



NIRIMBA personnel took over the wartime RAAF corrugated iron buildings in 1956 which had served as messes and accommodation blocks since 1944. The first Wardroom Mess was part of a building which contained officers, sergeants and airmen of the RAAF.

The second Wardroom Mess consisted of a group of decrepit iron buildings located roughly in the present site of the Wardroom Mess. The NIRIMBA Wardroom Mess was destroyed by fire in 1966 and the officers were moved into the then Chief Petty Officers' Mess. The Chief Petty Officers' Mess was then in a building located adjacent to the Gymnasium and which has been used as 'Club NIRIMBA' for the past eight years. The Wardroom Mess was located in that building until the current Wardroom Mess was completed in 1968.

The Chief Petty Officers of HMAS NIRIMBA began mess life on board in the former RAAF Sergeants' Mess before moving into the building described above. Upon being evicted by the Officers from their second Mess they were moved across the road to another decrepit wartime corrugated iron building remaining there until the new Wardroom was constructed. When the officers moved into the new Wardroom, the Chief Petty Officers returned to their old home. In 1974 the Chief Petty Officers' and Petty Officers' Messes of HMAS NIRIMBA were formed into a combined Senior Sailors' Mess and the Senior Sailors continued to mess in the building adjacent to the Gymnasium until 1976 when the new and current Senior Sailors' Mess was completed. Throughout this time and since 1956, the Junior Sailors' Mess and recreation spaces were contained in a building to the north east of the victualling compound.

Until the Wardroom and sailors' messes were built in NIRIMBA all personnel slept in World War II corrugated iron huts spread around the Establishment. These buildings were almost uninhabitable both during summer and winter due to the extremes of climate in this district and the swarms of mosquitoes which inhabit the place.

NIRIMBA apprentices lived in the same vintage huts of dormitory type in the area adjacent to Nabstock Road. They began to move into the new brick accommodation blocks (according to seniority) from the old iron huts in 1972 with completion of the first two new blocks. Gradually thereafter the wartime sleeping accommodation was demolished and removed. Many of the huts remain however, still in use today as classrooms and administration buildings, such as the Pay Office, Post Office, Signal Office, Barber Shop and so on.

None of the accommodation blocks contained toilet or washing facilities and it was necessary for occupants of all ranks to proceed some distance as the need arose, to separate toilet blocks located away from the dormitories. This practice was necessary even in the heart of NIRIMBA winters.

The building which was originally the RAAF Recreation Hall and presently houses the NIRIMBA barber shop, was the home of the Apprentices' Canteen from 1956 for twenty years until the Apprentices' Amenities Block and Cafeteria was completed in 1976. Prior to the erection of that building, the Apprentices' Dining Hall was located in a corrugated iron building roughly opposite the Gymnasium. This decrepit building was fondly known as the 'Skunk Cage' by its unfortunate occupants.



The first NIRIMBA Apprentices' Canteen Manager was Mr Gerry Foley, former Store, Chief Petty Officer who was relieved by another ex-RAN sailor Mr Lyall 'Dusty' Miller in 1967. Mr Miller remains as Canteen Manager today. Mr Tom Boyd an ex-Leading Electrical Mechanic once serving in HMAS NIRIMBA worked in the canteen for 12 years as assistant before retiring due to ill health in 1982. Mrs Chris Honeysett, wife of an RAN sailor is the current assistant to the Canteen Manager.

The Ship's Company Canteen and the Senior Sailors' Canteens were formerly located in their old Mess buildings.

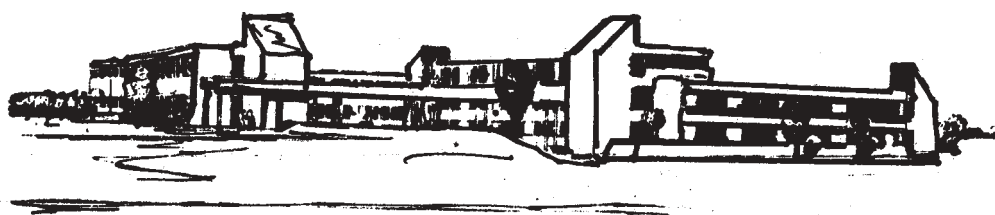
The HMAS NIRIMBA cinema began life in the Gymnasium (Drill Hall) having first had the projection room set up by the RAAF. The first cinema operator was Mr McDonald. Mr Keith Marks began duty as cinema operator in 1966 and has operated the NIRIMBA instructional and recreational cinemas since that time. In 1976, when the Training Administration Building (Facility 12) was constructed, it included two modern air-conditioned cinemas. After battling for many years, Mr Marks finally has modern cinema projection equipment to use in the cinemas. Recreational films are shown regularly in the larger of the cinemas during the week and on weekends.

There have been five swimming pools in HMAS NIRIMBA since the place commissioned. The first two were rough and constructed by the apprentices. One consisted of a bomb scow sunk into the ground. The Ship's Company pool erected adjacent to the Wardroom came in 1970. The Senior Sailors' pool was provided in 1976 from Senior Sailors' Mess funds. The Wardroom pool and surrounds were installed in 1983 from Mess funds and with the self help assistance of the HMAS NIRIMBA officers.

Today in NIRIMBA, sailors of all ranks, including apprentices are housed in modern multi-storey brick buildings with reasonable appointments, separated into small compartments in place of the great open dormitories of yesteryear. As new accommodation blocks are added, so the standards are improved and the current trend is for individual cabins in groups of four utilising a common toilet, bath and recreation space.

Accommodation and facilities for all ranks in NIRIMBA may now be described as nearing first class. Cafeterias are of a high standard and are well appointed and furnished. A great deal of achievement in Mess improvement has been carried out by the sailors themselves using their own mess funds.

There is a Sportsmen's Clubhouse adjacent to the playing fields for after sport social gatherings. Playing fields are of a high standard and being constantly improved. There are tennis courts on board and plans exist in the master building programme for erection of an olympic swimming pool squash courts, a modern physical and recreational centre and assembly hall. The first Sportsmen's Clubhouse - formerly the duty fire crew quarters was moved from the main gate to the playing fields in 1976 and in October 1983. Building 269 was moved to the site to augment the facility. Hobby activity has been a major part of NIRIMBA life since the place commissioned and much has been achieved in this field. Some of the clubs under guidance of officers and senior sailors cater for photography, motor vehicle repair, trail bike and go-cart maintenance and recreational clubs cater for abseiling, gliding, canoeing, sailing, horse riding and archery. There is a well equipped disco club in HMAS NIRIMBA and the Apprentices' Steam Club has been fully detailed description in a previous section of this history. (See Chapter 20).



Presidents of the Chief Petty Officers' Mess and the Senior Sailors' (combined) Mess 1956-1982 have been:

1956-57	Chief Engine Room Artificer W Cooper
1957-58	Chief Electrician (Air) S Martin
1958-59	Chief Naval Shipwright N York
1959-60	Chief Petty Officer Gunnery Instructor J W E Rose
1960-61	Chief Ordnance Artificer J Christie
1961-62	Chief Petty Officer Cook K Prendergast
1962-63	Stores Chief Petty Officer L L Woodard
1963	Chief Naval Shipwright J Sharples
1963	Chief Engine Room Artificer R Butler
1963-64	Chief Electrician Power F Bray
1964-67	Chief Ordnance Artificer J Christie
1967-68	Chief Engineering Mechanic S Hotop
1968-69	Chief Petty Officer Coxswain T Collins
1969-71	Chief Electrician Communications P F Lawford
1971	Chief Petty Officer Steward J Oliver
1971-72	Chief Petty Officer Academic Instructor J Mathew
1972-73	Warrant Officer Cook G L Craze BEM
1973	Warrant Officer Coxswain M Heaney
1974	Chief Petty Officer Aviation A A Scott
1974-75	Warrant Officer Cook G L Craze BEM
1975-76	Warrant Officer Marine Technical Hull F Curry
1976-77	Chief Petty Officer K McMiles
1977	Warrant Officer R Fairbairn
1977-79	Warrant Officer R Dorward
1979-80	Warrant Officer S Dewar
1980-81	Warrant Officer Cook A Steer
1981-82	Warrant Officer MTP G Graham
1982	Warrant Officer Coxswain R Irwin
1982	Warrant Officer ETW B Back

A group of civilian associate members of the HMAS NIRIMBA Senior Sailors Mess have given loyal support in many ways to HMAS NIRIMBA for varying periods since 1962.

These are...

Sergeant John Smith OAM, NSW Police; Mr Peter Gray, Hardware Manager; Detective Sergeant Les Taylor, NSW Police; Mr 'Spike' Jones, former Naval Shipwright; Mr Max Jones, AMP - Representative; Mr Ron Breen, ex RAAF; Sergeant George Evans, NSW Police; Mr Peter McFadden and Mr Clarrie Shaw, former CPOQMG and former Chief Boatswain's Mate of HMAS NIRIMBA.



The most senior of these is Sergeant John Smith OAM, NSW Police, who first joined the Senior Sailors' Mess in 1962. He is a Life member of the Mess. John Smith was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia for long and devoted service to charity. He has worked diligently and successfully for the benefit of Autistic Children and for the Salvation Army, for over twenty years.

He was the driving force behind the successful functions held in HMAS NIRIMBA in 1983 in support of the Princess of Thorndale Quest in aid of the Disabled Persons Centre at Werrington. Through John Smith's friendship with the entertainment world he was able to provide many top line TV recording and circuit artists, who donated their services free of charge. The NIRIMBA entrant, Senior Wran Writer Christine Higgins won the quest with a record take of over ten thousand dollars. Sergeant Smith was awarded a Captain's Commendation for his outstanding contribution to HMAS NIRIMBA.

Mr Peter McFadden organised donation of the magnificent memorial rock located at the entrance the Senior Sailors' Mess HMAS NIRIMBA and the two World War I German Shells located in the spot. This operation was carried out at considerable personal effort by Messrs Loadman and McMahon, executives of Bitupave Pty Ltd of Prospect. Messrs Loadman and McMahon also arranged donation of two World War I German naval shells located outside the NIRIMBA Museum and the pair sited outside Gunner's Store. These shells came from Germany many years ago as ballast for a crane operated at Bitupave quarry until recent times. Mr Graham McMahon has been a true friend to HMAS NIRIMBA in assisting with anti-flooding measures in the sports pavilion area.

All these men are sportsmen in the true sense. Peter Gray played first grade cricket for Petersham and Marrickville, Sergeant George Evans played first grade cricket for Western Suburbs.

