



It has been customary to carry Chaplains in ships since the very early days, one Chaplain being carried for each Division of the Fleet. In the reign of Charles I, a Chaplain was appointed to each ship. Both Chaplain and Doctor were paid by the Seamen. Each Seaman had to pay the Chaplain fourpence and the Doctor twopence per month. Prayers were read twice a day and a psalm or hymn was sung every time the Watch was changed. The Chaplain was authorised to reward, with sixpence, any Midshipman who learnt a psalm.

Any man who missed prayers was liable to twenty four hours in irons. For playing cards or dice, the penalty was four hours in manacles. It is on record that in the 18th Century, a British community in West Africa required the services of a Bishop to consecrate a cemetery - the Captain of a visiting British Frigate obliged by elevating the Ship's Chaplain to the temporary rank of Bishop and ordering him to carry out the job.

Chaplains were first appointed to the Royal Australian Navy in 1912 when an agreement was reached for the Churches to provide one Protestant and one Roman Catholic Chaplain to HMAS CERBERUS (Williamstown Naval Depot) and one each to the Fleet. Chaplain C Hudson was the first Anglican Chaplain to be appointed to HMAS CERBERUS and his Roman Catholic counterpart was Chaplain P J Gibbons. The agreement for provision of that number of Chaplains remained firm until 1929.

As for HMAS NIRIMBA, the first Chaplain appointed was Chaplain (C of E) Patrick Hellyer who served in HMAS NIRIMBA (RANAS Schofields) from 1953 to 1954. Then, after HMAS NIRIMBA commissioned as the Royal Australian Navy Apprentice Training Establishment, the first Chaplain appointed was Chaplain Gordon Beatty (C of E) who served here from 1958 to 1959. Chaplain Beatty died in April 1982.

Roman Catholic Chaplains were not appointed on a full time basis to HMAS NIRIMBA until 1967 when Chaplain J M Sayers (RC) joined to take up duty.

The history of the development of Chapels and facilities for Chaplains in the Navy has always been one constant struggle since the RAN began in 1911. Construction of naval chapels has been left to the generosity of the public and naval families - as up to the present time, the responsibility for erection of chapels has not been accepted as a public liability. Religious instruction was a part of the training syllabus of apprentices in HMAS NIRIMBA since the place commissioned but it took some years before this fact was given its rightful priority in the scheme of things.

Records of the Heads of Department meeting in HMAS NIRIMBA reveal that:

*'the chaplain stated "the services of an organist or pianist is urgently required to assist at Divine Service on Sundays" and he was advised to contact the Bandmaster in this regard'.*

The wheels of industry grind slowly and we find that in 1965 the Naval Board announced that:

*"Treasury sanction has been given to pay a civilian organist for Protestant Divine Services at the rate of two pounds per week at certain Establishments - including HMAS NIRIMBA".*

The first organist on record is Mrs Dorothy Stowe of Doonside, she being followed by Mr A Peacock of Quakers Hill. There is a record of Systems Artificer Apprentice Wallace carrying out the duties of organist in HMAS NIRIMBA in the late 1960's. Mrs Stowe and Mrs Emily Crapp are organists in NIRIMBA today.



How Times Do Change!! Orders for the year 1960 include:

**"ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH**

*Officers and ratings not on duty are expected to attend Divine Service and ratings under training are to attend on each occasion. A proportion of all officers is to be on board in the future. Seating in the Chapel is to be attended to by the First Lieutenant".*

and on a more lighter vein;

**"DIVINE SERVICE**

*I intend to take firm action myself if order is not maintained during Divine Service in the future".*

The primitive conditions of both NIRIMBA Chapels is evident from a report of February 1970 regarding the Protestant Chapel in HMAS NIRIMBA, which reads inter alia:

*"The Chapel and Chaplains' facilities consist of a rectangular galvanised iron hut; which has been modified to comprise a Chapel; a Chaplain's Office and a Wash Deck Locker. The Chapel is very long and narrow (101 feet by 22 feet) and as a result it is very difficult for the Chaplain to command attention. The Sanctuary is very austere and gives the impression of the makeshift.*

*The Chapel seats were originally designed for a picture theatre and are difficult to maintain in a reasonable condition.*

*The nature of the building makes it very difficult to heat in the winter and cool in the summer.*

*The absence of a vestry adjacent to the sanctuary area makes it necessary for the Wash Deck Locker to be used at present as a vestry...."*

and so the sad story goes on. There have been some improvements in this since those days. The building has been clad with aluminium and insulated, the old theatre seats replaced with a more utilitarian type seat and the Chaplains allocated working space in the Educational Block (Facility 12).

Happily in this field of endeavour, there is a light ahead as the building of Service chapels has been written into the charter of responsibility of the Department of Housing and Construction. One chapel constructed with Government funds has been erected at the Australian Army Barracks at Townsville, Queensland and there is provision in the Master Plan of HMAS NIRIMBA for erection of a chapel.

Before 1967, Catholic Chaplains came each week to HMAS NIRIMBA from HMAS KUTTABUL for two days during which time they gave character training lessons to apprentices. In 1967, Chaplain Jim Sayers became the first resident Catholic Chaplain in HMAS NIRIMBA. The records of Baptisms and Marriages in the Catholic Faith begin in HMAS NIRIMBA at that time. Prior to then, records of Sacraments administered by Catholic Priests in HMAS NIRIMBA were kept in the Command Chaplain's Office in HMAS KUTTABUL. During the years since 1967 the NIRIMBA Catholic Chaplain has worked in close liason with the Catholic Chaplain at the nearby RAAF Station at Richmond. Both assist each other in the work of the Apostolate as necessary.

The Catholic Chapel was set up in a temporary building in its present location when HMAS NIRIMBA commissioned.



HMAS NIRIMBA has had its share of interesting people who have had a ministry to the serve Christ. The much loved and well remembered Chaplain Walter Wheeldon (C of E) of HMAS NIRIMBA in the years 1960 to 1962, started his naval career as a pilot in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm in WWII. Wally Wheeldon was one of those rating pilots who flew flimsy naval aircraft from Aircraft Carriers during the war. He was a Leading Seaman Pilot. Chaplain Wheeldon now serves the Church in the Parish of Moss Vale, NSW.

Two apprentices of HMAS NIRIMBA left the RAN and were professed in the Roman Catholic Order of the Brothers of Saint Gerard Majella. These were Apprentice Stephen Hiddle who joined the Order in 1970 and Apprentice Darryl Dewar who left HMAS MELBOURNE to begin his studies in Sydney. Brother Dewar now helps the Chaplain from HMAS NIRIMBA with the fourth term apprentice character guidance week at Hopewood House Bowral, New South Wales. Brother Hiddle left the Order in 1978 and now resides in Western Australia.

Another of the Roman Catholic Chaplains of HMAS NIRIMBA - Father Max Davis (1976) began his career in HMAS LEEUWIN as a Junior Recruit and began his studies for the Priesthood as an Electrical Mechanic when his vocation took him from naval training to the Seminary. Max Davis is a lead light in Australian Football in the Navy and is currently serving in his first naval home - HMAS LEEUWIN.

Perhaps the best known Naval Catholic Chaplain in recent years was Chaplain Hugh McDonald. Born in Geelong in 1930, Father McDonald entered the Priesthood at Werribee in 1956 and was appointed to the Royal Australian Navy in 1960 when he began his naval career in HMAS CERBERUS. He served many times at sea and became a legend in his lifetime. 'Father Mac' as he was known throughout the Navy, was respected for his sportsmanship and for his championship of women and of youth. He was a champion sportsman himself and his great love was Australian Football. He was training with Geelong when he began his studies for the Priesthood and it was not until he was appointed to the Navy that he was able to take up again, seriously, his favourite sport. He was a prominent member of Navy teams and a great coach for Junior Recruits and Apprentices during his service. The trophy for the annual 'Father McDonald knockout competition' in Australian Football in the Navy is an appropriate memorial to this great man. Father McDonald was killed in a road accident at Castle Hill in 1975 whilst serving in HMAS NIRIMBA. He was travelling to HMAS PLATYPUS to celebrate Mass for the men of the Submarine Service, whose skill and courage he so greatly admired.

At his funeral service at Saint Mary's Cathedral in Geelong in 1975, it was said of him:

*"Nineteen years a Priest of Jesus Christ,  
Fifteen years Chaplain of the Royal Australian Navy,  
Patriot in love with his Country,  
Sportsman of no mean ability,  
Paragon of manliness".*

Since the commissioning of HMAS NIRIMBA in 1956, Chaplains of all denominations have given a fine record of service to the Ship's Company. In addition to religious instruction, both for apprentices and adult trainees, they have been charged with the responsibilities of arranging sponsor families to take into their homes young apprentices who live far away and entertainment for the apprentices in the forms of regular disco functions and learning to dance lessons. In the first years of HMAS NIRIMBA's existence, the Chaplains carried out character guidance courses in HMAS NIRIMBA and since 1970, these have been carried out under the guidance of NIRIMBA Chaplains at the Otford Methodist Conference Centre, the Gilbulla Church of England Conference Centre and at the Catholic Hopewood House at Bowral NSW.



In 1983, the Roman Catholic Chaplain's duties were carried out by Chaplain Kerry Costigan and until July 1983, when Chaplain (Anglican) Michael Holz joined, the religious care and ministry to Protestant denominations in HMAS NIRIMBA were carried out by the visiting Chaplains - Brian Parnell (Anglican), Principal Chaplain Bill Rosier (Unit Ch) and the Naval Reserve Chaplain J Hamilton.

Chaplains Costigan and Hamilton officiated at the annual Eucunienical Service held in HMAS NIRIMBA's gymnasium for the Naval Association of Australia on Sunday 15th May 1983. The service was attended by some 300 members of the Naval Association. Rear Admiral K Vonthethoff RAN, Flag Officer, Naval Support Command was the senior visitor for the service.

During 1983, five weddings and thirty baptisms were conducted on board HMAS NIRIMBA and Chaplain Costigan was visiting Chaplain to the RAAF Base Richmond until the arrival of an Air Force Chaplain.

Chaplain Costigan was recalled by his Bishop to be appointed Parish Priest in Queensland. He was the longest serving Chaplain in HMAS NIRIMBA to the present time.

Former Navy Apprentice A L Constance of the July 1965 entry is now an Anglican Minister of the Red Hill, Canberra parish. Mr Constance is a Chaplain of the Army Reserve and ministers to the Woden Valley Hospital.

### **Reveille**

"Reveille" is the trumpet or bugle call sounded in all military barracks and camps first thing in the morning to awaken the soldiers and tell them to get up and dress. It is also sounded at military funerals and commemorative services to signify the resurrection of the body after death and the awakening of the soul into a new life.

### **Last Post**

"Last Post" is the call sounded at 10 pm each evening to inform the soldiers that they should be inside their quarters for the night. It signifies the end of the day's activities and ushers in a period of rest and quietness. It is sounded at military funerals and commemorative services to indicate that the soldier has completed his life's work and has entered into his rest.



# Chaplains who have served in HMAS NIRIMBA

## PROTESTANT

1953-54 ....	Chaplain P Helyer C of E (RANAS SCHOFIELDS)	
1958-59 ....	Chaplain Gordon Beatty	C of E
1960-62 ....	Chaplain Walter Wheeldon	C of E
1963 .....	Chaplain Graydon Swain	Meth
1963-64 ....	Cbaplain Allan Batt	C of E
1965 .....	Chaplain Edgar Rolfe	C of E
1966-68 ....	Chaplain Bill Bates	Pres
1969-71 ....	Chaplain Bill Rosier	Meth
1972 .....	Chaplain Edgar Rolfe	C of E
1972-73 ....	Chaplain Russell Hawken RNVR	C of E
1973-74 ....	Chaplain Edgar Rolfe	C of E
1974 .....	Chaplain Gareth Clayton	Unit Church
1975-78 ....	Chaplain Allan Batt	C of E
1978-80 ....	Chaplain Brian Parnell	C of E
1981-82 ....	Chaplain Bill Rosier	Unit Church
	Promoted Principal Chaplain (PCHA) June 1982	
1983 .....	Chaplain Mike Holz	Anglican

Chaplain Helyer's son Nick joined the RAN as a Midshipman, specialised in Marine Engineering and served in HMAS NIRIMBA in 1974 as an instructor in Marine Engineering.

## ROMAN CATHOLIC

1967-68 ....	Chaplain J M Sayers
1969-70 ....	Chaplain K Ryan
1971-72 ....	Chaplain G E Mayne
1973-74 ....	Chaplain I T Dempsey
1974-75 ....	Chaplain H M McDonald
1975 .....	Chaplain P Kennedy
1976 .....	Chaplain M Davis
	Chaplain K Ryan
1977-78 ....	Chaplain K J Costigan
1979-80 ....	Chaplain D T O'Connor
1980 .....	Chaplain K J Costigan
1981-81 ....	Chaplain D T O'Connor
1982-83 ....	Chaplain K J Costigan
1984 .....	Chaplain C Barnett



Chaplain M Holz 1983 -







Chaplain Geoff Mayne 1971-72

