tightly linked as they struggled and crawled towards safety, the WRANS Quarters. Sometimes the chain broke as hands couldn't hold against the wind.

It was a terrible night. An aluminium boat sailed past, 15 feet in the air. Boats — there are many fishing enthusiasts at COONAWARRA — were flying all over the base that night.

One did a complete circle and crashed through the window of Commander Hall's office.

Suddenly . . . silence, complete, deathly and impermanent. Tracy, that most unwelcome visitor, had finally arrived at COONAWARRA.

Commander Hall: It was realised that the lull wouldn't last for more than a few minutes.

It had to be used to get all the families from their houses to the

comparative safety of the Junior Ratings building.

Everyone was sheltering in the Ratings cafeteria, under benches and toilets. A few were clearing away broken glass and splintered fragments from the floor.

Many weren't wearing shoes, all they'd had time to do was rush from their houses in their night clothes.

When the wind started again, as everyone knew it must, it was even more ferocious than it had been the first time.

There was a creak . . . the roof looked as though it was about to give away.

Rain poured through the hole onto the sheltering people beneath. People moved to the passageways, where it was still dry.

A number of pregnant mothers and babies were taken to the small galley storerooms right in the centre of the building.

These would more than likely be safe if the rest of the building collapsed.

Human chains of sailors lifted everyone from the cafeteria over the servery hatches into the safety beyond.

Then . . . daybreak . . . and a final, exhausted stillness.

There were many heroes at COONAWARRA that night. There was Warrant Officer Maurice Schoer, who was at RAAF Cyclone Operations Centre at the airport.

At a quarter to three that morning he remembers sending a message to COONAWARRA. "The whole place is falling about our ears."

This was the last message to the outside world. Five minutes later the RAAF base lost all power and communication.

WO Schoer, stayed on. He wasn't to know until much later that his wife and family were safe.

CPO Ron Corridas, too, has his memories of that night. He took a Toyota truck to the RAAF base. Or at least he tried to.

"I left COONAWARRA during a lull in the storm," says Ron Corridas.

"I'd hardly got outside the gates when the wind started gusting heavily again.

Trees and telegraph poles were falling around the truck.

"All I could do was to sit in the truck, engine running, brake on, gears in . . . and hope."

Ron Corridas stayed like this for FOUR hours.

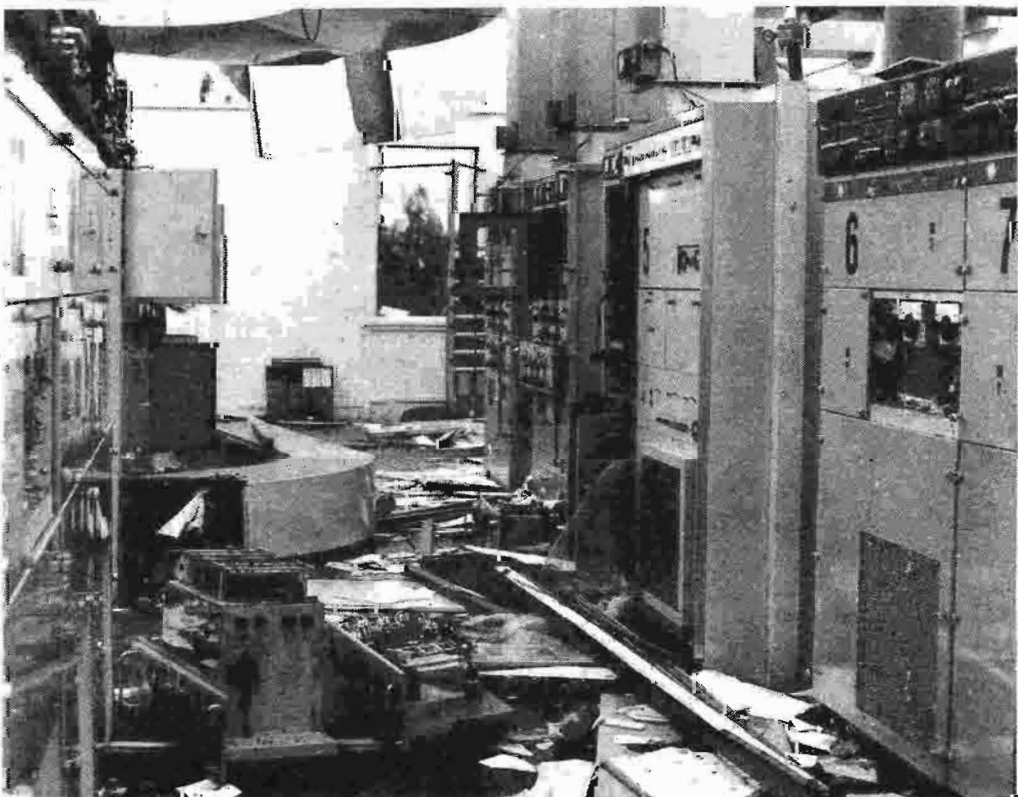
"Towards the end, the wind began to win. I felt the truck being blown forwards. A piece of tin flew through the wind-screen. The only thing to do was to drive the truck into the side of the road and bog it in the mud."

Power lines — live — were whipping everywhere like streamers in a breeze.

All the while, the White Ensign flew bravely on, a sign of the spirit inside the gates.



LEUT FRANK DENSTEN, X.O., COONAWARRA



Interior damage at the Transmitter Station.



Some of the damaged Married Quarters at COONAWARRA.

"It was bloody horrifying . . ."

says Patrol Boat survivor

"Mountainous seas, whipped up by winds in excess of 170 knots, were like crashing dumpers" was how observers described Darwin Harbour when Cyclone Tracy struck on Xmas Day.

A Navy check of the harbour at first light revealed that:

- The Patrol Boat HMAS ARROW had sunk alongside Darwin's Stokes Hill Wharf and two of the ship's company, PO Les Catton, of Adelaide and ABMTP John Rennie, of Mt. Gambier, both drowned.

- Injured were: SBLT John Jabobi (severe lacerations and immersion), sustained after being blown back into the water from the wharf; ARROW'S navigator, SBLT Andrew Birtchnell (lacerations and immersion); ABETS Kevin Rainbow (lacerations and later gangrene); ABMTP "Blue" Woollard (lacerations and septic wounds) and ABQMG "Daisy" Dav (infected wounds).

- Another patrol boat, HMAS ATTACK, had been driven ashore on a sandy beach while the two remaining patrol boats in the area — HMAS ADVANCE and ASSAIL — were both safe after heading for sea.

- The harbour was strewn with wreckage from shipping which had anchored off the town.



HMAS ARROW pictured in Sydney Harbour before leaving for Darwin.



Three of the ARROW survivors (f to r) MTP "Flash" Jordan, ABRO Barry McGowan and PO Barry Spencer on duty ashore.

One member of ARROW'S Ship's Company remembered counting some 17 vessels — prawn boats, two ferries and a schooner — anchored behind them in Darwin's inner harbour before the cyclone struck.

Soon after the "hard blow" at around 2 am, the same member looked around and there was nothing left of these craft.

All had presumably sunk.

The Naval Officer commanding North Australia, Captain E. E. Johnston, reported at the time that ARROW sank at the height of the cyclone when it was driven out of control by the gale into the outer corner of Stokes Hill Wharf.

He stressed that "HMAS ARROW did not explode. It hit the wharf and sank."

"It was bloody horrifying," said one survivor from HMAS ARROW when describing the harbour conditions.

ARROW was rolling heavily in crashing waves as members of her ship's company jumped to the oyster and coral encrusted wharf.

They had to cling for their lives to whatever they could.

PO Catton was struck by flying cargo, knocked unconscious and blown back into the water.

The windforce and driving rain ripped clothes from their bodies.

Four of ARROW'S Ship's Company were swept into the water against wharf pylons and struts.

On reaching the wharf, ARROW survivors faced a new threat.

Steel cargo containers, some the size of a room, were being swept along the wharf.

"They were being tossed along like children's blocks," said one survivor.

Once ashore, most of the survivors made their way to deserted cars in a nearby carpark.

Others took refuge where they could to dodge flying objects and broken glass.

When the wind dropped, a small group went into the town

for help. Survivors later assisted in relief work before proceeding on 14 days survivors' leave.

They were: The Commanding Officer LEUT Bob Dagworthy, ABQMG Sargent, ABRP Wakeley, POMTP Perrin, POCOX Spencer, ABRO McGowan, LSMTF Jordan, ABCK Taylor, POMTP Grosse, ABWM McLeod and ABETC Hawkins.

Majority of ARROW'S Ship's Company want to go back to another patrol boat.

One member, AB Doug Cousins from the Victorian country town of Eagle Hawk, summed up their feelings when he said: "When you fall off a horse you go and get back on again."

Of the other Patrol Boats:— HMAS ASSAIL was later assigned to SAR duties with RAAF Orion aircraft, while HMAS ADVANCE was found to be operational on only one engine.

Two holes in HMAS ATTACK were patched and the patrol boat refloated.

A naval clearance diving team later worked on the salvage of ARROW.

THE NIGHT THE BOATS FLEW . . .

CONT. FROM PAGE 6

Then . . . Tracy's giant hand reached down and plucked the flagpole bodily out of the ground.

This was Tracy's final, vicious piece of vandalism. Appeased, she moved on towards Kathryn and eventually out to sea.

COONAWARRA was lucky. Throughout the whole disastrous few hours, never at any time did the establishment lose power or light. Communications were lost for a short while . . . but on Boxing Day these were restored. COONAWARRA was wounded, but not dead.

The communications station at Shoal Bay — a few miles south — which is still under construction, was almost com-

pletely undamaged by the cyclone.

Shoal Bay was due to become operational sometime this year; at which time the WRAN communicators would move from the Radio Station on the main base to the new building at Shoal Bay.

Because the Shoal Bay Station was undamaged, operators were quickly moved from COONAWARRA to man it.

By Boxing Day, the Navy was back in the communications game. In future it will take something much more serious than a cyclone of even Tracy's force to put Naval communications in North Australia off the air.

CIVVY VEHICLES OFFERED TO NAVY: From the day of the cyclone onwards, civilians in Darwin were offering their vehicles to the Navy for their use in the relief operation. Sometimes the Navy asked civilians if they would temporarily relinquish their vehicles for Navy disaster use. Always the response was immediate. But as one Navy man said: "It's going to be a great job getting the scores of civilian cars and trucks back to their civilian owners when it's all over — but we'll do it somehow!"

NAVY BREADWINNER: One thousand loaves of freshly baked bread arrived by air from the south on board a Navy HS 748 aircraft. The Navy immediately took it all to Pauls milk depot in the city, where the citizens of Darwin still in the town go for daily milk supplies. On this occasion, however, every civilian who came for his milk went away with a New Year bonus: A loaf of fresh Navy bread.



Some of the damaged vessels that didn't go to the bottom.

PATROL BOATS STORY

Three "survived" Cyclone Tracy

Three of the four Patrol Boats attached to the North Australia Command survived Cyclone Tracy.

HMAS ARROW sunk when it crashed into the outer corner of Stokes Hill Wharf at the height of the cyclone.

The other three Patrol Boats, HMAS ATTACK, ADVANCE and ASSAIL have "lived".

Lieutenant Paul De Graaf is the Commanding Officer of HMAS ATTACK. This is his story:

"We got the word to secure to the cyclone mooring buoy at about two o'clock in the afternoon.

"I secured my boat to the buoy later that afternoon.

"The wind began to whip up the seas tremendously.

"I'd never seen seas like them.

"As the wind increased in intensity, we started being dragged about the harbour with the buoy after us.

"The normal procedure is to have about 90 feet of cable paid out to keep the ship at the buoy.

"The wind was so fierce that it was forcing the cable to pay out to about 360 feet.

"At this time (0045) we started the main engines to try to stem the buoy (that is to come up onto it to shorten the amount of cable).

"We connected up the winch to try to stop more cable being paid out.

"At one point we went to within 400 yards of the wharf.

"I managed to get us back to about 1,000 yards.

"We were dragging gradually in a westerly direction.

"The biggest problem was avoiding collisions with about 20 trawlers in the harbour. We lost the use of our gyro compass very early in the night.

"We were only able to steer by the magnetic compass which was totally inaccurate in the rough weather and was practically useless.

"And when our radar stopped working — at about ten minutes to four — we were totally blind.

"At that stage we were still attached to the buoy and still avoiding the trawlers.

"We had had it when a prawn



The Commanding Officers of the three Patrol Boats which "lived" through Cyclone Tracy. Left to right: LEUT Paul De Graaff (HMAS ATTACK), LEUT Chris Cleveland (HMAS ASSAIL) and LEUT Peter Breeze (HMAS ADVANCE).



The beached Patrol Boat HMAS ATTACK and her ship's company, before she was refloated.

trawler got to within 20 feet of us.

"It was while trying to avoid her that the Patrol Boat ran aground.

"And just before we went aground, the cable parted at the bows.

"We all stayed onboard until the cyclone moved away.

"Unbelievably we were all safe.

"HMAS ATTACK was refloated several days afterwards and is now alongside the Patrol Boat Base wharf at Stokes Hill.

"She has three holes in her hull.

"The other two boats, ASSAIL and ADVANCE managed to get themselves safely to sea with very little damage."

Lieutenant Peter Breeze, the Commanding Officer of ADVANCE, recalls that night:

"I had doubts about this cyclone.

"We had been tracking it on our radar all afternoon and it looked a very bad one.

"I decided not to anchor at the cyclone moorings but simply to anchor in the harbour

"I was scared that if the worst came to the worst we might not be able to get ourselves away from the buoy.

"Just after one o'clock, the ship started dragging anchor.

"I started both engines, weighed anchor and got underway, sailing up and down the harbour.

"The tide and wind kept moving the boat westwards, so I ordered three-quarter power ahead on the port engine and three-quarter power astern on the starboard engine.

"I put 30 degree on starboard wheel. To my total amazement, the ship started swinging to port, which it should never have done.

"Then I decided to put to sea.

"The wind now started changing and conditions became very difficult.

"We managed to get out of the harbour by going very slowly on the engine revs and steering 40 degrees off course.

"We got to the fairway outer buoy at about five thirty and steamed slowly into the sea for a few hours.

"Then we started to make our way back into harbour.

"All we had was a damaged propeller."

At 1000 on Xmas Eve morning, HMAS ASSAIL was alerted that a Japanese trawler was in trouble off Bathurst Island.

The ASSAIL's Commanding Officer, LEUT Chris Cleveland, takes up the story: "We were also watching Tracy that day and it soon became obvious that we would not be able to sail.

"Then came the word to go to the cyclone moorings.

"We moved at 1730 that evening.

"The moorings were brand new, seven and one half ton clumps, firmly stuck in the mud.

"At 0200, the cable broke and we began careering across the harbour

"We crash-started the engines in 10 seconds flat and had the second generator going in 12 seconds.

"We were being pushed all over the harbour.

"For an hour we stayed within the confines of the harbour.

"ASSAIL was rolling at least 80 degrees and the navigation

sidelights rolled into the water several times.

"Visibility was now about four feet.

"The propellers were as much out of the water as they were in, and the echo sounder seemed to be pinging on wave tops.

"The combined force of wind and rain stripped the foremast of its top coat of paint.

"I think that night we proved the theory that the 975 radar does work with the transmitter under water and that the aerial will keep turning, in a 200 knot wind.

"We also proved that the main engines don't fall off the mounts past 72 degrees of roll, even if the battery charger does.

"We also proved the engines can still work even with an eight-inch hurricane hawser wrapped around the port screw.

"And so we went eventually to sea and safety.

"We returned at 1300 on Xmas Day.

"Before the cyclone, there were at least 50 craft at the wharves.

"When we returned there were five — two patrol boats, two trawlers and one tug.

"The rest were sunk, missing or aground."

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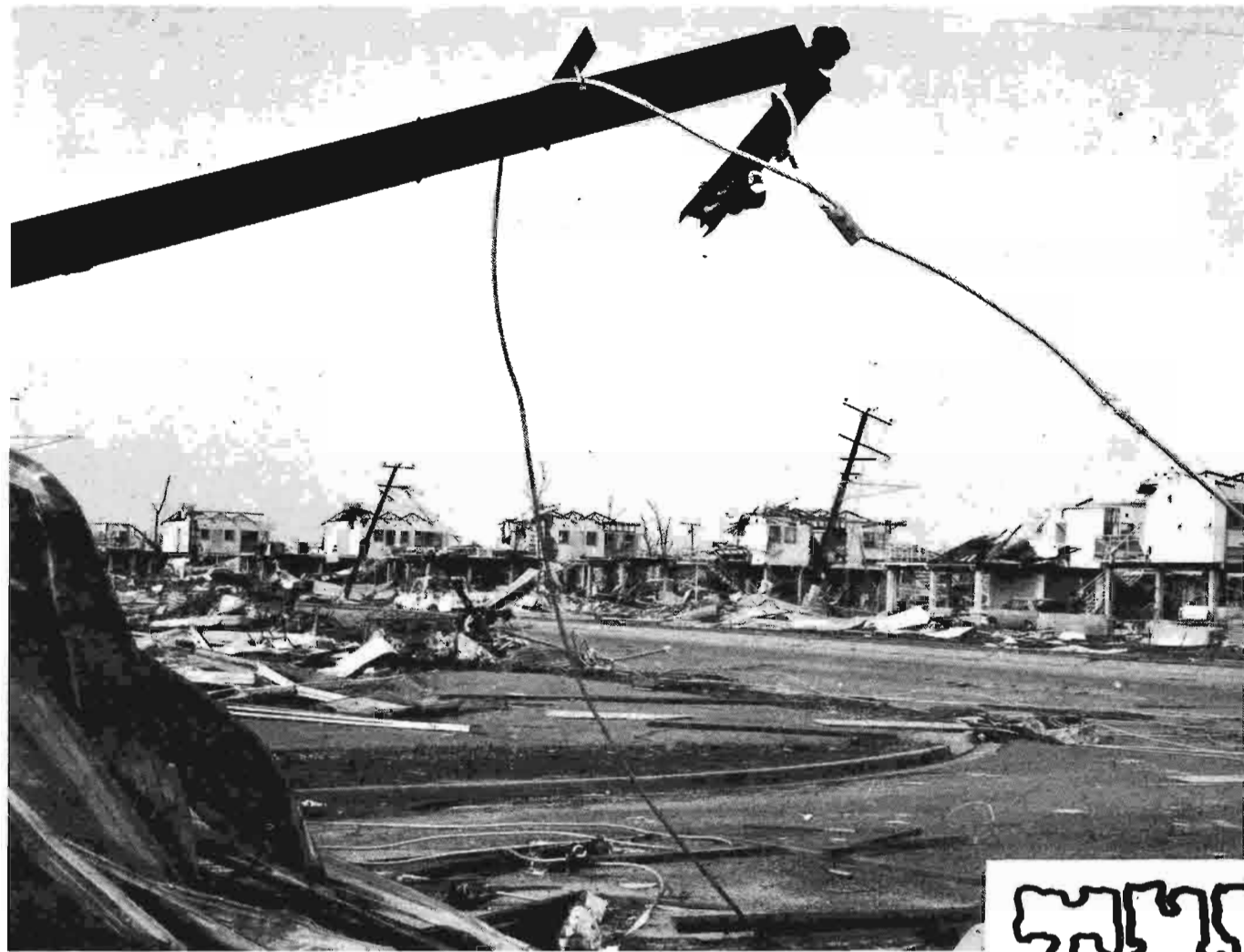
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THE RUINS OF DARWIN





THE RUINS OF DARWIN

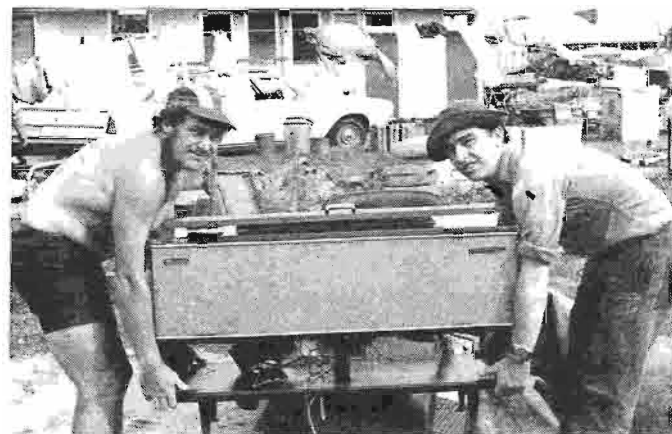
No number of photographs can describe the terrible damage caused by the cyclone



**NAVY
MEN
HELP
CLEAN
UP A
CITY**



LEFT: Just three of the NAVY band of helpers... and BELOW: ABMTP Neil Waywood (right) helps Mr. John McLeod with what remains of an expensive stereo. Mr. McLeod's wife and two babies braved out the storm in the house.



Sailors from HMAS MELBOURNE cleaning up the local fire station.

*Flagship's Commadore
set a fine example*



Commodore G. R. Griffiths, Commanding Officer of the Flagship HMAS MELBOURNE, had no intention of standing back and letting his men do all the cleaning up... in true Aussie spirit, he 'got into it' too, earnestly and energetically as this picture proves!!



LEFT: POMTP Michael Gilfoyle (left) and POMTP Bullock recovering a TV set from wreckage for safekeeping and RIGHT: CPOATC Tom McDonald... sweating it out.



LEUT Paul Tribel (right) and LSATC Lodovko Callagaris (left) salvage timber from the ruins.



Taking a lunch break on the job are from left LSSV Taylor, ABAVN McGregor and LSSN Prince.



Houses in the foreground show the results of some of Navy clearing up operations in one of the worst-hit suburbs, Nightcliff.

THEY LAUGH ABOUT IT NOW . . . the COONAWARRA WRANS . . . and those I've spoken to don't seem to think they were very frightened by Tracy.

FROM JOHN HERBERT

"There were two resounding cracks," one told me, "one when the roof went up and one when the roof came down."

Another was only worried about her flower pot. "I couldn't lift it, so someone else helped me drag it inside. I was sure the wind would push it over the balcony of the block."

One Wran, who was sleeping on the top floor of the WRANS Block when the full force of the cyclone broke, recalls her experiences: "I woke up and the whole place was shaking."

"I sat up and the door blew off and flew out the window."

"I just sat and watched as things flew out the window."

"Then, I felt I must move, and just after I did, the ceiling collapsed right on where I had been sitting. Then I ran down the corridor and outside."

Throughout the cyclone, the WRANS Chiefs and PO's Mess was used as a sheltering place for the families from the Hidden Valley Naval Housing estate.

After the lull, when everyone was in the Junior Ranks cafeteria, the WRANS busied themselves making sandwiches and generally helping everyone.

"They did a great job helping console the women and children," one sailor said.

Back at COONAWARRA WRANS communicators suddenly became stewards, despatch riders, one was even a Transport Officer for a week.

As First Officer Ann Briggs said, "Most seemed to enjoy the change in duties — they seem to think it's a bit of fun, having a different life style for a while."

I wondered why girls became WRANS.

First Officer Briggs thought for a minute. "I really don't know," she said.

"I often ask them this question, and most usually say what I said when I joined. 'I don't know'."

First Officer Briggs continued. "Being a WRAN is a marvellous preparation for later life. Besides, it teaches them self reliance and self discipline."

The girls of COONAWARRA certainly showed their self reliance and discipline over these last few weeks. Cyclone Tracy has proved that.



WRANS lend a hand with repairs at COONAWARRA.

Coonawarra's 'Girl Fridays'



SWRROS Karren Sabien sweeps out rain water from the bottom of the Senior Wrans Block at COONAWARRA



LWRMED Helen McCarthy bandages a sailor's busted fingers.



TWO WRAN helpers with the devastated Old WRANS Block in the background.

DOING ALL KINDS OF JOBS

Now that the cyclone has passed, the WRANS have risen magnificently to the challenge. They are doing all kinds of jobs two weeks ago they'd never dreamt of being able to do.

Because HMAS Coonawarra is a Communications Station, most of the WRANS and sailors on the base are communicators.

But this didn't stop them.

They took over the Sick Bay (some in fact had been qualified nurses before they joined the Navy).

Others learnt in five minutes flat the art of being a steward.

They moved outside the base to help the civilian population of Darwin in its hour of need.

Four — a Petty Officer and three WRANS — went to the Fire Station to man the telephones.

Another two went to the telephone exchange. Both had been qualified telephonists in civilian life.

Two went to Relief centres in two of the worst hit suburbs.

And one was seconded to the Police Station to help with the communications.



THE PHONES RAN "HOT" . . . taking clean-up bookings from the locals are LWRREG Judy Gerhard (left) and another Wran receptionist (right).



THEY ARE SMILING NOW . . . Senior WRANS Debbie Cord, and Karren Sabien.



OTHER WRANS who worked tirelessly behind the scenes included this smiling SBA, SWR Pratt (centre) and SWRSTD Kerry Franklin.

The co-operation of civil authorities and the media enabled HMAS MELBOURNE to sail for Darwin with more than 70 per cent of her ship's company onboard. But some had their moments before reaching their destination.

POSN Combes-Pearce arrived at Taree Railway Station with no money and no train to catch.

Police and rail authorities organised travel warrants and brought the Brisbane Limited Express to an unscheduled stop to get him to Sydney on time.

ABROEW John Campbell's honeymoon came to an abrupt stop on Xmas night when he heard the recall to join HMAS MELBOURNE.

John (20 on Jan. 2) married WRAN Caroline Boehm at Scots Church in Adelaide on Dec. 21, 1974, and had just completed Xmas dinner when notified of the recall. Six hours later he was on a flight to Sydney.

DARWIN SNIPPETS

LCOX W. Peterson made good time from Minlaton 240 km from Adelaide. Leaving home at 0330 he was onboard by 1030.

One of the longest return trips was made by LEUT Jim Stapleton who was recalled from Perth. His TAA flight was diverted to Adelaide to load about 70 sailors at 0425. Among them was CPOMTL Geoff Lenihan.

LSSIG Sturtevant was on posting to HMAS CERBERUS (West-ernport Bay). Both his removal and posting were advanced as his wife is expecting a child in January and he had moved into a house in Hastings. He only learnt of the recall at 0930 on Boxing Day but was back onboard by 1330.

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MAYOR'S TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN

"Darwin will never be able to repay what Eric Johnston and his Naval compatriots have done for our city. We owe them everything."

This tribute came from the Mayor of Darwin. Harry "Tiger" Brennan and he was referring to Captain E. E. Johnston, OBE, RAN (pictured). Naval Officer Commanding North Australia, who moved onto the Town Disaster Committee as Port Controller after the cyclone struck.

I first met Captain Johnston on the Sunday night after the cyclone struck.

He was tired — I doubt if he'd slept more than a few hours since that terrible Christmas "present" to the people of Darwin, struck on Christmas Eve.

I sat down in the sweltering heat of a Darwin evening, opposite him in his official residence overlooking Darwin Harbour.

He's the sort of man that one feels one should say 'sir' to even in his underpants. Captain Johnston kept the Navy in Darwin going in those first terrible, unco-ordinated days after the cyclone.

He had his own troubles . . . but he also took on the town's as well.

The Mayor of Darwin.

'Tiger' Brennan sorted me out to tell me what he thought of his friend, Eric Johnston.

"When Eric plants those two feet of his firmly on the floor . . . not even I can change his mind. What that man decides, happens.

"Darwin will never be able to repay what Eric and his Naval compatriots have done for our city. We owe them everything", he said.

Captain Johnston left his wife, Joan, at about eight o'clock on Christmas Eve.

He felt — like a number of others — that this cyclone couldn't possibly miss Darwin, and that if it hit, it would probably give the place a big shake-up.

Not even he, however, was prepared for the total devastation that Tracy brought with her.

"I went to Naval Headquarters just after eight o'clock." Captain Johnston told me. "I went with Lieutenant Sam Burrell, my command officers and two watchkeepers manning the telephones.

"In this way, I kept in

constant touch with the Patrol Boats — now at their cyclone moorings — and Canberra.

"I also ordered that all married personnel should return to look after their families."

What he didn't mention, but his wife did, was that although Captain Johnston left his wife at home, with their son to look after her, he kept ringing frequently. Worried, but duty came first.

"At about midnight," the Captain went on, "we lost all communication. The rain was so heavy that we couldn't see the Patrol Boats, although in normal conditions, they can be seen clearly.

"Just after midnight the roof started to go at the southern end.

"So we left the Ops. room and moved to my office at the other end of the building.

"Then that started to disintegrate before our very eyes.

"The others got under the tables — I stood in the doorway. Then the wall came down."

It was four o'clock. The time at which the eye was passing directly over

From John HERBERT

COONAWARRA, about nine miles away. Still, they stayed at their post. And they didn't consider doing so. There was nowhere to go anyway.

"We then moved into the cells. We remained there until just after six o'clock when the cyclone moved on.

"We moved out of the cells, and couldn't believe our eyes. Headquarters was totally devastated.

"Some people arrived. I recognised them . . . they were the crew of HMAS ARROW. They told me what had happened, and I was horrified.

"Some of them walked from the wharf where the boat had sunk, others came by car. We immediately organised search parties and sent the injured to hospital."

Captain Johnston doesn't remember very clearly the next day or so. So much happened, so quickly. The rest of Christmas Day was spent finding out what had happened and searching for survivors and casualties.

Captain Johnston was an organisational wizard



. . . he seemed to think of everything. Orders went out like computer tape.

He established a temporary Headquarters at the RAAF Base and on Boxing Day, moved onto the Town Disaster Committee as Port Controller.

He now not only had his own people to worry about, but the civilians of Darwin as well.

"The first things to do were to start a disaster routine and set up a proper chain of command.

"The situation was so bad that it seemed to me that only proper discipline could save us all.

"The people of Darwin responded magnificently.

"The next thing was to get everyone under cover and find out what everyone needed most."

I asked Captain Johnston how he felt when he heard the Fleet was coming.

"What do you think," he said . . . and grinned broadly. That's the sort of man he is.

He very quickly had the services of several officers from the South, Commander T. A. Dadsell arrived with Lieutenant Commander T. Jones, and Commander Fletcher.

They joined NOCNA's staff at the RAAF and began the seemingly impossible task of planning the relief operation from the Darwin End.

Captain Johnston, needless to say, had been doing it since about six o'clock on Christmas morning.

"I had to come back, I'm in the Navy and there's a job to be done". The words of Able Seaman Stevenson, who found his family dead while carrying out rescue duties after the cyclone hit.

An Able Seaman worked frantically on Xmas Day at the battered Naval Radio Station at Darwin unaware that cyclone 'Tracy' had claimed the lives of his wife and two children.

AB Geoffrey Stevenson, 26, returned home to find his family crushed to death under a double bed.

He was on rescue duty from 0030 to 07.30 Xmas Day at the height of the cyclone.

"My own house was completely demolished, trapping my wife and children," he said later.

He immediately flew to Sydney to break the news to his wife's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wheatley at suburban Newtown, that their daughter Cherry, 22, and grandchildren Kenneth, 4 years, and six-months-old Kylie, were all dead.

He then rushed to KUTTABUL to assist in relief work among Darwin evacuees before departing for his parents' Adelaide home.

At Cyclone Tracy moved towards Darwin, that fateful Christmas Eve, Able Seaman Stevenson was manning the PABX at HMAS COONAWARRA.

When he finished there, he went to the COONAWARRA Ad-

ministration Block where things were being controlled.

Like everyone else in COONAWARRA that night he wanted to help.

During the afternoon he had rung his wife several times to warn her about the Cyclone.

"Now", he said, "as things got worse, I almost rang her again. But it was getting late and I felt sure she would be in bed".

In the early hours of Christmas Morning, with the cyclone only three hours away, Able Seaman Stevenson volunteered to go with the Officer of the Day, Lieutenant McIntyre to help evacuate people in a house which had lost its roof.

The house was Number 26. They got the Navy truck to Number 24, but could go no further because of power lines across the road.

AB Stevenson got out of the truck — the wind was increasing in intensity all the time — and picked his way through the debris and flying corrugated

From John Herbert in Darwin

iron towards Number 26. All around him was devastation.

The end wall of the house had been torn away, the roof of another was lying in the back yard.

The back door was locked. He clambered round to the front. The wind was by now so strong that it was almost impossible to open the door.

He managed, and found inside the whole family huddled in the lounge. The bedrooms were so much rubble.

After the family were safe in the van, AB Stevenson noticed a light flashing from another house, he suggested he investigate while Lieutenant McIntyre drive the family back to the base and return for him.

There were three families in the house. They wanted to stay

where they were. "But there are two women in the house across the street", one of them told him, the women were huddled in the bathroom, terrified.

He half-dragged, half-carried them across the road to the house where the other three families were sheltering.

Back in the street it was almost impossible to move, the wind was so strong. Debris was flying everywhere.

The only way to move was on all fours using the front fences of the houses for protection. On he went checking houses as he went.

In house Number 3, he found a woman alone. She too wanted to join the other families. She didn't have a raincoat, so he lent her his.

It was now sheer madness to

be outside. The cyclone was reaching its peak.

But, AB Stevenson went out again, not long after he and Lieutenant McIntyre had returned to COONAWARRA. This time to help a shipmate bring back his wife and baby.

On the way they stopped to pick up the wife of a friend who was also on duty and could not get home. Four times they had to stop the vehicle and just sit there. "We thought the wind was going to blow us over", they told me. "Anyway we were just too scared to move".

Later back at the base, the women and children safe, came the lull. The eye of the cyclone passed directly over HMAS COONAWARRA. For about 20 minutes there was a deathly calm.

The Executive Officer, Lieutenant Frank Densten was a tower of organisational and emotional strength for everyone at COONAWARRA that night.

It was decided to take advantage of stillness and move everyone to the Amenities Block which still held. Able Stevenson helped.

He took the Base bus out onto the streets to bring back any people on the Naval Housing Estate who no longer wanted to stay in their houses.

He still had no idea of how his wife and two children were faring in their house in the northern suburbs of Darwin.

The only way to find out was to go and see. Lieutenant Densten told him to go home although his duty had another two hours to run.

It took him an hour for a journey which normally took about a quarter of that time.

As he drove through the total devastation of the northern suburbs, he knew his house must have been destroyed. Everything else was. He got within 200 yards of where his house had stood.

The road was completely impassable. He made an initial check of the wreckage but to his relief he found nothing.

He began to worry again, back to the house and a systematic search of the wreckage.

It took four dreadful hours that search, before he reached the main bedroom.

His wife and two children had obviously been sheltering under the double bed. The bed had collapsed and crushed them.

AB Stevenson finds it difficult to remember what happened after that for the next few hours, there were too many arrangements to be made.

On Boxing Day Able Seaman Stevenson flew south on a RAAF Hercules. In Sydney he turned to yet again. The Shore Establishment HMAS KUTTABUL was preparing for an influx of evacuees. Able Seaman Stevenson helped.

Then a flight to Adelaide, during which he realised he wanted to get back to Darwin.

Thirty hours after leaving Darwin, Able Seaman Stevenson returned.

It was Saturday, December 28. "I had to come back", he said. "I'm in the Navy and there's a job to be done".



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THE NAVY'S HELP OUTSIDE DARWIN

NAVY personnel outside Darwin toiled tirelessly in the task of helping the thousands of dazed and shocked evacuees as they arrived in the various capital cities.

In Sydney, NAVY transport took many from Mascot Airport to the shore establishment HMAS KUTTABUL, one of the three special relief centres set up to handle the evacuees.

Officers, sailors and WRANS worked around the clock arranging bathing facilities, temporary beds and food for the young mothers and children while NAVY social and welfare officers took particulars from the evacuees.

Many of them, without the help of their husbands who were still in Darwin, did not know where to turn.

Those unable to contact relatives or friends in Sydney or other centres, were transferred to HMAS PENGUIN and some to HMAS WATSON.

For others, it was back to the airport or railway stations for onward journey to new homes and a new life.

All were loud in their praise of the kindness and treatment from personnel in those hours of doubt they spent at KUTTABUL after the sleepless, nine-hour flight from Darwin.

Those at KUTTABUL will never forget the looks on the faces of these mere slips of

girls, struggling under the weight of young children and suitcases holding all their remaining possessions.

The cabins on KUTTABUL's fifth floor were a pitiful sight.

In one cabin, a young mother sat motionless on a small divan in the corner of the room.

Her small five-weeks-old baby was asleep at her side. She had not touched the hot lunch brought to her.

The scene was a familiar one elsewhere on the fifth floor.

Others without small families ventured downstairs to the cafeteria.

They were still in a state of shock and preferred not to speak of their horrifying experiences.

Rarely has the cafeteria held so many in eerie silence.

As news leaked to Sydney of the loss of loved ones, fellow evacuees gathered around their stricken members.

In most cases they had not met before joining the aircraft in Darwin or coming to KUTTABUL.

Young WRANS helped mothers bathe babies in make-



EXODUS FROM DARWIN: Homeless Territorian families await their departures "south" and for most, to places and faces unknown. This was a familiar scene at Darwin Airport during the mass evacuation of women and children from the devastated city.

shift baths while sailors went in search of strained meat, vegetables and sweets at nearby shops.

Donors and the Smith Family brought in coats, fresh clothing and necessities, even cash.

In Brisbane, "Operation NAVY Help Darwin" activated HMAS MORETON quite suddenly on Xmas Day.

The ships companies of BALIKPAPAN, BETANO, BRUNEI and TARAKAN were recalled from leave during the evening of 25th December and crews for all four vessels were assembled by 0800 the following day.

BALIKPAPAN and BETANO

were sailed on December 26 to embark cargo at Townsville and Cairns.

This cargo consisted of vehicles and equipment from the State Electricity Commission and HMAS CAIRNS.

The crews of BRUNEI and TARAKAN were stood down during the evening of December 26 and reported to their ships the following morning.

They sailed for Townsville that afternoon and awaited their cargo of Bailey bridging equipment.

WEWAK was put on standby in Brisbane on December 27 and finally sailed for Townsville, loaded with roofing iron, to join

TARAKAN and BRUNEI to sail in company for Darwin.

During the initial days of "Operation NAVY Help Darwin", many volunteer personnel turned out at HMAS MORETON.

These people, together with HMAS MORETON'S staff, despatched some 220 sailors recalled to their ships as well as acquiring supplies of essential stores for transport to Darwin.

Some 50 Naval evacuees passed through HMAS MORETON during this period including three medivacs.

As a result of this disaster, HMAS MORETON has received three WRANS in its complement — until D.G.M. finds out!

"BOOBY DAZZLERS" WERE TOP PRIORITY

Every operation has its lighter moments — as the NAVY'S Darwin liaison team at Townsville will tell you.

A lad arrived with a parcel of two Berlei bras for a WRAN in Darwin who had lost her clothing.

These items of female apparel, trade-named "Booby Dazzlers", were considered by the donor to be "top priority". To 'cup' it all — they were in fact, uplifted!

"Rooms exploded around us . . ."



POWRAN Pat Nuss, who returned to Sydney from Darwin last May, comforts Darwin evacuee and friend from those days, Helene Jones and 17-months-old son Peter at KUTTABUL.

The Darwin evacuation led to a chance reunion at HMAS KUTTABUL between POWRAN Pat Nuss and a fellow Darwin pipe-band member.

Pat, who had returned last May after two years service in Darwin, was helping out with relief work at the Sydney shore establishment.

Included in the Darwin evacuees was a friend from those days, Helene Jones and 17-months-old son Peter.

Helene and her husband Flight-Lieutenant Richard Jones had been scheduled to leave Darwin in the New Year to take up a position in Richmond (NSW).

Helene obviously welcomed Pat's comforting as both spoke of their days in Darwin — and the

happy times when both were in the local pipe-band.

Helene was among the more composed of the evacuees.

As she waited for transport back to Sydney airport for a flight to her parents' Broken Hill home, she told of her own experiences when cyclone "Tracy" struck.

As the warning red alert sounded, Helene grabbed up young Peter and rushed to the home of a nearby neighbour, who was also alone with three children.

As the 'eye' neared, I rushed into a bedroom and picked up Peter from a cot.

"My neighbour said 'let's go into one of the bedrooms'.

"I said 'no, into the bathroom . . . I was adamant'.

"Minutes later the roof was ripped from the house.

"Water poured in on us as we stood in the bathroom.

"It was cold and I held Peter close to me.

"I feared for our lives as the rooms exploded around us.

"Finally it passed and it seemed like hours before we were rescued."

Helen said that ironically a check later on Christmas Day had shown that her own home had been left untouched by the cyclone.

Husband Richard, who was away from home on duty when "Tracy" struck, helped with clearing up before rejoining Helene.

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The Darwin and Hobart disasters climaxed a big and busy year for members of the RAN's Clearance Diving Team Number One, pictured The team comprises from left to right: TOP ROW: LSMED (UM) Millen, LSCD Miller, ABCD Leonard, ABCD Collins, ABCD Samway, ABCD Gately (DARWIN), LSCD Cocks, ABCD Kelly (DARWIN), LSCD Bascombe (DARWIN), POCD Asher. CENTRE: LSCD Large, ABCD Gourlay (DARWIN), LSCD Cowmeadow, LSCD Steer (DARWIN), LSCD Creedon (DARWIN), ABCD Gray (DARWIN), LSCD Ey, LSCD Digney (DARWIN). FRONT ROW: POCD Barnes, POCD Reynolds (HOBART), CPOCD Rasmussen, LEUT Rashleigh (XO), LEUT Ramsden (CO) (DARWIN), CPOCD Narramore (DARWIN), POCD Cook (HOBART), POCD Mitchell (DARWIN). INSERTS: POCD Henry, ABCD Burgess, ABCD Lucas, ABCD Anderson.

Sunken Patrol Boat salvaged by RAN divers

The ingenuity of the RAN's Clearance Diving Team Number One led to the salvage of the Patrol Boat, HMAS ARROW, which sank after hitting Darwin's Stokes Hill Wharf during cyclone Tracy on Christmas Day.

The diver's success came after 20 days of hazardous work and an early setback when a cable attached to the ARROW snapped.

ARROW was finally raised from the harbour floor, dragged underwater away from the wharf and beached nearby to allow an inspection and repairs to be carried out.

They spent 12 days fixing hawsers to strong points on the sunken vessel.

They had to swim through the twisted wreckage trailing the hawsers behind them.

They then connected the other ends of the hawsers to two pontoons moored forward and aft of ARROW'S position.

The big day was Saturday, January 11, and as the tide rose so did the pontoons.

They acted like giant floating cranes to lift ARROW off the mud.

This part of the operation was a complete success and ARROW floated about 11 feet above the bottom, but still submerged.

The next part of the operation was the difficult one — to pull the wreck away from the wharf into shallow water to beach it.

Everything was going well . . . but suddenly a cable parted on the bow pontoon.

The bow of ARROW sank back into the mud.

But the tug and a civilian trawler pulled the other pontoon . . . and ARROW began to move.

The divers then relashed the ARROW'S bow to the other pontoon and, on Monday, January 13, succeeded in their goal and beached the patrol boat the following day.

Interested observers at the salvage operations were the Naval Officer Commanding North Australia, CAPT Eric Johnston, and the Fleet Commander, RADM D. C. Wells.

The divers' first task in the ARROW salvage had been to find a pontoon.

The only one available had been beached and it first had to be salvaged before the ARROW work could commence.

In attaching strong points of the ARROW to the pontoons, the divers actually had to go down inside the sunken vessel and pull the wires through the scuttles.

As the OIC of the team, LEUT Dave Ramsden said: "It was not the easiest diving."

"The water was very murky and there were jagged pieces of metal everywhere."

In a preliminary lift on January 7, to see what would happen, the divers secured lines to the pontoon at low tide.

As the tide rose, so did the pontoon.

ARROW, attached to the pontoon, also moved a few feet — proving the divers' theory correct.

"All we had to do now was consolidate this and lift her off," said LEUT Ramsden.

The divers then set about re-arranging the lines to the ARROW'S stern to give a better lift and brought in a second pontoon at the bows.

Partial success came on January 11. ARROW was hauled up on January 13 and finally beached on January 14.

The clearance divers had succeeded — again.

It was just one of the many important tasks they had undertaken after arriving on Boxing Day on only the second plane into Darwin following Tracy.

On Boxing Day everything was just as it had been during the cyclone.

Two patrol boats, ASSAIL and ADVANCE, were alongside Stokes Hill Wharf.

The divers went down into the murky black, debris-covered water to inspect the Patrol Boat hulls for damage.

They found both boats had propeller and shaft problems. But both were operational, although ADVANCE had only one propeller.

Their next task: FIND ARROW.

They found it wedged firmly beneath the pylons on the outer corner of Stokes Hill Wharf.

The fourth patrol boat, AT-TACK, had been driven up on the foreshore during the cyclone.

There were two holes visible in the hull but they were patched up sufficiently for the Patrol Boat to be refloated.

She was refloated that day but immediately developed a severe leak.

So down the divers went again.

They discovered a third hole.

The clearance divers worked fairly much to the same daily pattern although as LEUT Ramsden said — "I didn't realise it until I looked at the log."

Every day their main tasks seemed to be to give assistance to vessels which had survived the cyclone, to locate wrecks in the hope of finding missing bodies, and clearing the wharf faces so ships could come alongside.

They also worked on general harbour duties, such as checking fuel valves and removing pieces of metal from the wharves and water.

LEUT Ramsden's notes for December 29 say: "Diving conditions bad — black as pitch under fifteen feet, much jagged metal — no place for divers."

But they kept on, day after day, diving, diving and still more diving.

Their day never shorter than 12 hours. Their job — dangerous, and highly important.

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Navy's new Communication Station at Shoal Bay will prevent any future interruptions to our communications

For one day after Cyclone Tracy, the Naval Communication Station HMAS COONAWARRA, was off the air. This will probably never happen again!

A few miles down the Stuart Highway from COONAWARRA, is the newest of the Australian Communications Stations — SHOAL BAY.

It was due to be completed by the middle of this year. Now of course, that may be later because it will probably have to wait its turn in the general rebuilding programme in Darwin.

But despite the fact that Shoal Bay was still being built, it was very quickly brought into action after the cyclone.

Operators were sent from COONAWARRA and the Navy was back in the communications business.

The Shoal Bay buildings suffered practically no damage.

As Commander S. Hall, Commanding Officer of HMAS COONAWARRA says, "If Cyclone Tracy's sister strikes tomorrow, our communications will not be interrupted."

COONAWARRA and Shoal Bay form one of the two major communication stations in Australia. The other is in Canberra at HMAS HARMAN.

Although each station has a separate function, they do complement each other.

Each has a 'casualty' plan so that if one station loses some or all of its services, the other station will automatically take over.

This in fact was what happened with Cyclone Tracy.

Commander Hall explains, "When the wind got really bad, we warned Canberra that the transmitting station at COONAWARRA was experiencing problems because of the cyclone and could shut down at short notice".

Both the existing stations at

HARMAN and COONAWARRA were built just before World War II.

They are still capable of a number of activities but their principal function is to radiate a multi-frequency broadcast to ships in the Australian Naval area and keep a listening watch on a number of radio frequencies known as ship-shore, to receive messages from ships at sea.

These services operate around the clock.

Commander Hall explains: "Say for example, the Naval Officer Commanding North Australia has a message to send to one of his Patrol Boats at sea off the North Australian Coast.

"It is sent to COONAWARRA and transmitted by radio to the ship.

"If HMAS ADVANCE, on patrol duty in the Gulf of Carpentaria, wants to send a report to NOCNA, it comes by radio to COONAWARRA.

"If say, the Naval Officer Commanding the Queensland area wants to send a signal to HMAS YARRA in the Tasman sea, and HMAS MORESBY in the Indian Ocean, the message would be relayed to the station, which the ships were reading and their replies would be passed in on ship-shore, probably from YARRA via Canberra and from MORESBY via Darwin."

In addition, both stations operate radio broadcasts which can be read by any ship at sea in Australian waters.



The new Naval Communication Station at Shoal Bay — though incomplete — went into makeshift operation when the cyclone put COONAWARRA temporarily "off the air".

Both stations accept messages by radio from naval ships.

Ship-to-shore communications are often a problem because it is necessary to use radio frequencies which are often severely affected by ionospheric conditions caused by solar flares or sunspots.

dependent of the Post Office and the usual telephone land-lines.

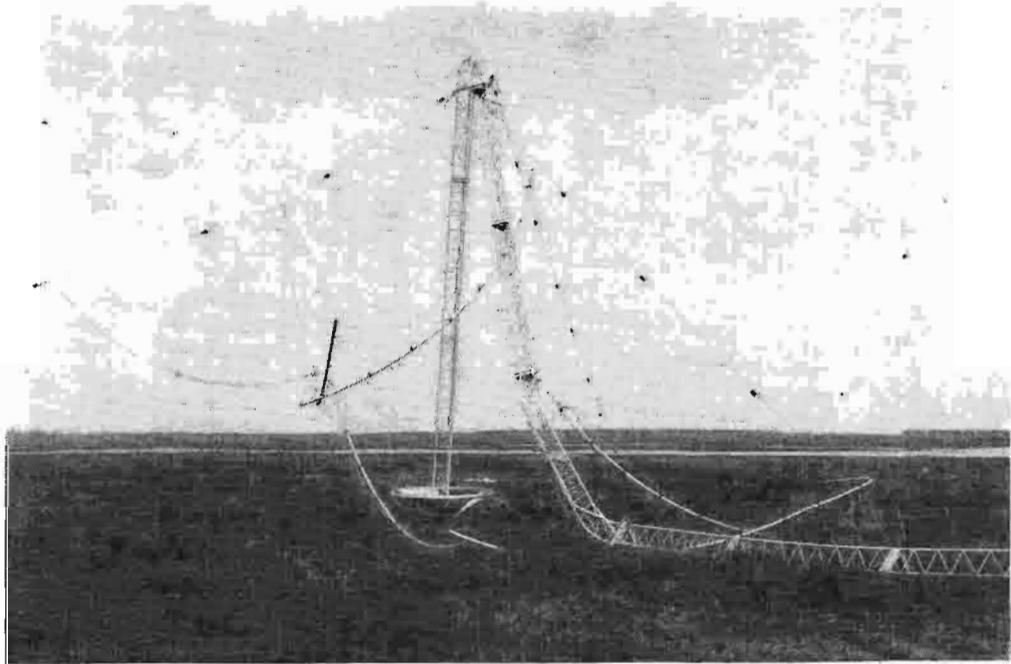
The station also has its own water, power and sewerage. The power plant is made up of

heavy diesel motors capable of supplying all the power needed on the station.

Inside, the station is completely air-conditioned and air-

conditioning is not a luxury in hot, humid Darwin.

Personnel on the station have modern comfortable lounges and mess halls to relax and eat in.



SHOAL BAY suffered only slight damage to this aerial (pictured), the surrounding wire fence and water storage tanks.

To overcome these problems, each station listens for ships on a wide range of radio frequencies.

What can be heard in Darwin may not necessarily be heard in Canberra.

Visiting ships of visiting navies can use Australian Naval communications. And they usually do.

As Commander Hall says, "By allowing others to use our service, we obtain reciprocal rights which enable us to have valuable world-wide communications with our ships".

Shoal Bay was built to withstand more than cyclones. And it was almost untouched by Tracy. Older buildings on the base were completely destroyed.

The Station is totally self-contained. It has its own microwave to link it with the main base at COONAWARRA.

This makes it completely in-

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THE POWERS OF THE DEFENCE FORCE OMBUDSMAN-DESIGNATE

On January 2, 1975, the Minister for Defence appointed Mr. D. O. Hay, CBE, DSO, as Defence Force Ombudsman (DFO)-Designate.

In this appointment Mr. Hay will have interim powers to deal with complaints in much the same way as the DFO Act will provide when it becomes law.

All members on continuous or part-time service, ex-members, and eligible dependants of ex-members of the Defence Force will be able to refer matters to the DFO which they believe infringe the rights they have accrued because of their service with the Defence Force.

Mr. Hay has the power, in varying degrees, to investigate any complaint except:

- (a.) Where, in his opinion:
 - (1) it had existed prior to 1 January, 1974.
 - (2) the complainant is not serious about, or has insufficient interest in, the subject; or
 - (3) the circumstances giving rise to the complaint have been overtaken by events.

(b.) Where rights of appeal exist in matters such as discipline, DFRDB and repatriation, unless it would be unreasonable to insist that those rights be exercised; or

(c.) In the case of serving members, when reasonable attempts have not been made to correct a complaint through Service channels.

Before making representations to the DFO all serving members are required to refer their grievance, in writing as a formal complaint, to their Commanding Officers.

If, as a result, a member is not satisfied with the corrective action taken by Service authorities or if, after 28 days have elapsed, advice of action taken has not been received, the matter may be referred to the DFO.

Throughout the period of 28 days, the complaint will be referred to the authorities capable of correcting it, and to all more senior headquarters, including the Service Board if necessary.

Each level of headquarters will advise the member, in writing, of the progress of his, or her complaint according to current procedures.

The 28 day period of grace is intended to give each Service sufficient time, where appro-

priate, to correct a matter, thus leaving the DFO free to concentrate on the most complicated issues.

It may not always be possible to finalise a matter in 28 days but members can expect to receive an explanation for delays if they occur.

Occasions may arise where a serving member could satisfy the DFO that to wait for the 28 day period to elapse, or even to attempt to use the Service system at all, would further aggravate the circumstances giving rise to the complaint.

Such cases need not automatically be rejected by the DFO but the grounds for such action must be convincing.

The ultimate decision on whether or not to accept a complaint which has not first been considered by a member's Service rests with the DFO.

Appointment of the DFO does not alter existing arrangements concerning ministerial representations through Members of Parliament, but as the DFO is necessarily limited in his powers to examine complaints already considered by the Minister, members are encouraged to use the DFO system.

If a complainant is unable to formulate a personal submission to the DFO through physical or mental incapacity, he or she may be represented by a next-of-kin, or by a bona fide third party.

Once a matter is accepted for inquiry, the DFO will conduct an independent and private investigation and will determine whether or not the substance of the complaint warrants some form of corrective action.

If such action is required, the DFO will refer the matter to the Minister and to the relevant area of the Defence Department where the required action can be taken.

In due course the person making the complaint will be advised of the findings of the DFO and the nature of the action taken, if warranted, to correct the matter.

The DFO could find the grounds for the complaint unfounded, in which case the complainant will be advised and the matter closed.

If personal files relating to a complainant need to be examined by the DFO in his investigation of a complaint, the confidentiality of these personal documents must be protected and the content of these files will not be released by the DFO to complainants or to any other party.

No disciplinary action can be taken against members who seek to correct a grievance through the DFO.

While these interim arrangements operate, Army and Air

Force Officers will continue to have the right to refer a grievance to the Governor-General-in-Council.

If this right is exercised the DFO will have no jurisdiction to review a decision of the Governor-General.

The address to which correspondence should be sent is:

Mr. D. O. Hay, CBE, DSO
Defence Force Ombudsman,
Qantas House,
197 London Circuit,
CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600.
The telephone number is Canberra 475033.

SENIOR OFFICERS' APPOINTMENTS

o REAR ADMIRAL A. G. McFARLANE, at present Chief of Naval Supply and Works, is to be Chief of Naval Personnel from January 28 next year.

o COMMODORE N. E. McDONALD, Director General of Operations and Plans, will be promoted Rear Admiral on February 11 next year and become Flag Officer Commanding East Australia Area on February 12.

REAR ADMIRAL McFARLANE, 55, of Deakin, A.C.T., a Supply and Secretariat Specialist, transferred to the Permanent Naval Forces in 1947 after war service with the RANR and has been Fleet Supply Officer, Fourth Naval Member of the Naval Board and Chief of Supply and Director General of Manpower. From 1971-1973 he was Australian Naval Attache at the Australian Embassy in Washington.

COMMODORE McDONALD, 52, of Campbell, A.C.T., entered the RAN as a cadet midshipman in 1936. His sea postings since war service have included HMA Ships SYDNEY and VOYAGER; and as Commanding Officer in HMA Ships QUEENBOROUGH; SUPPLY, VAMPIRE and MELBOURNE. Shore postings have included Australian Naval Attache, Djakarta, Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel, and Chief of Staff to the Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet.

He takes over as Flag Officer Commanding East Australia Area from Rear Admiral W. J. Dovers, who is retiring.

PROMOTIONS

OFFICERS'

Six Permanent Naval Force Officers, including one female officer, have been selected for promotion to the rank of Captain to date 30 June, 1975.

Another 14 officers have been selected for promotion to the rank of Commander on that date.

In addition 10 Reserve officers have also been promoted to date 31 December, 1974.

GENERAL LIST SEAMAN BRANCH COMMANDER TO CAPTAIN

J. A. Matthew MBE (HMAS HARMAN-DEFENCE)
I. B. James (HMAS HARMAN-NAVY OFFICE)
T. A. Dadswell (HMAS HARMAN-DEFENCE)

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TO COMMANDER

R. V. Morritt (HMAS PENGUIN)
P. M. S. Paffard (Fleet HQ)
L. M. Sulman (HMAS HARMAN-NAVY OFFICE)
G. R. Lamperd (HMAS KUTTABUL)
P. A. Ross (HMAS TORRENS)
H. J. Donohue (HMAS CARPENTARIA)
K. A. Doolan (HMAS WARATAH)
D. D. Farthing DSC (HMAS PERTH)

ENGINEERING BRANCH COMMANDER TO CAPTAIN

N. R. B. Berlyn (Acting Captain) (HMAS HARMAN-NAVY OFFICE)

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TO COMMANDER

C. J. Slater (HMAS SWAN)
R. J. Varley (HMAS KUTTABUL)
D. H. Blazey (HMAS MELBOURNE)

SUPPLY AND SECRETARIAT BRANCH COMMANDER TO CAPTAIN

P. A. Wood (HMAS ALBATROSS)

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TO COMMANDER

A. J. Farquhar (HMAS HOBART)
B. G. Haron (HMAS WATSON)

SPECIAL DUTIES ENGINEERING BRANCH

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SDEN TO COMMANDER SDEN

P. J. Clough (HMAS STALWART)

WOMEN'S ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVAL SERVICE CHIEF OFFICER TO CAPTAIN

B. D. MacLeod (HMAS HARMAN-NAVY OFFICE)

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY RESERVE The following promotions date from 31 December.

SEAMAN BRANCH COMMANDER TO CAPTAIN

N. E. Farmer
LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TO COMMANDER

J. K. W. West
LIEUTENANT TO LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER

R. J. Prindville
A. R. L. Lindsey

ENGINEERING BRANCH LIEUTENANT TO LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER

N. F. Meaden

MEDICAL BRANCH LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TO COMMANDER

A. C. Kingsbury R. D. Upton R. J. Knight

SPECIAL BRANCH LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TO COMMANDER

G. H. Lovell
LIEUTENANT TO LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER

P. J. Sheedy

"NAVY NEWS" SUBSCRIPTION AND ADVERTISING RATES INCREASED

Substantial increases in production and postage costs have brought about regrettable increases in subscription and advertising rates of "Navy News".

The increases, the first in five years, apply from January 1, 1975.

The annual home posting subscription rate has increased from \$5 to \$8 - the first rise since 1970.

The new 'casual' advertising rate has been increased by .20 cents to \$1.30 per single column centimetre (minimum 3 cm).

New 'casual' display ads are as follows:-

Full page \$312; Half page \$156; Quarter page \$78.

The new 'contract' rates (space at will) are:

150 cm \$1.20; 300 cm \$1.15; 600 cm \$1.10; 1300 cm \$1.05; 2500 cm \$1.00 (or greater).

SAILORS

The undermentioned Sailors/Naval Police/Wrans have been promoted from the dates indicated.

Petty Officer Academic Instructor: Evans, D. R. (10 Jan. '74).

Leading Seaman Writer: Kolder, A. J. (6 Sep. '74); Wright, E. J. (6 Sep. '74).

Petty Officer Stores Victualling: Cutabert, D. M. (4 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Stores Victualling: Williams, A. G. C. (4 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Cook: Salmon, K. S. (4 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Cook: Cleg-horn, P. L. (18 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Medical: Dine, P. J. (6 Sep. '74); Dix, G. W. (6 Sep. '74).

Warrant Officer Marine Technical Propulsion: Moten, M. D. (1 Nov. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Marine Technical Hull: Matthews, T. E. (4 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Marine Technical Propulsion: Brice, M. G. (4 Oct. '74); Cooper, D. A. (4 Oct. '74); Muirson, R. J. (4 Oct. '74).

Petty Officer Marine Technical Propulsion: Donchi, B. L. (18 Oct. '74); Higgins, G. C. (6 Sep. '74).

Leading Seaman Marine Technical Propulsion: Crouch, D. R. (4 Oct. '74); Rodgers, C. A. (4 Oct. '74); Sincock, C. T. (4 Oct. '74); Stokes, J. F. (4 Oct. '74); Tucker, G. R. (4 Oct. '74); Van Derkyl, P. N. (4 Oct. '74).

Warrant Officer Electronic Technical Weapon Systems: Dorward, D. R. (18 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Electronic Technical Weapon Systems: Newell, H. (18 Oct. '74); Stevenson, T. J. (4 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Electronic Technical Weapon Systems: Banaszcyk, E. (4 Oct. '74); Carabott, C. G. P. (4 Oct. '74); Crane, P. M. (4 Oct. '74); Harman, G. R. (4 Oct. '74); Marsh, G. J. (4 Oct. '74); Normandale, P. (4 Oct. '74); Parker, D. J. (4 Oct. '74); Peel, A. I. (4 Oct. '74); Trimble, T. J. (4 Oct. '74); Wilson, D. L. (4 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Electronic Technical Weapons: Luke, L. L. (4 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Electronic Technical Communications: Cunningham, J. (4 Oct. '74); Duffy, D. L. (4 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Marine Technical Power Electrics: Edwards, F. (12 Jul '74); Gunn, G. F. (4 Oct. '74).

Warrant Officer Coxswain: Harper, D. V. (18 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Quartermaster Gunner: Donald, G. A. (18 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Quartermaster Gunner: Baker, D. T. (6 Sep. '74); Barker, A. E. (6 Sep. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Weapon Mechanic: Claypole, J. B. (18 Oct. '74).

Petty Officer Weapon Mechanic: Haines, R. F. (4 Oct. '74); Veigel, J. (18 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Weapon Mechanic: Deppeler, D. E. (6 Sep. '74); Marczak, J. (18 Oct. '74); Rogers, B. R. (18 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Underwater Control: Stratton, S. A. (4 Oct. '74).

Petty Officer Underwater Control: Short, D. E. (4 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Underwater Control Submarines: McNeill, J. S. C. (6 Sep. '74).

Leading Seaman Underwater Control: Storey, R. E. (6 Sep. '74).

Warrant Officer Radar Plot: Heyhorn, N. C. (1 Nov. '74).

Leading Seaman Radar Plot: Haines, N. E. (6 Sep. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Radio Supervisor Special: Hartfield, B. S. S. (6 Sep. '74).

Petty Officer Radio Supervisor Special: Dowling, P. J. (6 Sep. '74); Gleeson, T. J. (6 Sep. '74).

Leading Seaman Radio Operator Special: Cross, M. K. (6 Sep. '74).

Leading Seaman Radio Operator: Shaw, R. S. (6 Sep. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Air Technical Aircraft: Jones, R. M. (9 Aug. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Marine Technical Propulsion Submarines: Johnson, J. W. (4 Oct. '74); McGinn, J. R. (4 Oct. '74).

Leading Seaman Marine Technical Propulsion Submarines: Jenkins, G. P. (4 Oct. '74); Rollinson, H. F. (4 Oct. '74).

Petty Officer Radio Supervisor Submarines: French, W. R. (18 Oct. '74).

Petty Officer Wran Radio Supervisor General: Hogan, J. E. (3 Oct. '74).

Leading Wran Radio Operator General: Erickson, C. J. (6 Sep. '74).

Leading Wran Radio Operator Teletype: Robson, A. (6 Sep. '74).

Sergeant: Hogan, A. (4 Oct. '74); Longridge, D. (4 Oct. '74); Moore, L. J. (8 Oct. '74); Sykes, G. E. (6 Oct. '74).

Senior Constable: Barker, E. (4 Oct. '74); Derby, L. W. (4 Oct. '74); Gardellini, P. A. (4 Oct. '74); Kalceff, V. (4 Oct. '74); Lilliman, D. (4 Oct. '74); Mark, R. W. (4 Oct. '74); Mathew, R. J. (4 Oct. '74); Shaw, J. E. (4 Oct. '74); Smyrk, R. H. (4 Oct. '74); Summerton, E. L. (4 Oct. '74); Waldron-Lamotte, B. D. (4 Oct. '74).

Chief Petty Officer Weapon Mechanic: Claypole, J. B. (18 Oct. '74).

Petty Officer Weapon Mechanic: Haines, R. F. (4 Oct. '74); Veigel, J. (18 Oct. '74).

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Petty Officer Underwater Control: Short, D. E. (4 Oct. '74).

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Leading Seaman Underwater Control: Storey, R. E. (6 Sep. '74).

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TASMAN BRIDGE DISASTER

Navy divers search for cars, bodies

NAVY Clearance Divers from HMAS PENGUIN and HMAS WATERHEN were rushed by air from Sydney to Hobart to assist police in the Derwent River search below the shattered Tasman Bridge.

The 11,200-tonne bulk carrier LAKE ILLAWARRA sank on January 5 after striking bridge pylons, bringing down three huge spans of concrete weighing up to 400 tons each.

The death toll at the time of going to press was nine which included crew members of the LAKE ILLAWARRA and occupants of cars which toppled from the bridge.

The ship settled in 110-feet of water, parallel to the bridge, and surrounded by jagged concrete slabs.

Officer-in-charge of the RAN Diving Team operations in Hobart, LEUT Alec Donald, described water conditions in the Derwent River as "appalling". Divers faced the hazard of strong river currents, the jagged bridge concrete sections and exposed steel reinforcing.

Visibility was reduced to almost nil with oil spilling into the Derwent River from sunken carrier.

LCDR Bob Sutton, Fleet Mine Countermeasure and Clearance Diving Officer in Sydney, received a call for urgent assistance on January 6, the morning following the bridge collapse.

"A CD team of three officers and 11 sailors were sent from Sydney, arriving Hobart at 0730 that day," he said.

"They carried out preliminary survey work.

"As a result, a further two sailors and extra equipment were sent there.

"They carried out nine dives to see what was there.

"Nothing was found of interest on this first day, Monday.

"The following day, 11 dives were carried out.

"Two cars at the western end of the break in the bridge were located and recovered."

In the days following, team members worked in a hole 30 to 40 metres deep.

Visibility varied from nil to five feet.

Tides were keeping diving down to six hours a day.

"The tide is running at about two knots for the rest of the time," LCDR Sutton said.

The divers found another car on January 8 but stopped operations soon after for the day

after conditions became hazardous.

Strong winds were blowing rubble and sheet iron from the bridge into the river.

LEUT Donald expected the team to be in Hobart for about two weeks, combing a river-bed area of 400 feet by 100 feet.

Because of the depth, divers were able to spend only a half hour each in the water at a time.

He said bridge rubble littered the river bed.

Divers reported that some large pieces of masonry had speared into the river leaving underwater craters 25 feet in depth and up to 15 feet in diameter.

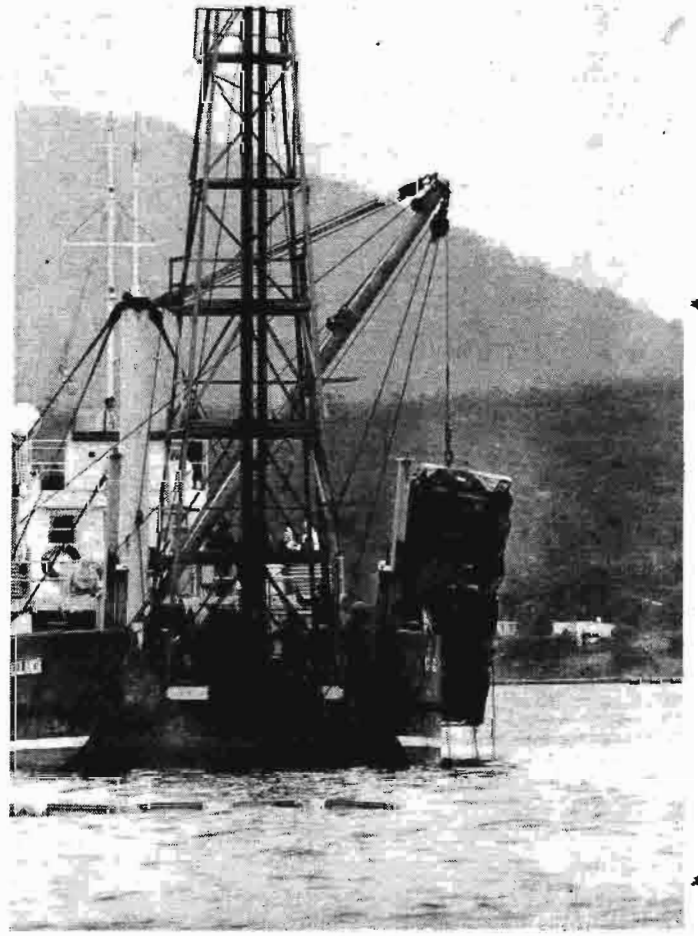


The Tasman Bridge pictured the morning after the mishap.

Pictures courtesy of Hobart "Mercury" and "Sydney Morning Herald".



Members of the RAN's CDT 2 position themselves over sunken car.



The first car found by RANCDT 2 contained two bodies. It is pictured here being lifted out of the murky depths.



Two cars perched over the edge of the Tasman Bridge after an 80-metre span crashed into the River Derwent.

EXCHANGE POSTINGS

Command Personal Services Office, 3rd Floor, Northgate House, 321 Kent Street, Sydney, 2000. Phone: 2901077

PERSONNEL REQUIRING AN EXCHANGE POSTING SHOULD MAKE THE APPLICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH 065F 73 (ACNB NEH 180620Z APR 73).

RANK	NAME	P/NO	PRESENT SHIP	SHIP FORCASTED	SEA/SHORE ROSTER DATE	PREFERENCE
LSQMG	R. J. MCINTOSH	R66440	KUTTABUL	MELBOURNE	SH. JAN 75	ANY OTHER SHIP
ABQMG	C. R. MATTHEWS	R65644	MELBOURNE		SEA JAN 74	ANY MELB. BASED SHIP
ABRP	M. J. HARRISON	R108771	MELVILLE	MELBOURNE	SH. JAN 74	ANY MELB. BASED SHIP
ABRP	M. W. KELLY	R104506	HOBART		SEA OCT 74	SHIP IN REFIT (MELBOURNE)
POCK	J. D. COLLINS	R62004	STALWART	ALBATROSS	SH. DEC 74	ANY SYDNEY ESTABLISHMENT
ABCK	R. J. BADCOCK	R112573	FLINDERS		SEA 09JUL74	SYDNEY BASED SHIP
ABCK	K. L. STOCKALL	R104726	MELBOURNE	ALBATROSS MAR 75	SEA 18JAN73	ANY SYDNEY ESTABLISHMENT
ABCK	W. R. QUINN	R108786	VENDETTA	CERBERUS MAY 75	SEA 02MAY73	ALBATROSS OR SYDNEY AREA
LSCK	A. R. LANSDOWN	R59310	MELBOURNE	CERBERUS APR 75	SEA 25JUN73	ANY SYDNEY ESTABLISHMENT
LSSN	P. J. HILL	R66784	PNGPBF LOMBRUM	ALBATROSS	SH. MAR 72	MELBOURNE AREA
ABWTR	M. R. GEEVES	R109586	CRESWELL		14 OCT 74	MELBOURNE AREA
ABSTD	B. C. MITCHELL	R110378	VENDETTA	CRESWELL	06JAN75	SYDNEY AREA
ABSTD	R. B. OATES	R109633	VENDETTA	CERBERUS MAY 75	SEA 02MAY73	MELBOURNE AREA
ABSTD	R. DAVEY	R112227	VENDETTA	CERBERUS MAY 75	SEA 02MAY73	SYDNEY AREA
LSETC1	K. J. SANDERS	R105335	HARMAN		SH. OCT 74	SYDNEY AREA
LSETS	M. V. LORAM	R104521	CERBERUS	BASILISK	SH. APR 74	ANY DESTROYER ESCORT
ABMTP1	K. P. KESTERS	R106083	DUCHESS		SEA AUG 74	ANY SMALL SHIP
ABMTP1	D. I. MAUNDER	R103980	DUCHESS		SEA AUG 74	ANY SMALL SHIP
LSSIG	A. J. MILLS	R95320	CURLEW	HARMAN	SEA JAN 73	SYDNEY ESTABLISHMENT
ABRO	R. G. WAY	R106283	MORESBY	COONAWARRA	SE. DEC 72	SYDNEY ESTABLISHMENT