

# Basic Detail Report

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## HMAS Ovens

**Vessel number**

HV000627

**Date**

1967

**Primary Maker**

Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Co Ltd

### Description

HMAS OVENS was built at Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Co Ltd, at Greenock, Scotland. The 90 metre long hull is built of steel but moulded fibreglass is used extensively in casings and the sail or fin. It has a diesel electric propulsion system using twin English Electric motors powered by two 16 cylinder Admiralty Standard diesel generators. On the surface HMAS OVENS 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. The submarine could go to sea for up to 30 days for patrol, and stay underwater for more than six weeks at a time, periodically using the snorkel system to draw air in while running at periscope depth. HMAS OVENS was named after the Irishman John Ovens (1778-1825), a British Army officer who served in NSW on two occasions before he became Chief Engineer of the colony. In 1823 Ovens explored some of the southern areas of NSW, and was responsible for naming the Murrumbidgee and Monroe rivers. The submarine's motto "Silence is Golden". HMAS OVENS was launched on 4 December 1967 by Viscountess Slim and commissioned on 18 April 1969 carrying pennant number 70. HMAS OVENS departed Scotland after completing sea acceptance and weapons trials and arrived in Sydney on 17 October 1969 docking at the fleet's base at HMAS Platypus in Neutral Bay. In April 1970, HMAS OVENS was one of an international fleet of 45 vessels that assembled in Sydney to commemorate the HMB ENDEAVOUR Bicentenary celebrations, and then it took part in multinational exercises linked to Thailand, New Zealand and Singapore. In January 1972 HMAS OVENS became the first RAN submarine to join the ANZUK force based in Singapore before it returned to Australia in June. Between September 1973 and October 1975 HMAS OVENS was decommissioned and underwent its first major refit at Cockatoo Island Dockyard, Sydney. During that refit HMAS OVENS became the first of the RAN's submarines to be fitted with a new long-range passive sonar system. HMAS OVENS then took part in exercises off Australia's east coast and was deployed to South East Asia in May 1976. Over the next four years HMAS OVENS operated around the Australian coast and throughout the Pacific, participating in numerous regional exercises including the RIMPAC series of exercises in Hawaii. In March 1980 HMAS OVENS began its second refit during which the submarine was extensively modernised under the Submarine Weapons Update Programme (SWUP). The refit, which was delayed by strikes in support of the 1981 shorter working week

campaign, was completed in August 1982. HMAS OVENS was then deployed throughout the Pacific and to Hawaii where it was a frequent visitor and participant in the RIMPAC exercises. The submarine was awarded Mk 48 torpedo weapons certification in 1982 and in November 1985 it conducted the first of the RAN's sub-surface firings of the Harpoon anti-ship missile, scoring a direct hit on a distant, small remotely-controlled surface target on the US Navy's Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF), near Hawaii. In 1986, Ovens visited Melbourne as part of the Australian fleet's visit to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the title 'Royal' being granted to the Australian Navy and shortly after was deployed to Hawaii and where it participated in RIMPAC '86. During 1987 HMAS OVENS operated in Australian waters making numerous visits to local ports and participating in a broad range of exercises. In March 1987 it conducted a successful Mk 48 torpedo war-shot firing against the former RAN corvette HMAS COLAC which sank after the explosion. A visit to New Zealand followed in August before it returned to Sydney to prepare for the submarine's third and final major refit. HMAS OVENS entered Cockatoo Island Dockyard in September 1987 and remained in refit until April 1990. During that time a significant work package was undertaken which included a rebuild of the communications centre, repairs to the pressure hull and conversion of numbers 3 and 5 main ballast tanks. After the refit HMAS OVENS celebrated the 21st anniversary of its original commissioning and the following week 25 members of her crew represented the Australian Submarine Squadron in the 75th anniversary ANZAC Day march in Sydney. HMAS OVENS then participated in further exercises off the Australian coast. In 1991 Ovens deployed for exercises with the United States Navy and Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) in Asian waters and then returned to Sydney in May for routine maintenance. It then participated in exercises off the east coast of Australia. In 1992 it participated in Exercise KANGAROO 92 off Darwin and then further exercises off the eastern seaboard before sailing for Western Australia waters and deploying to South East Asia for Exercise STARFISH 92. HMAS OVENS then returned to Sydney in November via Albany in Western Australia. In January 1993 HMAS OVENS was awarded the Submarine Fighting Efficiency Shield and the Mk 48 Firing Proficiency Shield by the Maritime Commander Rear Admiral R.A.K. Walls, AO, RAN. It was the third time that the submarine had won the Shield. Over the next six months HMAS OVENS was involved in local exercises and went to Cockatoo Island Dockyard for a mid-cycle survey. This was followed by participation in Exercise STARFISH 93 before it returned to Sydney in October. In 1994 HMAS OVENS was deployed to Hawaii to participate in RIMPAC 94. HMAS OVEN's final year in commission began with routine exercises off the NSW coast followed by a brief visit to Newcastle and a deployment to New Zealand where it operated with the Royal New Zealand Navy and French Navy. On Friday 4 August 1995, HMAS OVENS left HMAS Platypus for the last time to home-port and decommissioning in Western Australia. HMAS Ovens was decommissioned on 1 December 1995 at HMAS Stirling. The submarine was gifted to the Western Australian Museum in November 1998 and is on display out of the water on the World War II submarine slipway beside the Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle, Western Australia.

## **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 89.91 m x 8.08 m x 5.49 m, 2221.54 tonnes (295 ft x 26.5 ft x 18 ft, 2186 tons)