

Singing Sembawang's praises

O*f Hearts and Minds* is the fascinating history of Sembawang Shipyard and concentrates on the 30 years since the Royal Navy dockyard in Singapore was converted into a commercial shipyard.

Meticulously researched by Singapore military historian Melanie Chew, this is an eminently readable and enjoyable work. It starts with a comprehensive history of Singapore, followed by several chapters on the building and commissioning of the naval dockyard in 1938 as the UK became aware of the island's strategic importance in the light of Japan's growing military and commercial strength after the First World War.

The book traces the events of the 1960s when plans were being made for the British withdrawal, which led to the naval base being handed over to the Singapore government in December 1968. With the help of Swan Hunter, the newly formed Sembawang Shipyard began to learn the business of shiprepair. By the late 1970s, Singapore nationals began to fill managerial positions and started the process of modernising the berths and workshops and expanding the facilities.

Along with many superb double-page colour photos, the book also contains a large number of fascinating old photographs and historical documents of the old naval base and its dockyard.

Many stories were submitted by ex-service people contributing their experiences, photographs, memories and even poems. In many ways the story of Sembawang mirrors the amazing success of Singapore itself from a small trading outpost to one of the leading commercial and industrial countries in the world.

Of Hearts & Minds – The story of Sembawang Shipyard, by Dr Melanie Chew. Published by Sembawang Shipyard, Admiralty Road West, Singapore 759956, Tel: +65 752 2222; Fax +65 758 1025. ISBN 981-04-0670-3.

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