

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS APRIL 2017

We commemorate Anzac Day this year by sharing an excellent DVD documentary entitled 'Gallipoli Untold Stories' at our April Meeting. I have previewed the presentation and very much enjoyed the first-hand accounts given by ten of our heroes who were alive in 1990 when this DVD was made. It also gives a rare insight into what really happened, and includes rare black and white film footage and photographs many of which I hadn't viewed previously. One glaring omission is that they have not mentioned the exploits of AEII on April 25th, and it's bearing on the campaign.

Later, in my musings, I cover my own personal pilgrimage last year to the battle fields, and also to the grave of my Mother's Cousin at Wimereux in France. All are welcome to join us at our meetings in the Sunset Room at the Waverley RSL, and share our fellowship. The Warramunga restaurant opens at 1730 and a number of us take the opportunity of enjoying a lovely meal and a few drinks before the meeting. You are very welcome to join us. As the RSL offer special deals on a Monday night we need to book ahead in order to secure a table. Rodney Phillips is co-ordinating the booking of tables for us. We would like *you* to join us, and suggest you contact Rodney on 0466 983 313 or email him at: rodneyphillips212@hotmail.com. *Please note: Our Meeting now begins at 1900, thus giving you plenty of time to enjoy your meal in the restaurant.*

Major-General Mike O'Brien certainly lived up to his reputation as an excellent speaker at our March meeting. 'The Story of the World's First Guided Missile' was a very interesting presentation, and I was delighted that members of the Waverley RSL community joined with us to enjoy Mike's illustrated lecture.

Museum of HMAS CERBERUS: I have long been fascinated by the museum of 'HMAS Cerberus' the cradle of the Navy. The Museum opened in 1980 in a building that was first built in 1925 as the New Entry Study Block, firstly occupying one room. Under the Umbrella of the 'Naval Heritage Collection' the museum has grown considerably, and under the guidance of our friend and colleague WO Marty Grogan OAM RANR has become a 'must see' for the many Bus tour groups which visit the RAN Museum. I was present on April 5th when a Bus tour from Seaford visited the facility. Marty was their host and gave them a very interesting introductory talk about the collection. He covered the story of the Colonial Navies, the original HMVS Cerberus, and the clash between HMAS Sydney and the German Cruiser SMS Emden. Much of the original collection consisted of artifacts from the colonial Navies, and the Sydney/Emden battle, plus the Bitia-Paka conflict in German New Guinea, which also took place in 1914. Marty then expounded on the treasures contained in several buildings which now house the greatly increased collection, which has evolved under his stewardship. Our Navy now has an excellent museum at Cerberus which reflects modern museum thinking. Wednesday April 5th was my first day at Cerberus as a volunteer in the museum. It is indeed a hive of activity. A room



featuring Navy Bands was opened recently, and last November our Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove, AK MC (Retd) visited HMAS Cerberus. Sir Peter was Reviewing Officer for Vice Regal Ceremonial Divisions, and he presented awards and medals. It was a splendid occasion, made even more special when the Queen's Colour were paraded. After the parade His Excellency opened the HMAS Sydney room in the Cerberus museum, and also presented our WO

Grogan with an award as well.

Having also visited the Naval Heritage Centre, at Garden Island in Sydney, a facility which is definitely of international standard, I commend both establishments to you. You access the Heritage Centre by getting the Watson's Bay Ferry from Pier 5, and alighting at Garden Island.

Rex's Odyssey Part 13-July 2016

I embarked 'Emerald Princess' at Southampton on July 6th, bound for a Baltic cruise. Our first port of call was Zeebrugge and I took the opportunity of taking excursion to Bruges which encompassed Ypres, and, Menin Gate plus Tyne Cot etc and the battlefields. In past years I had taken extensive tours of the Battle fields in Belgium whilst based in Bruges, but I couldn't resist one last visit, as I intended to visit my Mother's cousin's grave in France after the cruise, and my research found that he had been in the battle Of Polygon Wood, suffered a head wound a few days after the battle and was evacuated to the large British Army Hospital in Wimereux, where he subsequently died of his wounds.



Polygon Wood Cemetery

London Tuesday July 26th 2016: Based in London I caught the 0650 London to Lyon Train from St Pancras, via the Channel, arriving in Calais at 0859, and arriving at Wimereux at 1001. Expecting to find a cab, I instead found a practically deserted station. After two tries I found a chap who spoke English, and he directed me to the local shop, suggesting that the lady there would ring a cab for me! You meet some wonderful people when you travel on your own, and I hit the Jackpot when I met Caroline the Proprietor of the shop. She is a delightful 30 something young Mum, married to the local Doctor. After explaining my predicament, Caroline tried unsuccessfully to book the local taxi. She was not deterred by this and proceeded to write a note 'Back in 5 minutes' and stuck it on the window. We then got in her car and she took me to the local cemetery, which is part municipal and part war graves. Caroline insisted on waiting until I had established that it was the correct cemetery and then after a hug she went on her way, suggesting that if I encountered any more problems to contact her. *I will never forget her kindness to me.* Most families in Australia were affected by WWI, and my Mother's paternal family was no exception. The Allwood family came to Australia from Philadelphia in the US during the 19th Century and settled in Western Victoria and in Western Australia. Six of my mother's family enlisted in the Great War, and all but William John Allwood returned home. He enlisted in the AIF at Warrnambool on 14th February 1916. He became part of the reinforcements to the 29th Infantry Battalion, which had been badly mauled in the



Fromelles fiasco, and he subsequently took part in the Battle of Polygon Wood. Bill was wounded in action on October 26th. He was sent to the 3rd Canadian Casualty station, and subsequently sent by hospital train to the 8th Stationary Hospital at Wimereux where he died aged 32, on November 15th 1917. One the five members of my family to return from the war, William Allwood, received the Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry at Hamel Wood South East of Corbie on July 4th 1918 whilst in charge of a Lewis gun. He was a brave man! The War graves commission facilitated my receiving from the Australian War Memorial, two wooden crosses to place on William John's grave. I had felt the need to honour him for some years and

thanks to my travel agent and Caroline, I was able to achieve my aim and return to London that night. *Lt Col John McCrae MD the Canadian Doctor who wrote 'In Flanders Fields' on May 3rd 1915, and who died on January 28th 1918 is also buried in the same cemetery.* **LEST WE FORGET!**

YOURS AYE!!

REX WILLIAMS