**PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS DECEMBER 2014**

Jenny and I extend Season's Greetings to you all. May you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2015.

Our 'End of year get together' at the Waverley RSL was very well attended, the food was excellent, and all seemed to have enjoyed themselves. Captain Stephen Bowater lived up to his reputation as being a very interesting Speaker, and CMDR Jim Speed was very appreciative of his 90th Birthday cake and was polite when commenting upon our rendition of 'Happy Birthday, Jim!' Laurie 'Lozza' Pegler from Navy Victoria donated a number of recordings of Jim Speed's address to us in August, for distribution to our members. Lozza's generosity is most appreciated. (CMDR Jim Speed CSC RAN Rtd spoke to us of his adventures as a Royal Navy Commando on Sword Beach during, and prior to the D Day Landings in June 1944). To my mind Jim's address is of considerable historical importance and Marty Grogan and I will seek to have copies placed with the Sea Power Centre and our own Naval Historical Society of Australia in Sydney to have it kept for posterity! My greatest regret is that we have failed to record some of our previous Speaker's addresses. Mac Gregory, Hugh Jarrett, Dacre Smyth, and folk of similar stature and historical interest, have provided us with some excellent talks over the years and sadly we don't have a sound archive to share with those who follow us. Hopefully we can rectify this in this coming year. Recording devices have improved dramatically in past years and are relatively in-expensive.

***SMS EMDEN 'Beached and Done For!' The Battle of Cocos Island November 9th 1914, is the title of the address Major General Mike O'Brien CSC, MDA, BSc will present to us on February 23rd.Please remember the new starting time of 1800. We will have a light supper prior to our brief meeting, followed by our Speaker or film. We plan to get you home much earlier. To cover our costs there will be a minimal charge of $5.***

Mike's interest in Military history is not just confined to the exploits of the 'Army', but encompasses history in general and in this context he has prepared a very interesting and comprehensive account of 'Australia's First Naval Victory'on November 9th 1914.

Mike is much in demand as a Speaker. Indeed, he is one of 3 historians who will be giving lectures during the cruise of MSC's ocean liner 'MSC Orchestra' which culminates off the shores of Gallipoli on Saturday 25th of April 2015.

Our Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove and our Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, together with the German Ambassador Dr Christoph Muller, travelled to Cocos (Keeling) Islands last November to commemorate the centenary of the action between HMAS SYDNEY I and SMS EMDEN on 9th November 1914.

*Vice Admiral Barrett said that SYDNEY's victory was a boost for the allies early in the war and foremost provided a victory for the young nation as it ventured off to the other side of the world.*

***"HMAS SYDNEY's defeat of SMS EMDEN was and remains an important achievement in our history, as our first victory, our first demonstration of the Navy's ability to fight and win at sea. The skill and*** ***determination shown by both ships' companies during the action and the compassion afterwards, forged a respect between two maritime nations. We must not forget the four Australian and 134 German sailors who died in this action, the 85 men wounded and the men forever changed by the events of that day. One hundred years on, I am honored to share his moment of remembrance*** ***with the descendants of those courageous sailors from both sides."***

The Governor General presided over a ceremony unveiling a 'friendship mast' which carries a replica ship's bell for each nation, that bears the inscription 'Friends today, friends tomorrow, friends forever,' echoing the sentiments of EMDEN sailor Able Seaman Arthur Werner. (source <http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Nov2014/Events/1561/Battle-of-Cocos-commemorated-100-years-on.htm#.VIp1PXtK6So>)

 ***Hear the full story from Mike O'Brien -join as at the MNC on February 23rd 2014***

On the 28th February 1915 the RAN Bridging Train, (RANBT) was formed in Melbourne under the command of LCDR L S Bracegirdle RAN. The Unit became the most highly decorated RAN unit in WWI with 20 awards for bravery or good service made to this unit for service at Gallipoli and in the Sinai during 1915-17. Leighton Bracegirdle later became a Rear Admiral and was knighted. We will cover the RANBT story next year in your 'Three Headed Dog', but it is his son who captures our attention in this T.H.D. CMDR Warwick Bracegirdle DSC RAN Ret., wrote an article entitled ['A Royal salute with Live Ammunition-Korea 1952'](http://www.navyhistory.org.au/a-royal-salute-with-live-ammunition-korea-1952/) which was published in our Naval Historical Review of December 1977, and we are mining the NHS Archive to re publish it in this THD. We very much appreciate the ability to share these articles for you. They are part of a treasure trove available for you to read on our NHS Web site.

Our LCDR Mac Gregory greatly admired and respected LCDR Warwick Bracegirdle whilst they both served in HMAS SHROPSHIRE during WW II .Bracegirdle was her Specialist Gunnery Officer. Mac joined the ship in 1944. Mac spoke to me of 'Braces' with real affection. In conjunction with CMDR Bracegirdle's son Nicholas, Mac, with the assistance of his Web master Terry Kearns from Atlanta, listed 24 of Nicholas's father's stories of his career in the RAN on 'Ahoy-Mac's Web Log . The 24 listed chapters, total 68,703 words. They make fascinating reading and we list just eight of them to whet your appetite: '***HMAS PERTH wins her spurs' Action Battledress' 'The Life Rafts' 'Two wet Lieutenants-Clan Frazer incident' 'Moonlight Patrol' 'HMAS SHROPSHIRE-CPO Cooper remembers.' A few days in the life of a destroyer crew in the Mediterranean during WWII' A Vivid Account of the Recapture of the* Phillipines'*.***

***Check them out on*** [***http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/macslog/WarwickBracegirdlesstorie.html***](http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/macslog/WarwickBracegirdlesstorie.html) ***and click on the link “Gentleman Cordite”***

***LCDR Mackenzie Gregory RAN Ret wrote in his cover page covering the 'Introduction to stories of*** ***CMDR Warwick Bracegirdle DSC\*\* RAN. "Gentlemen Cordite”:***

"As a Lieutenant RAN, I was fortunate in late 1944, to be appointed to the crack 8 inch cruiser of the RAN, the fabulous HMAS SHROPSHIRE. This ship at the behest of Winston Churchill had been gifted to our Navy as a replacement for her sister ship HMAS CANBERRA, sunk at the Battle of Savo Island on 9th of August 1942 with the loss of 84 Officers and sailors. Many of SHROPSHIRE'S crew had served in CANBERRA, as had I. Now SHROPSHIRE was many things ,not only a happy and lucky ship, but a most efficient fighting unit, she had been in every Pacific landing, bombarding before the troops went ashore, shooting down Japanese aircraft, and had played a big role at that surface action, the last "Great Sea Battle in Naval History, the Battle of Suraigo Straights."

A main reason for her success was the wonderful gunnery department, lead by the legendary Naval and Specialist Gunnery Officer, Lieutenant Commander Warwick Bracegirdle, RAN. In his WWII service Braces as he was affectionately known, won not one, not two, but three Distinguished Service Crosses .A most unusual feat. He had hand-picked most of his Gunnery ratings, being friendly with the drafting officer at Flinders Naval Depot, where everyone in the RAN does their training. I am proud to have served with this wonderful man. Post war, Braces went off to live in a small village in England, and he died aged 80."

**YOURS AYE!!**

**REX WILLIAMS**