

## PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS MARCH 2017

My sincere thanks are due to both Marty Grogan and Frank Cronin, my Vice Presidents, who conducted our very successful first Official Meeting for the year at our new home, the Waverley RSL. Captain Tim Standen's address was very well received, and in all the meeting went very well.

Whilst you were enjoying yourselves at Waverley I was getting some sea time. No, not the 'Grey Funnel Line' but with the Celebrity Cruise Line in the beautiful Celebrity Solstice. I joined the ship in Auckland NZ on February 17th and disembarked in Sydney on March 1st. Solstice is 122,000 tonnes and had 2,850 guests aboard whilst we circumnavigated both the North and South Islands and came back to Oz, via Hobart and then Sydney. I was familiar with the ship, as Jenny and I had sailed the Mediterranean in her sister ship 'Equinox' in 2009.

A special thrill was when having docked at Napier I saw a warship in the process of leaving port. Unfortunately I didn't have my camera with me and she had begun to go astern in preparation to leave her mooring. The vessel was the Offshore Patrol Vessel HMNZS Wellington, and what makes her special in my eyes was that I saw her launched at Williamstown, January 24th 2008. Wellington is one of two Protector Class off-shore patrol vessels in New Zealand's Navy. She is designed for maritime surveillance, supply and support and patrol missions around New



Zealand's 15,000 kilometer coast, the southern ocean and into the Pacific. Both OPV's are designed to undertake patrols where ice may be encountered. They have a strengthened hull, but are not designed as



an icebreaker or to enter the Antarctic ice packs, but have the range and other cold-climate capability to undertake operations in the freezing conditions of the southern oceans. We are fortunate that there are two u-tube videos on the net, one of the actual launch and another featuring a operation in freezing southern ocean waters, for us to enjoy. The OPV's displacement is 1900 tonnes, beam 14 meters, and length 85 meters. They have a range of 6,000 nautical miles and complement of 42 (core crew) 12 (flight

personnel), plus capacity for other personnel, government agencies etc up to a grand total of 80. Armed with a 25mm Rafael Typhoon stabilised Naval Gun, and a Kaman Seasprite SH-2G(1) Helicopter, plus numerous small arms ranging from 50 calibre machine guns to 9mm pistols. The current strength of the NZ Navy is: 2 Anzac Class Frigates, 2 Off Shore Patrol boats and 4 Inshore Patrol boats, plus a Fleet tanker, a diving support vessel and a multi-purpose vessel. I was very interested to learn that NZ is self-sufficient in oil, having reserves of 67,200,000 barrels.

Our correspondent in Texas is my friend Captain John Bannigan USN Ret. We met when John visited Melbourne in his Arleigh Burke Destroyer USS John S McCain. John showed me round his ship personally and we have become friends, sharing items on the internet which are of interest.

John recently sent me the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments report entitled 'Restoring American Seapower' A New Fleet Architecture for the United States Navy. The report runs to 138 pages plus, and I have downloaded the lot!!

These are very impressive documents and the arguments well thought out and expressed well. I found the historical background provided to empathise an assumption of a suggested course of action, most interesting, particularly the back ground on the cold war etc ref. pages 26-33. Check it out yourself, but buy another pack of copy paper first! **To download this very interesting report just Google: Restoring American Seapower report by CSBA or use the link: [http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/CSBA6224-Fleet\\_Architecture\\_Study\\_WEB.pdf](http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/CSBA6224-Fleet_Architecture_Study_WEB.pdf)**

## REX'S ODYSSEY PART 14-SUNDAY JULY 24 2016

Whilst based in London I undertook day trips by public transport. Last month I recounted to you my visit to Bletchley Park, and next month I will tell you of my quick trip to France to visit the war grave of my Mother's cousin.



I have heroes, and high on my list is Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill. In 1981 Jenny and I did a Churchill pilgrimage, visiting Chartwell, Blenheim Palace and the small room in which he was born, and Bladon Churchyard where the great man was laid to rest. Later, whilst in London we were very very fortunate to be taken on a tour of the Cabinet War Rooms. The War rooms were only available for viewing by application, becoming available to the general public in 1984, and with the excellent Churchill Museum opened by the Queen in 2005.

Naturally I have visited them several times since 1981, but this 1981 visit was extra special in that they were viewed just as they had been left at the end of hostilities with Germany. Imagine my great pleasure in being able to sit at the cabinet table in Churchill's seat. Beside me was a yellow rubbish bin with many burn marks which had been caused by the butts of WSC's cigars. What a wonderful privilege to be in the space where Churchill had sat, un-encumbered by the glass and the crowds. Jenny and I were included with a small party of Police.

Wishing to visit Chartwell again I researched just how I was going to get there by public transport. I found that Sunday was the only day the local bus services Chartwell, so I set out from London on a lovely summers day. Plan of Action!!! Catch the 0845 train from Victoria to Bromley South arriving at 0902. Local bus 246 leaves Bromley South at 0929 and arrives at 1219. Last bus leaves from Chartwell at 1620.

Mission accomplished I duly arrived at Chartwell in beautiful Kent, having gone past Biggin Hill the famous RAF aerodrome on the way. I was disappointed to find that photos were not allowed to be taken in the house. This was



certainly not the case in 1981. Set in 80 acres, the lake, gardens, swimming pool etc. are really lovely.

Originally purchased in 1922, it was the Churchill home until October 1964 when ill health forced him to move to their London flat in Hyde Park Gate.

On the top floor of the house you will find the museum and uniform rooms which have been specially designed to exhibit certain items from the Churchill collection. The uniforms are magnificent, the splendour of court dress, his robes of the Garter, the Lord Warden's of the Cinque ports uniform, and his army and air force uniforms all illustrate his remarkable life; his achievements; his greatness! There are photos galore, wonderful artefacts pertaining to Napoleon, whom Churchill admired. The house in the main is displayed as it was in the 1930's, the era when Winston, Clemmie and their four children all lived there.



In the grounds we find the studio where he did his paintings, a building crammed full of examples of his talent. We see the brick walls he made with his own hands. The swimming pool he had built, his fish in their pond, a statue of Winnie and Clemmie by the side of the lake where they liked to go. Yes, it is a shrine to Churchill and his family, a shrine to the greatest Englishman of the late 19th and twentieth century. We may never see his like again.

*Yours Aye!!*

*Rex Williams*