



Victorian Chapter

President's Musings – February 2020

We wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year!

This month we will enjoy a DVD presentation entitled *CENTAUR*-Death of a hospital Ship. When the Japanese submarine torpedoed and sank the Australian Hospital ship in May 1943, large loss of life eventuated. The wreck was found on December 20 2009, and the realisation that she lay off the coast of Caloundra in Queensland brought it home to us that she was so close. Join us on the 24th to view this first class documentary based on the stories of survivors!

In March we hope to catch up with quite a few of you at the Creswell Oration being held at the William Angliss Restaurant on Tuesday March 17. Our speaker will be CDRE Chris Smith CSM RAN, the Director General Littoral. Like to know more? Drop me an email on rex.f.williams@gmail.com and I'll send you a flyer.

Also in March we have our monthly meeting in the Sunset room at Waverley RSL at 1900, and our speaker is Leigh Webster of 'Offshore and Specialist Ships Australia'. A number of us attended the Exhibition 'Specialist Ships Made Australia, how?' in November, and found it most interesting. As a result Leigh agreed to talk to us and 'tell us all about it' on Monday March 23. Join us for a meal prior in the wonderful Warramunga Restaurant. Just tell Rodney that you are coming as we have to book. Contact him on 0466 983 313 or minstral77@outlook.com.

Owing to the close proximity of our normal meeting date in April to ANZAC Commemorations, we have once more decided to postpone our April meeting.

The *USS John S McCain* visited Melbourne in 2008 for the centenary of the visit of the 'Great White Fleet of the USN' in 1908. I was delighted to be given a very comprehensive tour of the ship by her proud C.O., CMDR, later CAPT. John Banigan USN Ret. and I'm pleased to report that my friend John receives our news letter each month, and that we are in regular contact, both having a very soft spot for this formidable warship.

She had a collision with a merchant ship in the Singapore straight on August 21, 2017 and the Arleigh Burke guided missile destroyer suffered significant damage to her hull resulting in flooding to nearby compartments, including crew berthing, machinery and communications rooms. Sadly ten US Sailors died in the accident. The ship underwent

repair and rectification work plus extensive, accelerated upgrades over the last two years, and she departed 'Fleet activities Yokosuka Japan' on October 28 2019 to conduct comprehensive at-sea testing.

A redelivery is set to take place in the US summer of 2020.



Alf Batchelder took a beautiful picture of the *USS John S McCain* off Sorrento heading out to sea with my friend John Banigan in command back in 2008 and it gives me great pleasure to share it with you.



Yours Aye!

Rex Williams