This motto reflects what the Gunnery Branch has been about since the science of naval gunnery was first practised in Australian Naval Forces. Gunnery training began in Victoria at the Williamstown Naval Depot in 1885. The Williamstown Naval Depot became HMAS CERBERUS in 1911 when the Royal Australian Navy was formed and the Gunnery School moved to Flinders Naval Depot (HMAS CERBERUS) in 1920, when the Williamstown Naval Depot closed down.

HMAS NIRIMBA, has a Gunnery Officer and Gunnery staff dedicated to parade training for new entries and for training the many Guards of Honour and armed parties for ceremonial occasions manned by NIRIMBA personnel in the City and suburbs of Sydney. Parade training is part of the syllabus of first term entrants and parade training continues throughout the time trainees are at NIRIMBA. This training culminates with the Passing Out Parade when the graduates form the Passing Out Guard for the Reviewing Officer. In addition, the Gunnery staff is responsible for small arms and expedition training in conjunction with the Physical Training staff.

HMAS NIRIMBA acquired two naval field guns in 1961 and for many years these guns were displayed at the entrance to NIRIMBA. Due to the number of times these weapons were hauled away by playful apprentices, they have lately been locked up and only taken out on ceremonial occasions.

The origin of these two field guns goes back to the days when the Royal Navy was often called upon to wage war in foreign lands at short notice. When this requirement arose, what was known as a Naval Brigade was formed. The word ‘brigade’ in this instance has no connection with the three or four battalion infantry brigade of military parlance, and in many cases, the naval brigade consisted of less than fifty men. The word ‘brigade’ meant a party of men landed from ships for shore operations. In the formation of a naval brigade, a field gun was usually included. Ships of all shapes and sizes were issued with a field gun for this purpose.
Field guns varied from time to time but it remains a fact that the navy favoured the 12 pounder, 8 hundredweight gun, which is of the type held in HMAS NIRIMBA.

The two NIRIMBA guns are 12 pounder, 8 hundredweight, fitted with artillery wheels of 42 inches. The 12 pounder is a 3 inch gun with a barrel weighing 8 hundredweight and fitted with an interrupted screw breech block. The gun is a quick firer, the charge being contained in a brass cartridge case. In field gun drill, it could be smartly moved about the countryside by a party of 18 sailors, most of whom were only required to tow the gun and most of whom had an easy time when the gun was in action. This type of gun is still used by the Royal Navy in the annual Field Gun Tournament, where it is dismantled, delivered by flying fox over an obstacle course to another point, then reassembled.

Plans are afoot to put the NIRIMBA field guns to work again for ceremonial occasions when special blanks will be fired. NIRIMBA tradesmen have been tasked with the job of manufacturing the cartridges for blank firing, from torpedo impulse firing cartridges. It is anticipated that these guns will be firing (blanks) again in 1984.

**Number 1 Gun (Number 1209):**

Was manufactured at the Woolwich Arsenal and was first fired on 30th January 1901 at Portsmouth on the Proving Battery when Major R Waring, Royal Artillery, signed the gun’s memorandum of inspection on behalf of the Inspector of Guns and Steel.

The next record reveals that number 1 gun was inspected in Sydney, Australia on 1st November 1910 and then there is record of the gun being fired at Fort Gellilbrand, Victoria on three occasions in 1918. The gun was next fired at HMAS CERBERUS, Victoria in 1929 shortly after which time it was transferred to the Armament Supply Depot in Sydney. In the column of the gun’s record of service titled ‘Sentence on Gun and Fittings’, it is noted - 4th November 1937; Number 1 Gun is ‘serviceable for saluting purposes only’.

**Number 2 Gun (Number 2432):**

Was also manufactured at the Woolwich Arsenal and was first fired at the proving battery, Woolwich on 11th April 1913 when Major H G Leahy, Royal Artillery, signed the gun’s memorandum of inspection for the Inspector of Guns and Steel.

This gun next appeared in Sydney where it was inspected by J.H Gill, Inspector of Naval Ordnance on 5th July 1924. The gun’s record reveals ‘Rounds fired on service from 16 April 1913 to 21 November 1921 not known’. Other firings, all in Sydney, NSW, were in 1924, 1928, 1931 and 1937. In the column of the gun’s record of service, it is noted that on - 7th September 1937, the sentence on this was for saluting purposes only’.

In 1979, Mr Roy Spencer of 4 Burgay Street, Leichhardt, refurbished both wheels of both guns at a cost of four hundred and twenty dollars.

**Freedom of the City**

In the days when fortress walls afforded to cities protection from the incursions of outlaw bands and attacks from feudal lords, their citizens wisely refused to allow the entry of bodies of armed men unless they were completely sure that the arms would not be used against them.

Hence the granting of permission for an armed body of men to enter a city, became a mark of trust and confidence in which that body was held by the citizens of the city.

While London is the only city of the British Commonwealth which has a legal right to exclude from its territories, the Sovereign’s troops, the action of a city in conferring upon a Regiment or Unit - "Freedom of Entry" with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating, bands playing and colours flying - is to accord the highest honour the city can bestow upon the unit.
The Royal Australian Navy has been granted the Freedom of the City to several Australian cities and in April 1979, HMAS NIRIMBA represented the Royal Australian Navy at the ceremony of granting of the Freedom of the City of Blacktown, NSW.

On that occasion, Captain David Holthouse, RAN led the Ship’s Company of HMAS NIRIMBA into Blacktown where they were challenged by the Chief Police Officer in the main street. The Mayor of Blacktown had previously given the scroll of Freedom of the City to Captain Holthouse in a park on the western side of the bridge leading into Blacktown. The scroll party consisted of Petty Officer Coxswain Don Beer, Leading Seaman Quartermaster Gunner George Rolfe and Leading Seaman Quartermaster Gunner Kim Cooper.

At times after granting of the Freedom of a City, the unit so honoured, traditionally asserts its right of entry with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, bands playing, drums beating, and colours flying. This right was taken up on behalf of the Royal Australian Navy by HMAS NIRIMBA in 1981. The Freedom of Entry march led by Captain Daryl Fox AM, RAN, Commanding Officer of HMAS NIRIMBA, preceded the Blacktown City 75th Anniversary Parade. This ceremony was particularly significant for HMAS NIRIMBA as it came in the year of the celebration of the Establishment’s Twenty Fifth Anniversary.

NIRIMBA’s volunteer band provided music for civilian marchers in the main parade, backed up by the establishment’s vintage Foden steam truck, itself a solid reminder of links with the past.

The Freedom of Entry march was the highlight of the celebrations in Blacktown and stressed the close links between HMAS NIRIMBA and the City of Blacktown. The NIRIMBA Contingent marched down the centre of Main Street to the middle of the shopping centre where Police Chief Inspector Nugert challenged the marchers. Captain Fox replied to the police challenge by presenting the scroll detailing NIRIMBA’s right to Freedom of Entry to the City. After reading the scroll, Chief Inspector Nugert invited Captain Fox and his Contingent to proceed through the City.

Warrant Officer Coxswain R Irwin was in charge of the scroll - Guard Officers were Lieutenants A Dawson and W Van Boheeman. The Officer in Charge of the Ensign Party was Lieutenant K Wanklyn. Petty Officer Musician M Wortham was in charge of HMAS NIRIMBA’s Volunteer Band.

HMAS NIRIMBA was well represented in the Anzac Day March through the City of Sydney in 1982 when the Naval Contingent was led by Captain D R O S Fox AM, RAN, Commanding Officer of HMAS NIRIMBA escorted by a large party of marchers from HMAS NIRIMBA.

Two of the most auspicious occasions in the history of the Gunnery Department of HMAS NIRIMBA were when NIRIMBA Gunnery personnel took part in occasions of Royal Ceremony. In December 1977, the Gunnery Officer of HMAS NIRIMBA, Lieutenant Commander D McNaught RAN, was the Royal Guard Officer and Lieutenant Geradin RAN, of HMAS NIRIMBA was Second in Command of Royal Guards mounted at the Sydney Opera House and in Canberra during the Silver jubilee visit of Her Majesty the Queen of Australia.

In September 1975 a Royal Guard was mounted in HMAS NIRIMBA to honour the visit of His Excellency the Governor General, Sir John Kerr, who visited NIRIMBA to review the Passing Out Parade and to present the Governor General’s Prize. The Guard Commander was Lieutenant Commander Peter Hugonnet and the Colour Officer was Lieutenant Noles. This was the first occasion when the Royal Colours were paraded in HMAS NIRIMBA.

In February 1980 a party from HMAS NIRIMBA took the part of soldiers of the Colony of New South Wales in the ABC Serial “The Timeless Land”. The party consisting of one Officer, one POQMG, one LSQMG and fourteen sailors of Able rank was filmed in action at a set in the local village of Kellyville. The ‘company’ was trained for the part by CPOQMG Laurie Nicholson of HMAS NIRIMBA. The party consisted of Lieutenant Morris, Petty Officer N Hoeking, LSQMG
Taylor and Able Seamen Kovac, Argent, Brockelsby, Campbell, Oates, Wanklyn, Bale, Wiley, Clancy, James, Sharock, Crossland, Fitton and Harris.

On 4th June 1983, the Officers and Ship’s Company of HMAS NIRIMBA led by Captain David H Thomson AM, RAN, Commanding Officer exercised their right of Freemanship of the City of Blacktown with a march into Blacktown in conjunction with the celebration of the 77th anniversary of the founding of the City of Blacktown.

The NIRIMBA contingent consisted of all of the Ship’s Company marching in Company formation, parading the Australian White Ensign, with a Scroll party, a 100 man Guard and the HMAS NIRIMBA Volunteer Band. The contingent was challenged by the Police in Main Street Blacktown. After the presentation and public reading of the scroll of the Freedom of Entry bestowed on HMAS NIRIMBA on behalf of the Royal Australian Navy in 1979, the contingent was granted permission to pass into the City.

The Scroll party, which was led by Warrant Officer Coxswain Geoff Carroll, consisted of Leading Seaman Coxswain Linguey and Leading Seaman Coxswain McQuillan. Officers of the Guard were Lieutenant Commander D Prass and Lieutenant Sam Trigge. Colour Party and escorts comprised CPOATA D I Taylor, PORP Joe Mewett and Leading Seaman MTH Lahene and Watters. Petty Officer Musician Chris Lane was in charge of the band.

Staff of the Gunnery Department of HMAS NIRIMBA in 1983/84 comprised:

- Lieutenant Commander D Prass RAN
- CPOQMG P Whitehouse
- CPOQMG C Dowd
- POQMG B C King
- POQMG K J Walter
- POQMG C L Brown

LSQMG E Dunstan
ABQMG L J Higgins
ABQMG T Keir
LSQMG K R Small

Gunnery Officers of HMAS NIRIMBA - 1956 to 1984:

- Senior Commissioned Gunner J Williams RN
- Lieutenant Commander W Storrie RAN
- Lieutenant Commander R Moag RAN
- Lieutenant Commander R Smith RAN
- Lieutenant Commander P J Cooke-Russell RAN
- Lieutenant Commander W Palmer RAN
- Lieutenant J Lister RN
- Lieutenant D James RAN
- Lieutenant R C Roberts RAN
- Lieutenant Commander D Prass RAN
- Lieutenant Commander J McNaught RAN
- Lieutenant Commander W J Grundy RAN
- Lieutenant Commander M Donaldson RAN
- Lieutenant Commander D Prass RAN
- Lieutenant K C Mathews RAN

Plan of Limber, QF 12 pdr
Saint Barbara - Patron Saint of Gunners

Saint Barbara, virgin martyr of the early church and Patron Saint of gunners died about 200 AD. Reputed to have been the daughter of a pagan - Dioscorsus, who kept her guarded to protect her beauty from harm.

When Barbara professed Christianity, Dioscorsus became enraged and took her to the Provincial Prefect who ordered that she be tortured and beheaded.

Dioscorsus performed the execution of Barbara and on his return home, was struck by lightning and reduced to ashes.

Barbara is venerated as one of the fourteen Auxiliary Saints (Holy Helpers) and she is invoked in thundrerstorms. Barbara is the Patron Saint of Artillerymen, Sappers, Astronauts, Gunners and all who work with explosives. Saint Barbara’s Feast Day is December 4th - The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery celebrates Saint Barbara’s Day as its Corps Day.

HMAS NIRIMBA Historical Machine Gun

The wording on the brass plate attached to the machine gun located at the entrance to HMAS NIRIMBA reads:

"Captured from SMS Kolonial Cessellshaft by HMAS WARREGO (Commander C L Cumberledge, RN), at Gazelle Peninsular, New Britain 19 September 1914".

"A similar gun was captured by HMAS NUSA (Lieutenant Commander J M Jackson, RN) from SMS Komet (Captain Moeller) at Talassia, New Britain 11th October 1914".

A Gunner’s Creed

‘But I’d rather trust to the darkest skies,
And the wildest seas that roar,
Or die, where the stars of Nations rise,
In the stormy clouds of War’.
Service Knowledge

Although the majority of training of HMAS NIRIMBA Apprentices is dedicated to technical and academic training, it is necessary, soon after their first entry in their indoctrination period, to change them from raw recruits to a passable version of a sailor. This task falls to the Gunnery Department for parade training and to the Service Knowledge Section for enlightenment in the areas of naval lore and customs.

Apprentices are instructed in Service Knowledge throughout their First, Third and Fourth Terms. The curriculum for First Term comprises instruction in Moral and social responsibility, Colours and Sunset ceremonies, matters dealing with pay and allowances, the Navy’s leave system, firefighting, First Aid, Boatswain’s Mate duties, sport and armed and un-armed squad drill.

The Third Term lessons cover Security, Welfare system, departmental removal entitlements, Wills, the Naval Welfare Organisation, rope work, look-out duties, ships’ location and marking systems, sentry duties and the organisation of the RAN.

During their fourth term the Apprentices are instructed by the Service Knowledge Section in Seamanship evolutions, every day shipboard hazards, ships’ boats, dockyard hazards, the Navy’s promotion system and the Navy’s sailor posting system.

Staff of the Service Knowledge Section at the time of writing comprises:

- Lieutenant Wayne Gobert RAN
- Petty Officer Radar Plot Ian Mewett
- Leading Seaman Radar Plot Michael Graham.

It is traditional for Commanding Officers when leaving their ship for the last time to be rowed ashore by their officers in one of the ships’ boats.

In 1983 the ‘ship’s boat’ used to haul Captain D R O S Fox AM, RAN ashore on the day of his departure from HMAS NIRIMBA was a replica gun limber from the Field Gun equipment manufactured in the Craft School in HMAS NIRIMBA to the finest detail. Work on that project was carried out mainly by civilian instructors.

The Guns

‘So when we call around with a few guns o’ course, you will know what to do, hoo! hoo!,

Just send in your Chief and surrender, it’s worse if you fight or just runs,

You can go where you please, you can skid up the trees, but you can’t get away from the guns.’

Kipling