

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS DECEMBER 2015

Naval pride was well to the fore in Port Melbourne on Friday November 27th and in Hastings on Saturday November 28th.

We were absolutely delighted with the overall quality and authenticity of the 'Answering the Call' statue our Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Tim Barrett AO CSC RAN, unveiled in Port Melbourne on the 27th. Admiral Barrett has been very supportive of this project since becoming our leader and his speech prior to the actual unveiling, revealed a depth of knowledge in the project, its conception and objectives. We have obtained a copy of our Chief's speech and I am delighted to share it with you by quoting excerpts from it. I feel it certainly ticks all the boxes.

"ANSWERING THE CALL" Port of Melbourne Statue Unveiling. CN Address:

QUOTED EXERPTS: I commence my address by remembering and saluting the naval service and the life's work of the late LCDR Mackenzie J Gregory, the former head of the Naval Heritage Foundation. It is very good to have Mac's family with us for this unveiling of his legacy.

"Mac" started at the RAN College as a Cadet Midshipman in 1936. He survived the sinking of HMAS *CANBERRA* and was aboard HMAS *SHROPSHIRE* in Tokyo Bay when the surrender was signed in 1945.

He devoted many years to keeping naval history and heritage alive. The first Council meeting at which Mac proposed the memorial was in October 2008. It was Mac's sustained perseverance, and that of his team, and all those who shared his vision, which has given us this memorial.

In 2011 Mac was awarded Pride of Australia Medal for his work in preserving the memory of those who gave naval service. He donated the prize to the work of the Foundation.

He was ably assisted in his work by his friend and the first Vice President of the Foundation the late Don Boyle and by others here today. As Patron of the Foundation I congratulate and thank all those who have kept Mac and Don's vision alive and brought it to fruition.

I thank the Department of Veterans affairs for supporting this memorial as Century of Anzac project. It has also received funding from the Victorian State Government through the ANZAC Centenary Grants Committee.

A succession of Mayors and councilors of the City of Port Phillip have seen this project through to installation. I ask the Mayor to convey the thanks of the Naval Heritage Foundation and the Navy, to all the councillors and city staff who made it possible to place this memorial here.

I am delighted with this work of art. The artistic understanding, skill and craftsmanship of the sculptor, Louis Laumen has captured the spirit of this young sailor with great accuracy and truth. It is a work of simplicity, dignity and beauty. It has the power to move us. That is all we can ask of our memorials. This one succeeds admirably and I thank Louis for his dedication to the project and the months of

creative work which he has put into this sculpture. I know that he and Mac worked closely on this concept for many years.

Our sailor is wearing the uniform of the 1939-45 war. He represents both the officers and sailors who fought the war at sea. He also represents the other two naval services, the Womens Royal Australian Naval Service, who were the Navy's essential backstop ashore, and the RAN's nurses whose service was, as always, 'beyond praise'.

In the six years of that war the RAN Reserve expanded from 4400 officers and sailors to over 30,000. Most of these young civilians went through Flinders Naval Depot, now HMAS *CERBERUS*. They trained hard and fast and then transited through HMAS *LONSDALE* to join their first ship. And so, ready or not, they went to war

Appropriately our newly qualified bronze sailor here is looking out at the entry of Port Phillip Bay on a bearing of 210 degrees. Beyond is the open sea-his new home where he must brave what the naval prayer accurately calls "*the dangers of the sea and the violence of the enemy.*" What will become of him? He may be posted to one of the Navy's fast well armed modern cruisers, *SYDNEY*, *PERTH*, *CANBERRA* or *AUSTRALIA*, each which fought with great honour. He may join an elderly destroyer of the famous "Scrap iron Flotilla" and fight it out with U boats and the German and Italian air Forces in the Mediterranean. He may be posted to one of the "greyhounds of the Navy" the fast modern destroyers.

Our young reservist sailor is very likely to join one of the 56 Australian built Bathurst class minesweepers. These little ships were workhorses not race horses. They fought across the seven seas. They sunk submarines, they shelled enemy beaches and where ever convoys needed protecting and troops ashore needed to be sustained from the sea, they were there!

In the first years of the war many of our ships both large and small did not survive the battles in which they were engaged. Ships companies fought to the end often against heavy odds. In the Second World War 219 officers and 1951 sailors of the RAN lost their lives. Most lie with their ships and have no grave but the cruel sea. So when one considers what new recruit sailors who "answered the call" were facing when they went into battle, one can only admire the mental strength, resilience and the enduring courage that these very young men displayed.

We who are serving in naval uniform today are their heirs. They were heirs to the generations of sailors who had trained and drilled here since 1859 when the Victorian Naval Brigade was founded in the Port of Melbourne.

During the First World War the Port of Melbourne reserve Depot trained sailors went into action in New Guinea in 1914. They were in the crew of HMAS *SYDNEY* when she defeated the German raider SMS *EMDEN*. Melbourne depot sailors stood the long watches in the bitter cold of the North Sea and the Atlantic until the war of 1914-18 was won.

The very last of the RAN's sailors of the First World War died just over a decade ago. The very much larger number who volunteered for the Second World War are now few in number, in their nineties and

they too will be gone in a few years. That inevitable fact makes the placement of this memorial very timely because here, in bronze, is a permanent reminder of these great hearted sailors who gave so much in both world wars and the conflicts since. Our sailor looking out to sea reminds us of those who never came back. But he also reminds us of those who came home and lived out their lives as our fathers and grandfathers and have since died.

While remembering the RAN's sailors we do not forget the thousands of sailors of the Australian Merchant Navy who served and the hundreds who died and were wounded in both world wars. It was the Merchant Navy Ships which carried the sinews of war, food, fuel, ammunition and troops, to the battlefronts of the world and sustained the populations at home until the victory was won.

This memorial is also a tribute to their service under the Red Ensign.

This fine new statue is a place of reflection where our generation, and those that come after us, can pause, and remember what we owe to all those who fought and returned from the sea-and to those who lie there still. The legacy of all those Australian sailors commemorated here is our life long liberty.

Lest We Forget. (END OF QUOTE)

Hastings welcomes 700 hundred sailors on Saturday November 28th.

Commanding Officer of HMAS CERBERUS, Captain Stephen Bowater OAM RAN proudly led his Ship's Company through the town of Hastings on the 28th, with swords drawn, drums beating, bands playing and colours flying, exercising the right of freedom of entry, a tradition which dates back to medieval times. ***Captain Bowater exclaimed: "Today is a very special day for CERBERUS. Navy has had ties to this community for 95 years and today recognises the relationship between the Shire, the community of the Mornington Peninsular and CERBERUS." "Cerberus is a Tri -service training establishment and today I'm particularly proud to march with not just my sailors, but with our soldiers, airmen and airwomen."***

The Hastings folk were not only treated to the spectacle of the march, but also witnessed fly pasts by vintage aircraft and of an RAN S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopter, which happened to be piloted by a local lad Lieutenant Jordan Taylor RAN who was born in nearby Balnarring. He landed his helicopter on the Foreshore after the parade, enabling it to be viewed, and, for the public to chat with the crew.

Commemorate the Centenary of the Evacuation of Gallipoli at a grave side Ceremony on Sunday December 20th. Where: Lilydale Lawn Cemetery Cnr Victoria Rd and Nelson Road Lilydale. At 1800 a ceremony and the unveiling of a memorial will take place at the graveside of Major William Scurry MC DCM, the inventor of the time release gun that enabled the evacuation to take place with-out the envisaged loss of life of up to 30% of our troops. Further detail from Don Parsons 0418588360.

An initiative of The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust and the Lilydale RSL Sub-Branch.

The concept of starting our new year with a 'Bring a Friend' meeting appeals to me. My rationale is that they have sampled Rodney's supper they are bound to return, and join us! With this long term objective

in mind I was delighted when Captain Martin Holme accepted my invitation to be our first speaker for the year. Martin has shared with us his experiences with the British army twice before and on February 22nd he shares with us "The Troubles-Cyprus 1958 " (Some Serious-Some Not!) which promises to be equally entertaining.

CHECK OUT THE FLYER ELSEWHERE IN THIS 'DOG' AND PUT IT IN YOUR DIARY NOW!

WHILST YOU HAVE YOUR NEW DIARY OUT PLEASE NOTE THAT BECAUSE EASTER MONDAY AND ANZAC DAY FALL ON THE FOURTH MONDAYS OF MARCH AND APRIL NEXT YEAR WE WILL BE MEETING ON MONDAY MARCH 21st AND MONDAY APRIL 18th.

It was lovely to catch up with George Bird at the 'Answering the Call' Unveiling and we sincerely trust that those of our membership like 'Our' George who have been 'under the weather' enjoy health and happiness in the year ahead.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year to you all!

YOURS AYE!!

REX WILLIAMS