OUR FORGOTTEN SAILORS

Have you heard of the Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme 1940-1945 affectionately referred to as the Yachties? If you have, then you are one of a very limited number of people who have.

Australia received a request from British Admiralty in early May, 1940, for arrangements to be made to appoint a limited number of men to direct commissions in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (Known as Wavy Navy because of the distinctive gold lace curves on the sleeves of Officers to denote Rank, instead of the normal straight gold lace) and accept a number of volunteers as ordinary seamen with a view to their promotion to the commissioned ranks in the RNVR after a period of service.

The Naval Volunteer Reserve had originated in the late nineteenth century with a nucleus of men formed from yachtsmen and members of rowing clubs. While men from all walks of life ashore were theoretically eligible, naval interests and skills were considered desirable. At the outbreak of World War II the approximate strength of the Volunteer Reserve in the United Kingdom was 1000 Officers and 7000 Ratings. Many were yachtsmen who had previous sea experience in the Royal Navy or Merchant Navy but others were a mixed group of stockbrokers, barristers, bankers, authors, actors and other professionals all keen on sailing and the sea. Most temporary Officers came from the lower deck and had been marked as ‘White Paper’ candidates by their Commanding Officers and recommended to the Admiralty.
The Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme volunteers were recruited as potential Officers through this method. Without the Volunteer Reserves, both from England and the Dominions, the Royal Navy would not have been able to continue the war at sea.

The first group of Australian Yachtsies of fifty-eight Ordinary Seamen and fourteen Officers embarked in RMS Strathnaver in September, 1940, as RANVR, although they went in civilian dress and were given no preliminary training in Australia. They were kitted out when they arrived in England and were on Australian rates of pay. Apparently the Officers (the ‘A’ Class) were able to have a flash, ‘Australia’ on the shoulder of their uniform if they applied to do so and the Commanding Admiral agreed that the Ordinary Seamen could have shoulder flashes but they had to organise it among themselves.

The work of Ken Halliwell, Bob Fotheringham and Roy Hall during the 1980’s resulted in 467 Yachtsmen Scheme enlistments being identified. Later work by Clive Taylor and Keith Nicol has increased the nominal roll to five hundred. The story board in the World War II gallery in the Australian War Memorial is incorrect as it states 370 Yachtsmen Scheme Volunteers. Sadly the exact figure will never be known as they generally all came home and resumed their civilian careers. They never formed an Association.

While some were lucky to keep together, many ‘Yachties’ served as the only Australian on board. They were spread across the Fleet in a variety of ships from Aircraft Carriers, Battle Cruisers and Destroyers to Fairmiles. The theatres of war in which these men found themselves were equally varied and many were initiated rapidly into the realities of life at sea during wartime.

However the majority of the Yachtsmen served on light coastal forces craft ranging from Trawlers to Motor Launches (MLs) to, later in the war, Landing Craft – Tank and Infantry (LCTs and LCIs) where their particular skills were important. Some volunteered for Special Forces units.

One group of the ‘Yachties’ were not posted to sea and they are remembered for the incredibly courageous work they carried out in mine disposal or rendering Mines Safe. These men were awarded the highest honours of either the George Cross and/or the George Medal. Lieutenant James Kessack died in action attempting to render a mine safe in April 1941. He was one of
five who sailed with the first Yachtsmen Scheme mobilization in September 1940 in *Strathnaver*. He had in that short time in England dealt with ten unexploded mines. The only four George Crosses awarded to Australians during the Second World War all went to ‘Yachties’:

LCDR Leonard Verdi GOLDSWORTHY, G.C., D.S.C., G.M., is Australian Navy’s highest decorated Naval Officer. (Died aged 85)
LEUT Hugh Randall SYME, G.C., G.M. and Bar (Died aged 62)
LCDR George GOSSE, G.C. (Died age 52)
LCDR John Stuart MOULD, G.C., G.M. (Died age 47)

Three of the four died at relatively young ages and it is wondered what impact their incredible brave service had on this.

No story of the Yachtsmen Scheme would be complete without the mention of their contribution to D-Day. Keith Nicol believes that about three hundred of the men must have served in the Normandy landings in June 1944.

In summary, the young Australians recruited through the Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme to be trained as Officers in the Royal Navy were successful in achieving their ambitions. They were a highly selected group whose level of education and social skills qualified them for acceptance within the RN. The achievement of gaining a commission gave them a sense of privilege and status. They were welcomed by their fellow officers and the men with whom they served and succeeded in
acquiring the skills and professional competence necessary within the RN in various theatres of war in the northern hemisphere. Certainly Lord Louis Mountbatten believed the Australians had special qualities and reputedly requested some of ‘those hot-shot Australian’ for his destroyer flotilla and Combined Operations. They earned respect, acceptance and acknowledgement. Their presence in Britain was noted and they were aware how important this was to public morale. Many of the men recorded the positive comments they received from the British public. They were proud to be Australian and were welcomed also, as Dominion servicemen supporting the mother country.

Yours Aye!
NVN Team

NOTE: This month’s editorial was extracted from a Paper prepared by Janet I. Roberts Billett, in July 2009 and presented at the King-Hall Navy History Conference, 30-31 July, 2009 in Canberra. Click here to download the complete Paper.

VALE

† CAPT W.F. Garner RANR, 19 October 2014.
† CPOCK J.M. Sloper, R52339, 16 October 2014. Aged 75.
† CPOMTH3 F. Eastwell, R42607, 12 October 2014.
† AB A.R. Baddeley, PM2368, 08 October 2014. Aged 93.
† ABQMG E. Stanley, R62410, 30 September 2014. Aged 70.

The above names have been placed on our Vale page

Lest We Forget

Members: When you hear of any of our Navy family that has crossed the bar, please don’t hesitate to let us know. We would like to list their names in perpetuity on our special ‘Vale’ page on the website. If possible list their Rank, Name, Number, Age and their date of passing. Thank you

(WRA). More.....

First LHD accepted by DMO
The Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO) has accepted the first LHD, NUSHIP Canberra, from contractor BAE Systems. A ceremony took place in Canberra’s hangar to mark the significance of the signing of the acceptance certificate. More.....

Speech in recognition of the men and women of the Royal Australian Navy delivered to the House of Representatives
On Wednesday, 1 October 2014 a speech in recognition of the men and women of the Royal Australian Navy was delivered by The Hon Teresa Gambaro, MP, to the House of Representatives, Parliament of Australia.

I rise to speak today in recognition of the tireless and often thankless service undertaken by the men and women of the Royal Australian Navy. More.....

Defence support to Albany Convoy Commemorative Event
Defence has confirmed significant commitment to the first major Australian-based event for the Centenary of ANZAC commemorations with Army, Navy and Air Force assets and personnel set to take part. More.....

The Australian ex-Services Atomic Survivors Association Inc. are the latest association to take advantage of having a website under the Navy Victoria Network’s website. If you are one of the survivors and are interested in the association, why not visit the website at http://atomicsurvivors.navyvic.net

First Principles Review of Defence – Call for public submissions
On 5 August 2014, I announced the external panel who are conducting the
Commemorative Service

When: Sunday 16th November 2014
Where: Queenscliff @ Ocean View Reserve

Organised by
The Naval Commemoration Committee of Victoria
“Perpetuating Gallant Ships and Brave Men”

Program (Full details at [http://navyvic.net/flagship.html](http://navyvic.net/flagship.html))
11:10 AM Marchers fall in, King Street
11:30 AM Service commences Ocean View Reserve
12:30 PM Lunch RSL Hall King Street (Must Book)

Dress: Medals please

Keep up to date with our own Smartphone / Tablet App. Go to our website to view the brochure which explains how to download and install the NVN App to your phone / tablet.

Interests: If you have a specific interest/link you think would be of appeal to the wider Navy community, we would be pleased to hear about it. Just email our webmaster – webmaster@navyvic.net with details.

NCCV’s “Rogues’ Yarn” attached below
DIARY NOTES

Services at the Shrine of Remembrance
[Everyone welcome]

RAN Recruits
Emms Division
Wreath Laying
Sanctuary
2NOV14@1030

HMAS SYDNEY 1
Centenary Wreath Laying Service
Sanctuary
9NOV14@1200

Remembrance Day
Forecourt Service
11NOV14@1100

HMAS SYDNEY 2
Wreath Laying
Sanctuary
19NOV14@1200

October was an important month for all Seafarers in Victoria. The service at St Paul’s Cathedral was one of the most significant events for the year, focused on commemoration and the traits of Seafarers. This service was held on the 19th October, closest Sunday to Trafalgar Day. This occasion brought together all manner of people who have direct or indirect links to the defence of our ocean trade routes or have a connection with the maritime industry, an industry so critical to Australia’s wellbeing. This year the Guest of Honour was Rear Admiral Mark Purcell RAN, Head Maritime Services, Defence Materiel Organisation. Also in attendance was Captain Steve Bowater OAM RAN, Commanding Officer HMAS Cerberus and Senior Naval Officer Victoria. The readings were given by a variety of identities relevant to the purpose of the service, they included representative from the Mission to Seafarers, Royal Australian Navy, Master Mariners and NCCV. The program of readings, hymns and scripture were relevant to the occasion, particularly matching the Dean’s sermon. The Dean, once a helmsman in the Royal National Lifeboat Institute network supported rescue missions along the west coast of Wales for over three years. His sermon touched on his own experience at sea and the gravity of the situation when encountering unpleasant seas. The Seaman’s Anthem was sung by the choir, whilst being the words of the Naval Hymn, this was the first time in Australia that this new arrangement had been heard. Every pew was taken up by young and old with an ear tuned to the words so crucial to the wellbeing of all mariners. Included in the gathering were mariners of both Royal Australian

and Merchant Navies. Some had travelled from overseas for a reunion of Port Line Merchant Navy Master Mariners. Others from interstate, but mostly Victorians attended to show support for those that currently serve, have served and those no longer with us. The service was made very special by the attendance of the Australian White Ensign Colour Party and a flag bearing party of Australian Navy Cadets. Flags representing many Nations and a large number of house flags from Maritime Industry Shipping Lines were paraded into the Cathedral. The Royal Australian Navy Band – Melbourne Detachment played during the procession, two hymns and supported the protocol of commemoration where the Act of Remembrance took place. Two Cadets recited the Naval Ode and CDRE Jim Dickson AM MBE RAN Rtd, Patron NCCV, recited the Ode to the Fallen. The Last Post, Reveille and the National Anthem followed making it a very poignant moment as everyone reflected on those that are no longer with us. This key activity for Navy Victoria should be regarded as a mandatory commitment across all of our different Associations.

Next NCCV meeting
9DEC14@1030 at Melb Naval Centre.
All Ship/Unit/Branch Associations are encouraged to be represented!

HMAS GOORANGAI
Service
16NOV14@1110
Queenscliff RSL

Email: naval.commemoration.committee@gmail.com
Website: http://navyvic.net/
President’s Report

A busy time for those of us who attended the key activities conducted during the month of October. The Seafarers was a particularly well attended service with a good number of Master Mariners along with RAN and ex-Service men & women. The Navy Wreath Laying Service followed the Seafarers at 1230 on the same day. This made the journey rather quick from St Paul’s to the Shrine of Remembrance. The service in the Sanctuary was an acute reminder of the contribution made over the past century. Our service men and women of today’s Navy are ready to do their duty as effectively and efficiently as any of their predecessors. Notwithstanding the different technology and the current mix of women at sea. It is apparent that these changes have improved the potency of the Navy to levels unknown to the old school.

The recent raising of the risk across the nation has caused some issues with respect to ceremonial activity located in public venues. One requirement has been the attendance of Victoria Police, or at a minimum their rapid availability should anything untoward occur. We hope this situation doesn’t diminish the importance of the flagship activities planned through the next few years. We are more aware of the Spirit of ANZAC centenary events to occur due to the energetic efforts of the ANZAC Centenary Committee of Victoria, chaired by Hon Ted Baillieu. Navy has also established an ANZAC Navy Co-ordination Committee, chaired by CDRE Bob Richards to seek the best support of Naval matters through WW1. In particular, the participation of Navy and Ex-Navy on ANZAC Day in 2015 is also under review. Ideally, all Associations & RSL Sub-Branches will look seriously at conducting ANZAC services on the weekend before 25 April to maximise participation in the CBD on ANZAC Day 2015.

We are seeing fewer WW2 Veterans these days, so it is best to make the most of those opportunities when they attend the many commemorative activities. Their legacy is significant and deserves our respect.

Yours aye, Terry Makings

HMAS GOORANGAI Commemorative Service

On the 16th November the annual HMAS Goorangai Commemorative Service will occur. Goorangai was the first RAN surface warship lost, circumstances surrounding the loss being such that little has been publicised since. The entire Ship’s Company of 24 men were lost. The Service commences at 1130, Sunday 16th November, Ocean View Reserve, Queenscliff. If able, join a short march from the RSL Rooms at 1110. After the commemorative service a lunch will be served in the Queenscliff Point Lonsdale RSL Rooms, King Street. The cost is a very reasonable $25 pp and to avail yourself of this opportunity you will need to transfer the total amount ($25x people) to the NCCV: BSB 633 000, A/C 146712294. Make sure you identify the transfer by using your family name and email NCCV as detailed below. On emailing, if you wish, nominate a ship table.

Email: naval.commemoration.committee@gmail.com Website: http://navyvic.net
HMAS Australia Association conducted their annual commemoration service in memory of the Battle of Leyte at St Paul’s Cathedral on Thursday, 23 OCT 14. Few members of the original crew were in attendance to reflect on their experience at that fateful time. HMAS Australia was part of an armada of Warships, primarily from the USA deployed to clear the way on the journey to Japan. The time had come to destroy the enemy forces seeking to repel the Allied forces at Leyte Gulf, Philippines. The Battle of Leyte Gulf is regarded as the biggest sea battle of all time. Over 850 ships and aircraft were actively involved. The fighting commenced on 12 OCT 44 and continued through to 26 OCT 44. By the end of this relatively short period, much of the Japanese Fleet had been destroyed. Australia’s involvement was through the deployment of Australian cruisers HMA Ships Australia and Shropshire, the destroyers HMA Ships Arunta and Warramunga. The amphibious landings involved HMA Ships Westralia, Kanimbla, and Manoora. This battle was a turning point as it had diminished the enemy Fleet in the Pacific to the point where it had lost any control it may have had over the Pacific Ocean. The service at St Paul’s may prompt descendants to make contact with the association: desmond.shinkfield@bigpond.com

100 years ago, thousands of Victorians embarked at Port Melbourne bound for the battlefields in Europe. By the end of October 1914, 17 troopships had left Victorian shores carrying almost 8,000 troops as well as nurses, technicians, horses, supplies and weaponry. This was Victoria’s First Convoy, they were to meet at Albany before sailing to Egypt. A number of symbolic activities were arranged at Princes Pier on Sunday, 19 OCT 14 to remind us of the sentiment during those departures. Men/women in uniform and outfits of the day, also a number of civilians in period clothing gave a clear impression of what may have occurred those many years ago. Below, HMA Ships ARUNTA & PARRAMATTA, witness in silence the events unfold on Princes Pier as rosemary and poppies were despatched to the sea by many Victorians.
ANZAC Centenary
We have seen a busy schedule during the past few weeks, in particular the event at Princes Pier, Sunday 19 October. The activities were varied and heightened the connection between our current population and the experience that occurred at Princes Pier so long ago. The departure of the first group of Australian Servicemen & Nurses from Melbourne to Albany, then Egypt was unambiguous and sentimental. The ANZAC Centenary Committee of Victoria, Chaired by the Hon Ted Baillieu is encouraging all Victorians to make a connection with their heritage. Everyone has a connection either directly or indirectly with WW1. If you live in a house that is over 100 years old, did a serviceman or nurse live in that house. Finding out your connection may be the source of great pride in how your family supported the war effort. Sadly, every family that lived in Victoria 100 years ago were impacted by the tragic outcome of the war. Even if your family came to Australia after WW1, we can all be grateful for the courageous effort made by so many Victorians, a job done so we might live as we do today.

Items of special interest

ANZAC Commemoration Navy Ball. We have mentioned the Navy Ball a few times over recent months, the purpose being to prompt a response from you to the organisers so that they might get a good handle on the likely numbers. Please discuss with your organisation and test the level of interest. This event will be a big deal and represent the commencement of Navy Week 2015. Refresh and send your email to: rodney.withers@bigpond.com

Officers & Warrant Officers Mess Dinner. The annual mess dinner will be held at 1900 on Friday 14th November, venue will again be Melbourne University. Easy to get to by public transport and plenty of parking nearby. If you are interested in attending the mess dinner, then an early response is essential. Contact ericmushins@optusnet.com.au

HMAS CASTLEMAINE Museum Ship. During WW2 Australia had a ship building capability that enabled 60 Corvettes to be constructed at a number of dockyard around Australia. Victoria’s effort was through the skills deployed at the Dockyard, Williamstown. CASTLEMAINE is a proud product of Melbourne. For a mere $6 you can visit this great asset at Gem Pier, Williamstown.

Distribution of the Rogues Yarn. Each time we despatch this newsletter we ask that it be sent to all members of your Association. The reason is that we are trying to make sure the Flagship Events are front of mind. These events are primarily commemorative services that reflect the effort by so many at a difficult time in Australia’s past. Given there are thousands of ex-Navy men and women in Victoria, it is disappointing that we are unable to stimulate sufficient interest for each person to attend at least one event. It will be a sad day if we lose our Associations because of lack of interest through poor communications. If you need a hand with trying to improve the situation within your Association, by all means given the NCCV a call, or email us at the address above & below.

Commander Mike Oborn CSM RAN. We have been very lucky to have Mike Oborn as the XO, HMAS Cerberus for the past three years. Mike has been extremely supportive of the wider Navy Community in Victoria. He has been very helpful when uniformed resources have been requested. We wish him our very best for when he eventually takes command of HMAS SIRIUS.