

## PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS    OCTOBER 2015

Many of us attended the Navy Ball at the Atrium Flemington Racecourse on October 17th, and the consensus is that it was a splendid occasion. Our congratulations go to the organising committee for a job well done. Personally I had a great time!

Traditionally we have 'Show and Tell' as part of our AGM and we urge you to check out that trunk in the attic and share your treasures with your friends, who are sure to believe everything you tell them about it! Show and tell is a lot of fun and we are sure to share a few laughs together, as always!

**Rex's Odyssey – Part 1:** My son, David, is working in Manila and so my trip, over two months, really



started and ended in the Philippines. It was really great to catch up with the Williams family and be with them for a couple of weeks sharing their new environment. I'd like to also share with you my time at the American Cemetery in Manila and my day trip to Corregidor Island.

The American Cemetery and Memorial is set on 152 acres, and burials number 17,201 most of who lost their lives in operations in the New Guinea and Philippines area. The headstones are aligned in 11 plots forming a generally circular pattern, set amongst lush lawns and beautiful trees white and shrubs. It is indeed a beautiful resting place which is maintained to perfection. The chapel building is situated near the centre of the complex and in front of it on a wide terrace are two large hemicycles containing 25 mosaic maps recalling the achievements of America and her allies in the Pacific, Chinese Indian and Burmese theatres during WWII. These maps are most informative and an integral part of the memorial. Tablets of the missing, commemorate a further 36,285 names.



Situated at the top of Manila bay, Corregidor island was of great strategic importance. Heavily fortified by the Americans at the beginning of the 20th century, they also undertook the building of a cinema, barracks a hospital, a swimming pool, and other amenities to support a large garrison. Heavily bombed and shelled by both the Japanese upon the defeat of the Americans on the Bataan Peninsula, and by the Americans themselves later in the war, the gun

emplacements and buildings are now mainly in ruins. David had organised a walking tour for us and whilst rather taxing, it proved worthwhile. Enjoy the photos.

Whilst staying in Derbyshire, my friend Brian Evans and I drove up to Yorkshire to view the 'Yorkshire Air Museum', which is situated in a 22 acre parkland site on the former WWII RAF Bomber Command

Station at Elvington near the City of York. The Museum features 15 top class exhibitions and over 60 historic aircraft and vehicles, many of which are in working order.

The collection features early pre war bi planes such as the Avro 504k, through to WWII icons such as the Spitfire all the way to newly retired jets such as the Nimrod MR2, fresh from recent Middle eastern conflicts. Of particular interest to our THD readership are indeed the Nimrod, the Gannet, the Buccaneer and the Harrier, and we have photographs for you plus a brief description of each plane.



**HAWKER SIDDELEY NIMROD MR2 XV250:** Based on the De Havilland Comet, the worlds' first jet airliner the Nimrod entered service in the early 70's until being retired in March 2010. A Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft she was fitted with air to surface missiles, torpedoes and mines. Nimrod carried radar and other secret electronic equipment and was regarded as the most advanced reconnaissance aircraft in the world. It's role was detecting sea borne threats from both submarines and surface vessels.



**FAIRLEY GANNET AEW3 XL 502:** This aircraft was in service from 1953-1978 and there were 303 manufactured in the Anti Submarine Variant and a further 45 were used in an Airborne Early warning role. Gannets were flown by both the Royal Navy and our Royal Australian Navy from aircraft carriers and land bases in order to spot enemy shipping and aircraft. Originally designed as anti-submarine aircraft, they carried sophisticated radar and other electronic warfare

systems.



**BLACKBURN BUCCANEER S2 XN974:** In service from 1964 until 1994 the Buccaneer Fighter Bomber was designed to attack Soviet ships during the cold war. They first served with the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm, flying from both air craft carriers and land bases. Later the Royal Air Force used them as ground attack aircraft also.



**HAWKER SIDDLEY HARRIER 'JUMP JET' GR3 XV 748:** The Harrier depicted is but one variant of this fantastic aircraft. Harriers served with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy from 1969-2006. Whilst visiting the RAF Museum at Hendon during my recent trip, I experienced the sensation of flying whilst in a Harrier Simulator. It was fun indeed! Heroes of the Falklands War in 1982, 10 of the GR3 Harriers were modified to fly from HMS HERMES, whilst both

ATLANTIC CONVEYOR and ATLANTIC CAUSEWAY were fitted with temporary flight decks to accommodate Sea Harriers and GR3's. During the Falklands war Harriers carried Paveway laser guided bombs and 50 mm rocket pods and also as self protection, were fitted with Sidewinder air-to-air

missiles. The Mc Donnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier II continues in service with the US Marine Corps, and the Italian and Spanish Navies.

Whilst overseas I continued my ongoing research into the life and times of Vice Admiral of the White, Horatio Nelson KB RN, 1st Viscount Nelson. October 21st is a very special day to us being the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, and it is fitting that we honour him in this THD. I look forward to sharing with you the fruits of my labour, over the next few months.

***I quote from a speech that HM the Queen gave at a dinner in HMS VICTORY on October 21st 2005:***

*First Sea Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Both Prince Philip and I are delighted to join you for this very special celebration here in the Great Cabin of Lord Nelson's Flagship to mark his famous victory at Trafalgar exactly two hundred years ago. The defeat of the combined French and Spanish fleets lifted the very real threat of an invasion of Britain. It was greeted by the nation with huge relief, and it was the first step in the process of defeating Napoleon's ambitious plans for the domination of Europe. Success at Trafalgar was by no means a foregone conclusion. The British Fleet, under the command of Lord Nelson, faced a formidable enemy, but battles are seldom decided by statistics.*

*It was the qualities of the leadership and comradeship which he gave to the Royal Navy in the years leading up to his final battle that made all the difference. He was without doubt a superb tactician and a fearless and determined commander, but he was above all a man of faith, duty and deep concern for the welfare of everyone in his fleet. Tonight we recall his greatest battle and his death at the moment of victory, but we also remember his example of service and his humanity. Just before the battle, Nelson sat down at the desk behind me, to compose his famous prayer in terms so typical of his character:-*

***"May the great God, whom I worship, grant to my Country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory: and may no misconduct, in anyone, tarnish it, and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British Fleet."***

*I invite you to join me in the traditional toast:*

***"To the immortal memory of Horatio, Lord Nelson, and to all those who fell with him."***

**YOURS AYE!!**

**REX WILLIAMS**