

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS FEBRUARY 2015

We wish you a happy and healthy new year. Our Treasurer, George Bird, has been under the weather recently, but his 'better half' Betty hopes to have him 'hale and hearty' soon. All the best, George!

Whilst perusing the 'Australia Day Honours Lists I was delighted to see that our National President Paul Martin has been awarded the OAM. The citation read: 'For service to the community through the preservation of Naval History'. Paul is tireless in his stewardship of our organisation, and on behalf of the membership of the Victoria Chapter of the Naval Historical Society, I extend our congratulations to Paul upon his receiving this honour. Well deserved! John Jeremy was another of our colleagues in Sydney to be honoured. John is a Vice president and he was awarded the AM in this Honours list. In John's case the citation read: 'For significant service to the preservation and celebration of maritime and naval history'. It is also with delight that I extend our congratulations to John upon his receiving his AM. Having visited the 'Boat Shed' myself on a number of occasions, and having witnessed the dedication of our team of volunteers, the recognition of two of our colleagues in this instance is most satisfying to the society in general, and most appropriate!

You are urged to dig out your old 'dancing pumps' and 'dance the light fantastic 'on Saturday 17th October 2015. The ANZAC Commemorative Ball is being held at the Etihad Stadium in Melbourne and promises to be the social event of the season. Any queries give David Dwyer, the booking officer a call on 0434 407 378, AH (03) 9741 1143 or have a chat with our 'Carmel', Petty Officer Carmel Tom on 0418 710 510, AH (03) 97411143.
Why not make up a table?

From Navy Today 21/1/15 and 15/1/15: Google Maps has published a complete 360 degree virtual experience of USS CONSTITUTION. Using street view technology, Google created on line a virtual experience of touring the ship. The 271 year old warship is scheduled to undergo nearly 3 years restoration work in March, during which time 'Old Ironsides' will have her copper siding replaced, along with major restorations to areas of the ship's hull, interior, and stern. The virtual tour allows the public to view and experience the ship as she traditionally looks, being fully rigged at her berth at pier 1 in Charlestown Navy Yard.

HMS VICTORY will celebrate her 250th anniversary in May this year. Launched in 1765 a 550,000 pound survey recently conducted on board the ship revealed that the vessel's keel has been dropping by half a centimetre a year due to water damage and that the current dry dock cradle was putting stress on her hull. The National Museum took responsibility for the vessel in March 2012 and is already working on enhancing the vessel's cradle with some 140 points of support. Other works that are planned which will have the goal of stabilizing the vessel and replacing the old planking, thus making her top deck watertight.

'Answering the Call' update. Mac Gregory's daughter, Jayne Gregory reports that sculptor Louis Layman is hard at work preparing the statue. We will advise you and the wider Naval Family when the date for the unveiling is fixed. That day will mark the culmination of a dream held by our esteemed and much loved colleague LCDR Mac Gregory RAN who with his friend Don Boyle first envisaged the 'Navy Square' project way back in 2004. In 2008 came the formation of the Naval Heritage Foundation, and the subsequent project which evolved, of a 230cm (7'6") bronze statue of a RAN sailor in WWII rig looking out to sea. Certainly a fitting memorial to the thousands of men and women who have served in our Navy in war and peace! That 'Answering the Call' will soon come to pass is due to the many donations, large and small given to the enterprise. Particularly welcome was the grant from the Department Of Veterans Affairs of \$83,024 which 'put the icing on the cake' in that the

project could proceed. The Navy Family is indeed grateful the Minister the Hon. Michael Ronaldson and his Department for the means to make 'our dream a reality'.

Peter Davidson of Queenscliff enjoys reading our 'Three Headed Dog' and contacted us about an item of interest pertaining to the article about the 'Battle of North Cape,' which was included in my Musings of July 2014. A relative of Peter's served in HMS JAMAICA, a colony class light cruiser, which was in company with HMS DUKE OF YORK coming from the south. HMS BELFAST was racing from the north; both forces closing in on the enemy. Aided by destroyers screen, the objective of sinking the German Battle Cruiser SCHORNHORST came to pass at 1945, (7.45 pm), December 26th 1943. From her crew of 1996 only 36 were saved! What Peter has shared with us is a copy of a document signed by all 36 of the survivors. What makes this even



more special is that on the bottom LH side the then VADM Sir Bruce Fraser RN has signed it and on the RH side the then VADM Robert Burnett RN has added his signature as well. Our thanks to Peter for sharing this historical document with us.

Vice President WO Marty Grogan is a welcome addition to our team. He is putting together a data base detailing the Email addresses of our Victorian Membership of the Victoria chapter of our NHS of A. This asset will prove to be of great benefit in assisting us to keep you up to date. We invite all readers of our THD, members of the NHS or not, to provide your Email addresses to be part of the data base. There may be just one a particular function you would like to attend, and being part of the data base you get to know about it!

If you have an email address please contact Marty at: grevillethedevil@gmail.com

We regret to announce the 'Passing over the Bar' of two more of our WWII veterans.

Robin Kent was a personal friend of mine, who although not a NHS Member, he took great delight in joining us each year for our end of year celebrations in November. He died on January 9th. Robin served with the RN in a destroyer at wars end. Robin was 87, and possessed a great sense of humour, as did his brother. He was with the BBC, and his claim to fame was that he provided the sound effects for the 'Goon Show'.

Whilst visiting my wife, Jenny at Epworth hospital late last year I was advised that there was a WWII RAN veteran in a ward close by. It turned out to be our member Alan Hooley and I spent 30 minutes or so chatting to him about his Naval service. Alan was particularly proud of having served in HMAS WESTRALIA I. As always,

I enjoy hearing of our veterans experiences, and it was a delight to spend time with him. Sadly he died on January 22nd, aged 91.

The Battle of Cocos Island-Nov 1914'.

Major-General Michael O'Brien, CSC, MDA , Bsc. is an excellent speaker and is indeed one of 3 historians giving lectures during the cruise of MSC's Cruise ship 'MSC Orchestra' which culminates off the shores of Gallipoli on Saturday 25th of April 1915. We were treated to his prepared lecture for the cruise on the battle between SMS EMDEN and HMAS SYDNEY 1 on February 23rd at the MNC. The passengers on the cruise will visit Cocos and Mike's illustrated address. It was an excellent presentation and extremely well researched. Rodney had prepared a delicious light supper to begin with and our earlier start was an outstanding success! We have a \$5 cover charge to defray expenses for the supper, which certainly was good value.

Join us next month. You are very welcome.

YOURS AYE!!

Rex Williams