

COMMANDER RICHARD JOHN PERCY WITHYCOMBE PERRYMAN AM (R45-47)

He was born on 6 November 1929, the son of Dick Perryman the racehorse trainer who trained the 1946 winner of the Derby "Airborne" at 100 to 1. In recognition of this success, the College was given a half-day holiday.

He joined the Royal Navy as a Special Entry Cadet in 1947 and after training and service in several ships took command of a Fast Patrol Boat running from HMS Hornet at Gosport. He successfully completed the specialist communications Long Course in 1956/57 and served on exchange with the RAN as a Lt Cdr.

During his Exchange Service he served in the Australian Joint Anti-submarine School (AJASS) at Nowra, on the New South Wales South Coast. This very pleasant environment obviously had an effect on him because he eventually elected to transfer to the RAN in 1969/70. He arrived in Australia on the Italian liner ACHILLE LAURO - six weeks of very comfortable First Class sea travel before the cold light of dawn and down to work!

As a Lieutenant Commander and Communications sub-specialist, with considerable experience he was appointed to be the Project Officer for the RAN's entry into computer-based communications, heading a team to implement the automatic switching centre for message traffic. He had a very central role in the design and eventual fitting out of an ideal area for this purpose in Navy Office in Canberra, and putting it into commission.

It was given the name of Defence Communications Automatic Relay Station (DEFCOMMARS) Canberra and, although designed to serve a single-Service purpose soon became a Joint facility.

He then became the Fleet Communications Officer, serving in the aircraft carrier HMAS MELBOURNE on the Staff of Rear Admiral W. Dovers, the Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet. He was in his element, at sea, in the prestigious appointment as FCO and at the time when the accent in the Australian Services was on "Jointery" - the three Services operating together, and, as such, working in Combined settings with allied nations. He was a member of the Planning Staff for Exercise KANGAROO ONE, held in 1974, and the most extensive Combined Exercise which Australia had undertaken. It was also the platform for the compilation of a series of Joint Operations Publications to replace the UK-originated Joint Service Publications, which had been in place since WWII. He was one of the writing team for JSP (AS) 10 - Joint Communications, which - like the others in the series - was "bedded down" in Exercise KANGAROO ONE.

From the position as the RAN's Fleet Communications Officer, and "type-cast" for his Joint experience, he joined the Project team of the Defence Integrated Secure Communications Network (DISCON), based in Canberra but spending a great deal of time travelling throughout Australia, to develop, first, a User Requirement and then the specifications for this major project. He spent three years in this most exacting appointment and was rewarded by his appointment in Command of HMAS HARMAN, the RAN's major Communications Station and Administrative base for the Canberra region.

As Captain of the establishment, which was also the social centre for the RAN's officer corps serving in Navy Office, he shone! He thoroughly enjoyed his tenure in this appointment, which was unfortunately cut short after 18 months by a great need for an officer with his experience and expertise to fill the appointment of Deputy Director of Naval Communications in Navy Office. In that position he was responsible for the development of policy in the area of communications operations in the RAN, and also the RAN's involvement in Joint Communications.

During that time he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his services to Military Communications.

All too soon, November 1984 loomed and he was placed on the RAN Retired List. This did not dampen his enthusiasm in any way whatsoever, as he applied for, and obtained, the position of National Secretary of the Scout Association of Australia. Once again, he threw himself into every facet of the position. He held a Scout rank and involved himself with the in-depth organisation of National Jamborees, National and State Conferences and the day-to-day running of the National Headquarters of the Scout Association of Australia in Canberra.



He retired from his position at the age of 65 and settled into an active lifestyle, working the wonderful garden which he and his wife Sheila had spent many years getting into the way they wanted and spending a great deal of time "on the road" - caravanning being one of their many interests (also as a means of escaping from the notoriously chilly Canberra winters!).

He spent four years as Chairman of the Canberra Branch of the Royal Naval Association from 2001. He was, as ever, a very effective and hard-working occupant of that position.

At the end of 2010 he and Sheila moved from their home of some 35 years to a retirement village only a short distance away. He had just settled in to his new home - where, without doubt, he would have probably been organising the village in a very short time. He was always a natural organiser (and entertainer) - although far removed from his early years, and equestrian surroundings, in Newmarket. He was a very good man, a fine naval officer and first-rate Signal Officer, and not least, a very close and supportive father and grandfather.

The above is taken largely from information that Captain Richard Husk (R47-51) obtained from the Royal Australian Navy.