

**John Parrott, Laurieton RSL.
13th October 2018.**

John Joseph Oxley was born in England in the early part of 1784. He entered the navy at the age of 15 (as did I almost two centuries later) and saw active service in many parts of the world, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant. He first visited Australia in 1802, and returned to England twice. In 1811 he retired from the Royal Navy, and in May 1812 sailed for Sydney for the third time, to take up his duties as Surveyor-General. It was from this point in time that he became an intergral part of the Camden Haven history.

The rebirth of the Australian Submarine Service followed the decision of the Naval Board, in 1963, to order six of the highly successful British “Oberon” class boats for the RAN. One of these boats was named after the man we are honouring today, Surveyor-General, John Oxley. Although many other vessels that have seen service in the RAN, have names of the early explorers, they were named after the Cities, Towns, geographical features or rivers that were named for early explorers, John Oxley is the only explorer to have a frontline unit specifically named in honour of his exploration achievements.

HMAS OXLEY, the first submarine built for the RAN for almost forty years, was launched on 24 September 1965 by Lady Downer, the boat was named after John Oxley, who we are honouring here today. She was commissioned on 27 March 1967.

After leaving the United Kingdom on 12 June 1967, she reached Sydney on 18 August, where she was moored at HMAS PLATYPUS, the new RAN submarine base which was commissioned on the day of OXLEYs arrival. She also made history, by being the first RAN submarine to pass through the Panama Canal.

The “Oberon” class was one of the most advanced type of conventional submarines in any navy, combining high speed with great underwater endurance. They were attack submarines, with both anti-surface and anti-submarine capabilities. Designed specifically for silent running, they were amongst the quietest operational submarines in the world, including nuclear submarines. They were therefore extremely difficult to detect and were ideally suited to operations on an enemy’s “doorstep”. Equipment included sensitive long-range underwater listening devices and electronic fire-control systems. They were fitted with a “snort” system, which enable batteries to be recharged while the submarine remained submerged.

The *Oberons* operated during the height of the Cold War, with duties including surveillance, tracking of other ships and submarines, delivery and retrieval of special forces personnel, and serving as targets for anti-submarine surface ships and helicopter training. I spent many hours on ships and in helicopters doing Anti-submarine exercises, tracking the Oberons and American Nuclear Boats, and the Oberon was by far the more difficult unit to detect. In fact there is a story that an Australian O Boat surfaced within 1000 metres of US Task force 7's Flag Ship in the Pacific, and the boats Skipper sent, by aldis lamp, to the Aircraft Carrier, Bang Bang your dead. The American Admiral aboard the carrier was not happy that the O Boat had penetrated his ASW Screen undetected.

At the lower car park entrance of the LUSC, we have mounted a 21 inch torpedo used in the Oberon Class Submarines, and the six crests of Oberons that served in the RAN. One of these Crests is HMAS OXLEY's.

HMAS OXLEY was decommissioned on 13 February 1992.

Thankyou.