

## HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INC

### LONGCAST

11 March 22 – Navy Club Lunch at Remuera  
18 March 22 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Waiheke RSA  
8 April 22 - Navy Club Lunch at Remuera  
15 – 18 April 22 – Easter  
22 April 22 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Henderson RSA  
25 April 22 – ANZAC Day

Hi Folks

#### **NGAPONA ASSN LUNCH**

Our lunch last Friday at the Swanson RSA was most enjoyable. Still probably the best meal we have of all the RSAs that we visit. Numbers were down a bit, but not unexpected. The highlight of the day was the winning of the door-prize by the President (not rigged!).

Our lunch next month is at the Waiheke RSA and is always a great outing.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENT FROM CN**

It is with pleasure I announce the appointment of a new Commanding Officer for HMNZS *Manawanui* from September 2022, Commander Yvonne Gray, RNZN. CDR Gray has had a successful career as a Principal Warfare Officer in both the Royal Navy and Te Taua Moana o Aotearoa, including roles such as Fleet Warfare Officer, Fleet Seamanship and Executive Officer, and Commander Naval Support Training. She is returning to Regular Force service after a period of international travel and active Reserve Force service. The incumbent Commanding Officer, Commander John McQueen, RNZN, is taking over as Commanding Officer HMNZS *Te Kaha* as previously announced.



HMNZS Manawanui

### **THE FALL OF SINGAPORE**

This month marks 80 years since Singapore, a British colony with significant strategic importance, was invaded and subsequently captured by the Empire of Japan. Its loss represented the lowest point of the war in the Far East and was a matter Prime Minister Winston Churchill never really got over.

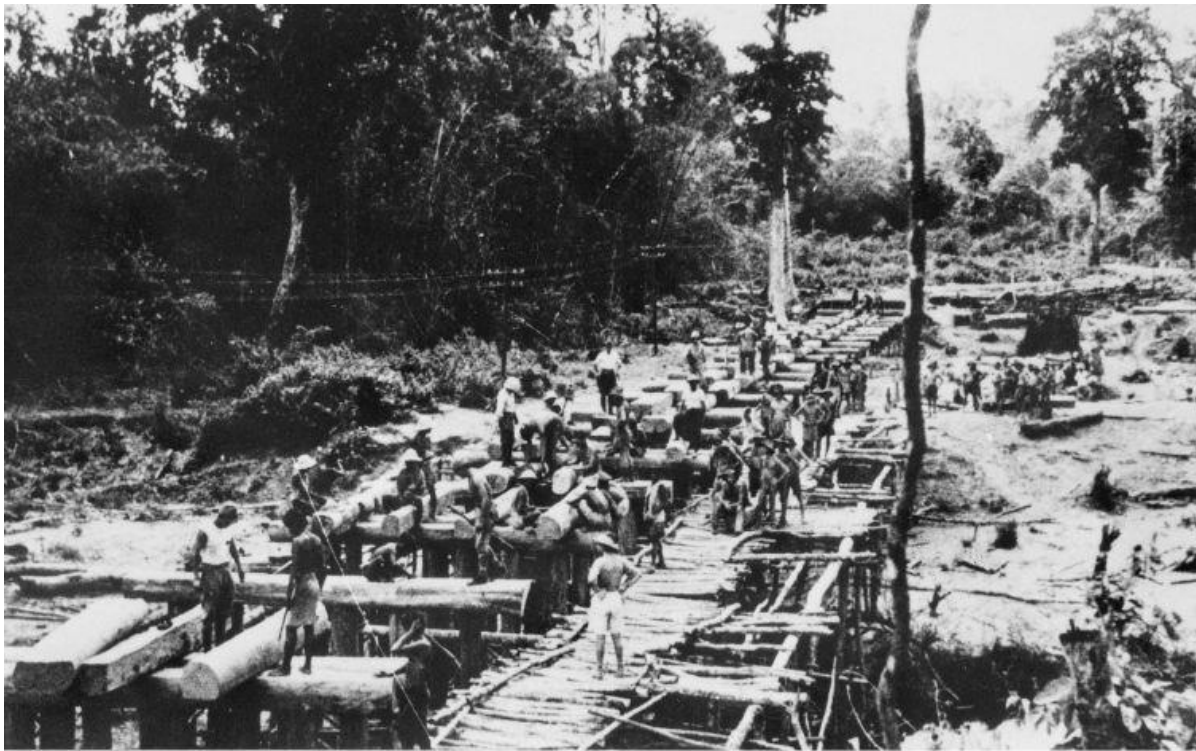
He described the defeat as the "worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history". For the defeated Commonwealth soldiers who had battled to save it, 80,000 of them immediately became prisoners of war.

The loss came about due to various unfavourable circumstances, which partly included the British military being stretched too far defending interests closer to home and the Japanese advancing throughout the Far East with a mighty rage and committed focus.

But another key reason was that of the British underestimating how and from where the Japanese attack on Singapore island would occur.

A wrong assumption was made that the enemy would approach from the south – via the sea. And so, the British fortified and readied heavy weaponry, ultimately facing the wrong direction.

When the Japanese attacked from the north, after a painstakingly arduous journey through the thick jungles of Malaya, much of the island's defences were redundant. The loss of Singapore and subsequent capture of 80,000 men marked the single largest surrender in history. As said by the old Prime Minister himself, it was Britain's "largest capitulation". Both physically and mentally, the scars worn by the survivors of captivity would never heal. 80 years on from the loss of the island, the anniversary is as much about those men and their experiences as prisoners of war as it is the actual fall of Singapore.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00406.035

*Prisoners of war building a bridge on the Burma-Thailand railway*

### **SUEZ CANAL IMPROVEMENT**

Egypt is working to improve the Suez Canal by making an additional 10 kilometres accessible to two-way traffic, while widening and deepening another 30 kilometres, the chairman of the authority managing the waterway said on Tuesday. Suez Canal Authority Chairman Osama Rabie, giving the first news conference on the expansion which began in June, said it would be too expensive to widen the entire length of the waterway linking the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. However, the two-way portion would be lengthened to 85 kilometres (53 miles) from 75 kilometres, he said. Global shipping traffic was disrupted last year when one of the world's largest container ships got stuck in the southern section of the 190-kilometre canal for about a week. Rabie was speaking on a dredger north of Suez, about two kilometres from where the container ship, the Ever Given, got stuck last March. The expansion, which was scheduled to start in January, was accelerated after the crisis, he said. The work aims mainly to increase traffic safety. Once finished, the transit time to pass through the canal will remain at about 11 hours, Rabie said.

### **AUSTRALIAN ACQUISITION FOR BABCOCK**

Babcock to buy remaining 50% stake in Australia's Naval Ship Management Since its establishment in 2012, NSM has evolved as a strategic maritime sustainment partner to Australia. Babcock International Group has signed a sales and purchase agreement to acquire the remaining 50% stake in Australia's Naval Ship Management (NSM) joint venture for \$42.8m (A\$60m). The agreement was signed with its long-term joint venture partner. The deal is subject to customary approvals. In 2012, this JV was formed to maintain the ANZAC-class frigates of the Royal Australian Navy. Since its establishment, the business has become a strategic

maritime sustainment partner by not only supporting the Anzac class under the Warship Asset Management Agreement but also the two Canberra Class Landing Helicopter Docks (LHD) and 12 LHD Landing Craft. NSM currently employs around 300 people. The deal will enable Babcock to boost its support to the Australian Defence Force's maritime capability besides providing further capacity for the existing and future maritime programmes.

## **RUSSIA-UKRAINE AND INDO-PACIFIC CONSEQUENCES**

The drums of war continue to beat in Eastern Europe as Russia flexes its military muscle along its border with Ukraine. A diplomatic resolution seems unlikely at this stage, with NATO powers yet to reach a compromise with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Observers fear a Russian invasion will be just the start of a long, drawn-out conflict, embroiling neighbouring countries and much of the West. The nature of a Western intervention remains unclear, with the US and its European allies keeping their cards close to their chests.

The Biden administration faces a serious strategic dilemma, with a Russia-Ukraine clash threatening to distract from its ambitions in the Indo-Pacific as it looks to counter China's growing influence. According to Ashley Townshend, director, foreign policy and defence at the United States Studies Centre, Washington's allies in the Indo-Pacific will be watching closely. He notes the Biden administration's efforts to reassure partners that it "can walk and chew gum at the same time", exemplified by Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's recent visit to Australia for the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

## **LASER ATTACK ON RAAF P-8A POSEIDON**

Just after midnight last Thursday, a transiting Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA-N) vessel shone a military-grade laser at an Australian air force plane conducting coastal maritime surveillance.

This did not happen in the South China Sea near China's coastline, but rather in the Arafura Sea, within Australia's exclusive economic zone off the north coast of the country. From what can be ascertained, this is the closest an attempt at military intimidation by China has got to the shores.

The Chinese vessel has since steamed through the Torres Strait at the northern tip of Queensland accompanied by another PLA-N ship, heading towards the Coral Sea off the Great Barrier Reef.

China's "reckless" laser attack on the surveillance aircraft was an "act of intimidation", according to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who is calling for an explanation from Beijing.

Defence recently confirmed reports of a laser attack on a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) P-8A Poseidon while in flight over Australia's northern approaches on Thursday, 17 February.

According to intelligence gathered by RAAF personnel, the laser emanated from a Chinese People's Liberation Army – Navy (PLA-N) Luyang Class guided missile destroyer travelling through the Arafura Sea alongside a PLA-N Yuzhao Class amphibious transport dock vessel.

Defence condemned the "unprofessional and unsafe military conduct", warning it could have endangered the lives of the P-8A Poseidon crew.





Luyang Class guided missile destroyer

### **ROGUE WAVE RECORDED**

Researchers have announced that a 17.6 m rogue wave – the most extreme rogue wave ever recorded – has been measured in the waters off of Ucluelet, British Columbia. The rogue wave, which measures as high as a four-story building, was recorded in November 2020 by Victoria, B.C. The giant wave measured almost three times as high as the waves around it. Rogue waves are defined as waves with a height more than double that of other waves occurring around them.



### **CAPT BLYTH R.N.**

#### **The Castaways Pt 1.**

The launch reaches the island of Tofua without mishap and was to remain there for four days.

1 May 1789. The weather was stormy. The men of the launch while searching for food and water came across natives of the island. An altercation arose when the natives demanded a magnifying glass, they had seen the crew members used to light a fire be given to them. Cutlasses at the ready, the crew members retreated to

the launch. However, John Norton was stoned to death while attempting to recover the launch's anchor. The survivors rowed for their lives eventually reaching the open sea. An inventory of the provisions on board showed they had about 150 pounds of bread, twenty-eight gallons of water, twenty pounds of pork, three bottles of wine, five quarts of rum, some coconuts and some breadfruit. As a result, the crew all promised that their daily ration would be one ounce of bread and a quarter of a pint of water per day. After making the launch as seaworthy as possible, Bligh decides his only option is to strike for Timor, about 3600 nautical miles away. So why Timor? Timor was the nearest island with a European settlement at the time.

Timor. The island, has been divided into two regions for centuries and these currently are East Timor and the western part is West Timor part of Indonesia. Australia lies about 500 miles south. Separated by the Timor Sea. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the island was settled by both the Portuguese and the Dutch based in Coupang. The Dutch and Portuguese fought for the island; a treaty being established between the protagonists in 1859 when the island was divided between them. West Timor was known as Dutch Timor until 1949 when it became part of Indonesia, formed from the old Netherlands East Indies. East Timor was known as Portuguese Timor, a colony of Portugal until 1975. East Timor is now known as Timor-Leste. The storm did not abate causing very high seas and with winds at about 30-35 knots. The crew were bailing to keep the craft afloat, with only a heavily reefed sail by which to maintain control of the boat. The weather remained foul until on the 4 May a number of islands began appearing. Bligh believed these were the islands of Fiji. Navigation was proving an issue, as the weather had allowed only for dead reckoning to be employed based on an estimate of the speed of the launch through the water. A crude form of a log was constructed using items found in the launch which then allowed Bligh to make more of a determination of boat speed and therefore distance per hour.

During their travel through the islands of Fiji, Bligh sketched the profile of the islands and approximated their position thus creating the first known chart of the area. They were to become known as Bligh's Islands.

At one stage they were sighted by two sailing canoes which gave chase, the launch was rowed out of perceived danger by the crew.

Much of the sailing until the 14 May was carried out in severe weather. During this time a 10inch high curtain was rigged between the boat's gunwales and the masts to increase the freeboard of the boat. At about 0600, the islands of the New Hebrides were sighted. They had been in the boat for about two weeks with a boat speed of about 4 knots had covered some 1200 nautical miles. But this was carried out in hellish weather conditions and with little food.

To ensure that he did not land in New Guinea, Bligh made the decision to sail on a more southerly course toward New Holland (Australia).

*(to be continued)*



The inhospitable island of Tofua

Regards

**Jerry Payne**

Editor

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