



Naval Historical Society
of Australia

Victorian Chapter

President's Musings – February 2018

We wish you and yours a Happy and Healthy New Year. We have an excellent speaker lined up this month. Our XO at HMAS CERBERUS, CMDR Matthew Hoffman will share with us his passion for HMA Submarine service. As a submariner he certainly knows his subject!! ***CHECK OUT THE FLYER FOR FURTHER INFORMATION!***

We extend a very warm welcome to our Garden State, to the new Senior Naval Officer Victoria, Commodore Greg Yorke, CSC, RANR. Commodore Yorke has not only enjoyed an excellent Naval career, he has been involved also with companies such as KPMG Australia, was Leading consultant to a Mining company, as well as the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries(source *Linkedin*). *Indeed a man of many parts and we look forward to meeting him.*

On March 26th our Speaker is Pamela Nicholls, a WWII WRAN who enlisted in 1943, spurred on to join the Navy, by the bombing of Darwin. Pamela was posted to HMAS HARMAN initially, and after training, she monitored Imperial Japanese Navy ship and submarine radio traffic, in conjunction with Bletchley Park in the UK. Allied intelligence had broken the Japanese Naval Code and indeed the job done by Pamela and her colleagues was essential to the war effort! Commissioned later in the war, Pamela's story is well worth hearing. *Join us at Waverley RSL on March 26th. Why not enjoy a meal in the 'Warramunga' restaurant beforehand? Check out the NHS of A or Navy Victoria Network websites for further information.*

Our April meeting is on the 30th, and not on the 23rd April as you would expect, given that Monday 23rd is the fourth Monday! The RSL has another function on that night. *However the archive recording we have for you is well worth waiting a further seven days for:*

ANZAC VOICES GALLIPOLI. *From those who were there! Anzac Voices is the story of Gallipoli, told by the Diggers who lived through it: regular troops, senior commanders, stretcher bearers, signal operators, a nurse and a Turkish general, as well as Australia's official war correspondent. It is an ABC Classics CD 481-1626, two disc set, and we will hear disc one on April 30th.*

Recorded between 1953 and 1990, the compelling and deeply emotional first-hand accounts drawn from ABC Archives recall in graphic detail the circumstances and events of the Gallipoli Campaign, from the innocence of enlistment to the horror of the landing and-for those who lived to tell their story-the bitter relief of homecoming.

Personally I found the experience of hearing the Digger's story most moving; so much so that I purchased another copy for my Grandchildren. On the 30th you will only hear disc one, because of time restraints, but I feel that some of you will be so moved by it that you



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will purchase the full set from the ABC shop for yourselves! Those voices are now silent, but their stories live on!

Leading Stocker J H Schofield's 1940/41 Diaries have been donated to our HMAS CERBERUS Museum and detail his adventures whilst serving in HMAS VOYAGER I. It is my privilege to share highlights from his diaries with you. Last month we covered the period from mid April 1940 until he joined HMAS VOYAGER I in Alexandria on May 18th 1940.

L/Stoker Schofield's Odyssey-May 20 1940 to June 30 1940

VOYAGER left Alexandria in company with STUART, VAMPIRE, WATERHEN, two French Battleships and two Destroyers, escorting a convoy bound for Bizerte in French Tunisia, on May 20th. He commented on the sea being a pure blue. They enjoyed calm seas and in passing Malta they were joined by another two French Destroyers, arriving at Bizerte on the 23rd where the Battleships remained but they left immediately for Malta when they oiled ship. Shore leave followed and he went 'Roaring down the Gut'. ('Jack speak' for Strait St, a very popular haunt for sailors. Ed.). He describes Malta as a city being built of rock and looking like a graveyard, and also having plenty of goats and bottled beer. The next day they sailed in company with Stuart and Waterhen, steaming at full speed on three boilers, achieving an average of 28 knots. VAMPIRE was left behind in Malta.

May 29th saw them off Alex doing torpedo exercises with submarines. They scored some fish through their efforts and returned to Alex next day, where swimming over the side proved very popular. J.H. summarised the month of May: "Quite an interesting month. Very pleased to be on an Australian ship again, which is the best in the fleet. Wonderful crowd on here, and above all very clean. Alex is a very poor place from what I've seen. Very large fleet here in Alex, including both French and British ships, including five Battleships, one Aircraft Carrier, ten Cruisers and about twenty six Destroyers. We spent nine days in harbour and twenty two at sea. Steamed 9,480 miles this month."

HMAS VOYAGER was back at sea on June 3rd doing exercises with four Battle Ships, four Cruisers, and sixteen Destroyers with two Submarines. He commented that there was hardly any room to move, but it was certainly a great sight. The fleet returned to Alex at 2200, however Voyager remained out in company, with the carrier EAGLE until 2000 the next day. June 10th was a momentous day. His entry reads: *"Left Alex at 0600 with Eagle and VAMPIRE for usual exercises and anti submarine patrol. Buzz came true. Italy declared war on Britain. Expect we will have plenty of action now! Large British flotilla joined us at 1000 going fast and consisting of four more Battleships, four Cruisers and about fifteen Destroyers. Calm seas."*



The following fifteen entries in J.H's diary are action packed and merit being quoted verbatim:

JUNE 11th: "Sprung hole in ships side today, came back to Alex with four other Destroyers. Battle fleet carried on. Oiled ship and went alongside HMS RESOURCE the Fleet repair ship. No sooner listed ship when we had to proceed, because of air-raid. Carried on to sea and made make-shift repairs ourselves. Doing A/S patrol in calm seas".

JUNE 12TH: "At sea all day to-day. Discovered a mine field which was laid by Subs. Reported same, and three mine sweepers came out and started to clear them out. Sank three ourselves. Another air raid over Alex but no damage done. Over 80 mines in field."

JUNE 13TH: "At sea in fine weather all day today. Met French Fleet of four Cruisers and five Destroyers and warned them of mine-field which was laid in a secret channel. Action Stations sounded of at 1730, and after dropping fourteen depth charges, we were successful in sinking an Italian Mine laying Submarine. First blood to our ship. All hands very pleased. (No survivors)"

JUNE 14TH: "Anti-Submarine Patrol again, but very quiet day. BUT we were again successful against another Sub during the night. It proved to be another mine layer. We are the only Australian destroyer to have been in action, so far.(No survivors). Seas still calm with warm weather.

JUNE 15TH: "Stayed at sea, until relieved by VAMPIRE at 0900, and then returned to harbour. Refuelled and ammunitioned ship. Received congratulations from the Commander in Chief and most of the ships. Another air raid today. Three bombs landed in the water, no damage except to a small jetty. No leave."

JUNE 16th: "Out on A/S patrol again today. No engagements with enemy, but found an unfinished mine field which was laid by a submarine. We expect to get him tomorrow when he comes back to finish his job. Weather still hot with very calm seas.

JUNE 17th: "On patrol again today and as expected made contact with another Italian sub. Sank this one with six depth charges. VAMPIRE also in this action. Expect we will give her credit for it, as she hasn't got any yet. No survivors.

JUNE 18th: "Came into harbour at 0900 and went alongside HMS RESOURCE for boiler cleaning and general repairs. C. in C. gave us a 'Submarine' make and mend today on account of our three subs. Went ashore and had a marvellous night. Another air raid today."

Boiler cleaning occupied June 19th, 20th and 21st also when J H commented that there was an air raid but that the Air Force fought them off before any bombs could be dropped.

JUNE 22nd: "Proceeded to sea today during another air raid. Planes dropped about six bombs but are flying too high to pick their targets. None landed near us."



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June 26th: "Left Alex with VAMPIRE on A/S patrol, but returned at 2100 and oiled ship. Looks pretty fishy expect long trip tomorrow. Still fine."

JUNE 27TH: "Left Alex at 0500 with ILEX, HYPERION, DECOY, and DEFENDER. Special trip and ships company rather proud about being picked for it. Seas very heavy today for a change. Man swept overboard and was very lucky to be rescued. Gashed leg but no other injuries. (Editors note: The four British ships in company were relatively new Destroyers, and Voyager's crew had every reason to be proud to be selected to sail in company with them.)"

JUNE 28TH: "Raging sea all day today. Sighted Submarine at 1730, which instantly dived. However ILEX forced it up with about ten depth charges. We rescued fourteen of the crew, and the other Destroyers 10. Over forty trapped or killed. Sank sub with gunfire. We found out from prisoners that this was their latest Sub."

JUNE 29TH: "Good day today. Sank another Sub at dawn, and DEFENDER forced another one to the surface. Attacked another one a little later but couldn't get any proof of destruction. Important victory for the flotilla as confidential code and papers were found on the one that surrendered."

JUNE 30TH: "Running short of oil so returning to Alex. Expect to arrive late tomorrow night. RAF aircraft flying with us as we are carrying the Italian code and papers taken from the Sub. Seas calm again."

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 1940: "A very exciting month as we got our first taste of action, and as we have been very successful all hands like it! Have now been attached to new flotilla since we got our three subs, and are now known as the 'Terrible Ten'. Commander in Chief (Later, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham. Ed.) congratulated us twice on our marvellous exhibition and hoped we would carry on with the same amount of luck. Spent eleven days in harbour (five days re boilers and repairs), nineteen days at sea, 5193 miles this month. Our Captain, LCDR Morrow was made Commander."

So ends our account of the adventures of L/ Stoker J H Schofield for this month. We are sharing his war through the medium of his Diaries for 1940/ 1941. In a later Three Headed Dog we will feature the story of CMDR James 'Copper' Morrow (KM) DSO DSC RAN, Voyager's C.O. He achieved the rank of Captain in 1947. His nick name was either 'Copper' or 'Ginger' owing to the fact that he had red hair. Our good friend, the late LCDR Mac Gregory RAN, knew and respected him as a colleague and a friend. Mac tells a good yarn, and you will find it very interesting.

Yours Aye!

Rex Williams