

Basic Detail Report



HMAS Onslow

Vessel number

HV000374

Date

1968

Primary Maker

Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Co Ltd

Medium

Metal

Description

HMAS ONSLOW was built at Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Co Ltd, at Greenock, Scotland. The 90 metre long hull is of steel but moulded fibreglass is used extensively in casings and the sail. It has a diesel electric propulsion system using twin English Electric motors powered by two 16 cylinder Admiralty Standard diesel generators. On the surface ONSLOW could travel at 15 knots, submerged it was capable of 19 knots. It was an attack submarine and armed with eight torpedo tubes, six at the bow and two at the stern, along with sensitive surveillance equipment. The Oberon Class was one of the most advanced conventional (non-nuclear) submarines of its period and was amongst the quietest of any submarine type world-wide. Named after the Western Australian town of Onslow, it could go to sea for several months and stay underwater for more than six weeks at a time, periodically using the snort system to draw air in while running at periscope depth. HMAS ONSLOW was launched on 3 December 1968 and commissioned late in the following year carrying pennant number 60. HMAS ONSLOW departed Scotland in April 1970 and came to Australia via the Panama Canal. On the Pacific crossing it stopped at Hawaii and joined in exercises with US naval forces. HMAS ONSLOW arrived in Brisbane on 30 June 1970 and then went on to Sydney and its harbour base at HMAS Platypus in Neutral Bay early in July. HMAS ONSLOW and the others of the Oberon class maintained a strong defensive presence around Australia's coastline and participated in exercises with British, New Zealand, Dutch and US forces on many occasions. In keeping with Australia's joint military obligations they also patrolled outside Australian waters when required. In 1971 HMAS ONSLOW went back to Hawaii for exercises and in 1972 spent four months in the Far East with ANZUK forces. During one exercise HMAS ONSLOW successfully 'sank' one of the US navy's super aircraft carriers, USS CARL VINSON. It also travelled widely around Australia, and twice represented the Navy at the Hobart regatta. During its service HMAS ONSLOW was the first conventionally-powered submarine to be fitted with anti-ship missiles. On six occasions HMAS ONSLOW was used as the target submarine for the Fincastle anti-submarine warfare competition. Three significant incidents occurred during HMAS ONSLOW's service with the RAN. The first was in 1972, when the submarine dived to almost twice its safe operating depth and with insufficient compressed air available to blow the ballast tanks had to rely on propulsion to bring it to

the surface. It was a deliberate action of a sailor who disobeyed orders. After the incident the RAN abandoned conscripting submarine crew and relied on a volunteer-only policy. The second incident was in 1980, when carbon monoxide fumes from one of the diesel generators filled the submarine, resulting in the death of one sailor and severe effects on many others. The third was a controversial equatorial line-crossing ceremony in 1995, which resulted in restrictions being placed on similar ceremonies aboard RAN vessels. HMAS ONSLOW was given a mid-life refit from 1982-1984, when new attack sonar, integrated data processing and fire control systems were added. The Oberon submarines were gradually decommissioned in the 1990s and both HMAS ONSLOW and HMAS OVENS became Museum vessels, maintained unarmed but in their operational configuration. HMAS OVENS was slipped at the West Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle, while HMAS ONSLOW was put on display in the water at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 89.91 m x 8.07 m x 5.48 m, 2186 tonnes [surfaced], 2417 tonnes [submerged] (294.99 ft x 26.48 ft x 17.98 ft, 2151 tons [surfaced], 2379 tons [submerged])