

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS JUNE 2015

Our Speaker at our May Meeting was Tim Smith, Executive Director of Heritage Victoria who treated us to an interesting and informative illustrated address entitled Australia's Heritage at Sea. Tim is no stranger to our Society having spoken to our Sydney Colleagues at the 'Boat House' previously. Thank you, Tim.

'The Victorian ANZAC Centenary Cultural Program' is indeed a very worthwhile initiative of our State Government and we recommend you take the opportunity of visiting the Shrine of Remembrance and view the **ANZAC Battlefield: Landscape of War and Memory**, which is on display until August 31st. The exhibition showcases 100 archaeological items recovered by the Joint Historical Archaeological Survey of the Gallipoli battlefield conducted over the past four years. We thoroughly recommend you check out permanent display in the newly revamped 'Galleries of Remembrance' whilst you are there. Don't miss seeing our LCDR Mac Gregory's artefacts. We are so pleased that he has been honoured in this way The Melbourne Museum is hosting two wonderful displays as part of the Centenary Cultural Program: **WWI Love and Sorrow and the WWI Centenary Exhibition**. Love and Sorrow is sourced in the main from the Museum's own collection and features the heart rending stories of eight real life individuals experiencing WW I and its aftermath. You have until 30th of November to view it. Deeply moving.

The WW I Centenary Exhibition continues at our Melbourne Museum until October 4th, and should not be missed. Using the full range of modern museum techniques-real historic objects, direct personal stories, powerful works of art, dynamic audio-visual presentations all sourced from the vast resources of the Imperial War Museum of the UK, this wonderful exhibition, still only provides us with a snap shot of the events of 1914-18. Where the Exhibition succeeds well, is in engendering in the visitor a real hunger to know more about this momentous conflict. The only extensive coverage of the Naval war was the U-Boat Campaign. They featured on the sinking of the heavy cruisers HMS's ABOUKIR, HOGUE and CRESSY, and in the same context, the Zeebrugge raid. We have some photos to share with you concerning both the raid and the sinkings.

Other events in the Cultural Program include 'War Pictures: Australians at the Cinema 1914-1918' at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, which continues until July 26th, Theatres of War: Wartime Entertainment and the Australian Experience. The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, features the work of some of Australia's most well-known, and not so well-known artists, in **'Follow the Flag: Australian Artists at War 1914-45' until August 16th**. At the Arts Centre Melbourne, until September 20th you can view **Theatres of War: Wartime Entertainment and the Australian Experience**.

I was impressed with two exhibits at our State Library. **Writing The War: Personal Stories From WW I** and on the 5th floor in the dome. The display in the Dome is ongoing, however the Personal stories will tour Victorian Libraries from July 2015 until June 2017. The personal stories cover the experiences of seven ordinary Australians visiting <http://anzaccentenary.vic.gov.au> throughout the war years. It is well worth visiting the Dome display as well.

We suggest you discover more history, stories and events by visiting anzaccentenary.vic.gov.au

As previously mentioned, the U-Boat Campaign was featured in the WW I Centenary Exhibition from the IWM. The RN's 7th Cruiser Squadron was intended to support the 1st and 3rd Destroyer Flotillas when patrolling the approaches to the North Sea and the English Channel. On September 22nd 1914 the destroyers were unable to leave port because of bad weather. The three pre dreadnought, armoured cruisers HMS ABOUKIR, HOGUE and CRESSY went out alone. They were spotted by the German U-boat U 9, which torpedoed and sank all three ships in quick succession. HMS CRESSY's gangway door was washed on the Dutch coast, and two life belts, one of which was from CRESSY, were also recovered from the wreckage. All are featured in the exhibition. Also on display is the ship's bell from RMS Luisitania, sunk by U20 on May 7th 1915, which resulted in the loss of 1100 lives, (including 128 US citizens.) ***Bad move Kaiser Bill !***

The renewal of the German U-boat campaign in 1917 had a devastating impact on British shipping. Many U-boats operated from bases that entered the North Sea via a canal at the Belgian port of Zeebrugge. Over several months plans were considered to stop U-boats using this canal. On April 23rd 1918, the Arrogant Class Cruiser, HMS VINDICTIVE led a daring assault on Zeebrugge and Ostend. Totalling 75 vessels in all, VINDICTIVE was to go in first, under cover of a smoke screen and, to land ratings and Royal Marines at the entrance to the Bruges canal, (at the mile long Zeebrugge mole) in order to destroy the shore batteries. The operation began badly, the smokescreen proved ineffective owing to unexpected winds exposing the old cruiser to crippling fire, and she moored at the wrong location with her guns unable to bear or being out of action. An explosive packed Submarine, however destroyed the mole connecting the bridge to the shore after being exploded. Three cruisers, packed with concrete, and designated as block ships, were prevented by the fire from the shore batteries from scuttling themselves at the narrow entrance to the canal. Similarly two other cruiser cum block ships, failed in their attempt to block the entrance to Ostend harbor. The exhibition features a large painting of VINDICTIVE moored alongside the mole taking tremendous punishment, as well as displaying a modified mortar which was fitted to her. Other objects, such as rum measures and her binnacle cover, on display from the ship give testimony to the tremendous punishment endured! Casualties and losses incurred in the operation were 277 killed, 356 injured. ***For Further information check out: <http://firstworldwar.com/batts/zebrugge.htm>.***

As a young lad, I was a paper boy for the Warrnambool Standard. (80 papers a day for ten bob a week!) Amongst my customers were two special people, Captain Carrington the Harbor Master and Archdeacon TP Bennett.

Both encouraged my interest in the Navy. Captain Carrington showed me how the lighthouse operated, and talked to me of the sea. The Archdeacon spoke to me of his time in the RAN as a Chaplain. I knew he had also spent time as an Army Chaplain, and regret not learning more about his time in Gallipoli.

Captain Chaplain Thomas Pearse Bennett landed at Anzac cove with Victoria's 22nd Battalion in September 1915, after months in Egypt and aboard a troop ship. Chaplain Bennett, known to the men as the 'Padre' lived in a dugout in Shrapnel Gully where he spent his days burying the dead, writing to their loved ones and conducting services. Every day he went into the trenches, his 'parish', to visit the battalion and to share their dangers. *He was, wrote Patsy Adam-Smith in 'The Anzacs', the paragon amongst men. In fact Patsy wrote a whole chapter about him in her book, and entitled it 'The Padre'.* Chaplain Bennett was a keen photographer and a selection of his hand coloured, and black and white slides were donated to

the State Library of Victoria in 1983, by his son.

You can view a selection of them on <http://anzaccentenary.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/SLV-Anzac-Spirit.jpg>. Also in the State Library Collection are letters of condolence he wrote to the families of his flock, as well his mess tin and other articles from his time on Gallipoli. On a personal level I became very fond of him and his wife. He was a mentor to me in my youth. Mrs Bennett was the sister of Aeneas (Jeannie) Gunn of 'We of the Never Never' fame.

YOURS AYE!
REX WILLIAMS