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## Shipbuilders return to Cockatoo Island

Former shipwrights, engineers and fitters & turners will return to Cockatoo Island this week to begin work on restoring a wooden launch from the aircraft carrier *HMAS Sydney* (III).

The 30-foot launch from the *HMAS Sydney*, will be lifted out of the water by crane on Wednesday and placed in a purpose-built cradle to begin work on its conservation.

Working on restoring this unusual craft will be a team of volunteers, some of whom worked on Cockatoo Island when it was Australia's biggest shipyard. With specialist skills and a passionate interest in maritime machinery, the team is helping to save the island's industrial and maritime history.

Materials conservator David McBeath leads the volunteers and worked on Cockatoo Island himself as an apprentice during the 1970s.

"We've been working together for a year now and have built up a great sense of teamwork," said Mr McBeath.

"About half the gang originally worked on the island when it was a working shipyard. Now after spending much of their working lives on Cockatoo, they are coming back to work on projects that they are passionate about."

The volunteer conservation team have already completed a number of heritage projects. They restored one of Cockatoo Island's signature cranes, and recently saved an 18th century cannon, like those used during the Napoleonic War. They will soon begin work on re-instating a 74-foot flagstaff that once stood on top of the island and was used to hoist flags to alert everyone when workers were being hired.

The *Sydney* will be the first boat to be restored under the program. Once the launch is manoeuvred onto its specially built cradle, the team will start to conserve its timber and plywood hull and look at refitting the motor.

The launch was built in 1945 in England. It is the only remaining example of its type in Australia. It was used by the *HMAS Sydney*, which was converted from an aircraft carrier to a troop transport in the early 1960s and refitted at Cockatoo in 1967.

Once the launch is restored, it will be exhibited on the island and at boat shows, and perhaps, like its saviours, it will be back at work on Cockatoo Island.

*The Volunteer Conservation Team is looking for interested people to join the group and can tailor a project to fit your skills or interests. To find out more visit the Harbour Trust's website: [www.cockatooisland.gov.au](http://www.cockatooisland.gov.au) or phone Catherine Enright on (02) 8969 2112.*

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