

Another perspective on the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Entry and Review

It was still dark at 0530 on Friday 13th March 2009, but the advanced crew had already mustered on deck to prepare a hearty 'pussers' breakfast for the troops, bacon and eggs with 'train-smash', (made to the traditional recipe of course,) orange juice, toast and copious cups of coffee... important to have a full stomach for the biggest event on their calendar year, the **RAN Fleet Entry into Sydney Harbour**.

By 0600 whilst most of 'the troops' were still in the scran line, all looking very smart in their 'tiddley new uniforms' and chattering excitedly amongst themselves about the events they'd be soon taking part in, the rest of the crew was busily 'dressing ship', bunting from masthead to deck, fwd and aft, life preservers strategically mounted aft, **Australian White Ensign** run up the flagstaff, everything ship-shape and ready to roll...



L-R: Brian 'Charlie' Staples, Col 'Pussasan' Kelson, John 'Ned' Kelly

At 0645 everyone assembled for a short briefing by the XO before heading off to their assigned 'part of ship' to prepare for the RAN Fleet Entry...



Chippy Chris 'SeeJay' O'Keefe and wife Jan ready to come aboard

hold her port-side-on to the line of warships that could already be seen coming through Sydney Heads...

Then it was 'Cast off fwd, cast off aft...' and **The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba'** slipped quietly away from the wharf at RANSA, her sleek black hull making her way through the RANSA Fleet and out into the open waters of Sydney Harbour...

She headed directly across the harbour for Athol Bay, where on arrival, she tucked herself under the shadow of the HMAS Sydney 1 Mast on Bradley's Head, dropping her main anchor, then deploying a second anchor aft, to

Aboard were **10 former Naval Artificer Apprentices** of the now decommissioned **HMAS Nirimba**, the **Royal Australian Navy Apprentice Training Establishment**, **MOBI's** as they prefer to be known, all 'feeling 19 years old and bullet-proof' again, some accompanied by their partners, most of whom had travelled considerable distances to be a part of the day's historic events.

They were aboard the 12.8 metre Alan Payne designed steel sloop which most of them had had a hand in constructing during their time at HMAS Nirimba, RANATE in the early to mid-sixties. Ex-MOBI's reunited aboard the yacht on the day were:

- Arthur Ongley 'Greenie' 12th MOBI Intake - Jan. '62 (Sydney)
- Rick Pengilly 'Chippy' 13th MOBI Intake - July '62 (Sydney)
- John Kelly 'Chippy' 13th MOBI Intake - July '62 (Nowra)
- Tim Baker 'Greenie' 13th MOBI Intake - July '62 (Canberra)
- Dave Warren 'Greenie' 14th MOBI Intake - Jan. '63 (Sydney)
- Gordon Robertson 'Greenie' 15th MOBI Intake - July '63 (Sydney)
- Peter Weyling 'Tiffy' 19th MOBI Intake - July '65 (Coffs Harbour)
- Chris O'Keefe 'Chippy' 19th MOBI Intake - July '65 (Cairns)
- Charlie Staples 'Tiffy' 23rd MOBI Intake - July '67 (Newcastle)
- Robin King 'Greenie' 25th MOBI Intake - July '68 (Adelaide)

Partners:

- Sandy Robertson (Sydney)
- Ellen Mueller (Nowra)
- Jan O'Keefe (Cairns)
- Rhonda King (Adelaide)
- Brigid Butt (Canberra)

Throughout her long career with the RAN, from her launch at G.I.D. on Nov., 1966 to her disposal by the RAN in 1987, she was known simply as '**Nirimba**' and was a veteran of seven Sydney to Hobart Yacht Races on the seventies. When a dedicated team of ex-Naval Artificer Apprentices decided to buy back the restored vessel in 2005, she was renamed **The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba'** and now proudly stands sentinel at her mooring at the entrance to RANSA's Fleet in Rushcutters Bay.

And now today, keen to show off this sole remaining historic icon of their past, and with the CN's approval, proudly flying the Australian White Ensign, these 10 excited MOBI's lined the rails of **The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba'** and '*cheered ship*' as each and every warship in the Fleet Entry completed their salute of HMAS Sydney 1 Mast.



Manning the rails, from aft to fwd, are MOBI's: Chippy John 'Ned' Kelly, Chippy Chris 'SeeJay' O'Keefe, Tiffy Brian 'Charlie' Staples, Tiffy Peter Weyling, Greenie Arthur Ongley, Chippy W.J. 'Rick' Pengilly, Greenie Tim Baker, Greenie Robin 'Tafmo' King, Greenie Dave Warren and Greenie Gordon Robertson Partners (behind), aft to fwd are: Sandy Robertson, Rhonda King, Brigid Butt, Jan O'Keefe and Ellen Mueller

Obviously we must have impressed somebody, our 'Cheer Ship' attracted the assembled media vessels and we were asked to repeat the exercise for the Channel Nine News and Sydney Morning Herald camera crews...

If the video is still 'up', we can be seen on Channel Nine's NineMSN at:

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/video.aspx?tab=4&videoid=ececd63e-388a-438c-9947-6ee11ce01dcd>

and the Sydney Morning Herald's video of the RAN Fleet Entry at:

<http://media.smh.com.au/?rid=46962> doing our 'Cheer Ship'...

After the last of The Fleet had passed **The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba'** weighed anchors, did a lap of The Fleet, then headed up the harbour to visit HMAS Waterhen before returning to take up station astern of HMAS Sydney for the 21 Gun Salute.



With the 'formal' part of the outing behind us, we enjoyed a 'few convivia's' in a relaxing hour-long lay-over at anchor under our cool canvas awnings at Chowder Bay before heading back to RANSA for a late, but lavish BBQ lunch, then it was unwind-time (with a few more convivia's,) as the RANSA Fleet assembled for their Friday Twilight Races.

A fantastic day was enjoyed by all and we can't wait for the next RAN Fleet Entry in twenty or so years time...! GO NAVY...!

The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba' Association Inc. was formed in NSW in 2005 as a not-for-profit organisation to administer the operations, preservation, and restoration of **The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba'**... If you'd like to know more about **The MOBI Yacht 'Nirimba'** or perhaps you'd like become involved in the operation and preservation of this historic icon, e-mail the **President: Rick Pengilly** on: roman27@tpg.com.au

