

Day 1: 2 February 1927

A group of boys from five Australian states warily assembled on a platform of the Central Railway Station in Sydney. Farewelled by local parents, they were directed to a train heading south, down the picturesque New South Wales coast via Kiama, to the small station of Bomaderry where they were met by a naval Chief Petty Officer. From Bomaderry there was a Cadillac charabanc coach into the night some 40 kilometres across the Shoalhaven River to Nowra, and then along the rough bush road to the remote Royal Australian Naval College, situated on Captain's Point at Jervis Bay. It is not recorded if that CPO made the traditional stop at the Nowra pub while telling the boys he needed "to collect some mail"!



Left: VAT Smith's Defence Force Service Medal. Right: The logo signifying all three Australian defence services, as featured on the obverse of the Defence Force Service Medal.

The thirteen new cadets were met on arrival by the College's two Year Officers. After biscuits and cocoa, they were then taken to their dormitory, where beds and sea chests were allocated in alphabetical order. Cadet-Midshipman Victor Smith, thirteen years and eight months old, would have turned in at the end of his first day in the Navy simultaneously excited and exhausted. In his tired boyish dreams that night could he have possibly fantasised the improbable – that almost eighteen thousand days of service later he would be an admiral, knighted by his sovereign and decorated for repeated acts of bravery in the air against his nation's enemies.



The Royal Australian Naval College at Jervis Bay in the pre-war era.