

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS MARCH 2016

Greetings one and all! We hope you have remembered to mark the changed meeting dates for our March and April Meetings at the MNC. The dates are March 21st and April 18th. You won't want to miss out on Rodney's Suppers or our excellent speaker in March and interesting ANZAC video in April! We have to vacate by October 30th and only have a further eight meetings at our Melbourne Naval Centre. We will miss the ESU Building, where we have enjoyed many wonderful shared experiences over many years.

Our benefactors, as always, have been the Melbourne Naval Centre and we owe them a great debt of gratitude for their ongoing support, both in supplying a venue for us and for kindred organisations, plus substantial financial support to a number of our projects during the years. They have been magnificent! Their generosity continues to this day. Members of the Committee are actively seeking replacement venues for the Naval family at large, to meet in, and have activities at! Hopefully the premises they eventually obtain will have space for our extensive library, however in the interim I urge you to check this facility out, and use it for your enjoyment whilst you can!



In February Melbourne enjoyed hosting the Edinburgh Military Tattoo at the Docklands Stadium. My friends, Barb and Mike shouted me a ticket, and what a marvelous spectacle we enjoyed. Having been to two Tattoos at Edinburgh Castle over the years I wondered if our local version would live up to expectations! I was pleasantly surprised, and also delighted with the organisation, the colour, the music, the way it was lit, and their obvious desire to recreate the Tattoo down under. That they succeeded in that aim was a joy! We even had the fireworks at the end. I was very proud of our own Federation Guard.

They marched and drilled with precision we expect of the Guards; and together with our combined services band, they did Australia proud.

'The Spirit of Anzac' exhibition is travelling around Australia and John Redman and I visited it whilst it was in Melbourne. Exhibits were to the forefront of modern technology and the Australian Government are to be congratulated for their decision to tour it nationally. Primarily featuring on WWI it covered other conflicts well, and was well worth attending. Currently in Adelaide I urge you to tell your South Australian friends not to miss it.



Rex's ODYSSEY- Part 4 (London August 2015)



I can never resist not visiting HMS BELFAST in the Thames, although having been on board a number of times, and previously having written extensively about her in the THD so in this case I will only give a brief resume of her story, depending on some of the many photos taken of her during the latest visit to illustrate this proud ship's legacy!

Commissioned 5th August 1939 as an Town-class light cruiser of 12 X 6" guns and 12X 4" guns, she initially served as part of the British blockade against Germany. She was successful in intercepting the German blockade runner Cap Norte, and she also captured the Swedish ship Uddeholm. In November 1939 BELFAST struck a

magnetic German mine whilst leaving the Firth of Forth. The mine broke her keel and wrecked one of her engine and boiler rooms. Twenty Officers and men required hospital treatment, one later dying, plus a further 26 suffered minor injuries. The ship was badly damaged and would have been scrapped if it had not been for the personal intervention of Winston Churchill! Over the next two years work was carried out to straighten, reconstruct and strengthen her hull. Her armoured

belt was extended and thickened. She received updated armament, radar etc and with so many improvements her previous displacement of 10,590 tons was increased to 11550.



BELFAST returned to action in November 1942 escorting Arctic convoys to the Soviet Union during 1943, and in December 1943 she played an important role in the Battle of North Cape, assisting in the destruction of the SCHARNHORST, and in March 1944 was part of the covering force for the carriers, whose aircraft successfully attacked TIRPITZ.

BELFAST was part of the Bombarding force off the Normandy beaches during the D day landings and during her 5 weeks off Normandy she had fired 1996 rounds from her 6"guns. Far East service followed and her participation in the Japanese campaign was forestalled by the end of hostilities against Japan.

Post-war service from 1945-50 was also in the Far East, which was followed in 1950-52 by service in the Korean War. (My thanks to Wikipedia for background on the ship!)

Vice Admiral David Johnston AM RAN proved to be an entertaining speaker at the Creswell Oration.

He spoke to us about his role as Chief of Joint Operations, Headquarters Operational Command in Canberra. We found his talk fascinating, providing an insight as to how well our Armed forces work so closely together. That Australia does this type of thing very well is instanced by the fact that our LHD, HMAS CANBERRA has been able to provide such an abundance of equipment, medical assistance and overall help so promptly to the people of Fiji in the after-math of the recent cyclone. The NHS of A Victoria Chapter are on the organising committee of the Creswell Oration, and the job of being the MC is on a rotating basis. I was MC this year and enjoyed meeting the Admiral. VADM Johnston very generously presented me with a plaque to commemorate his visit, and it has pride of place on our lounge room wall!



YOURS AYE!!

REX WILLIAMS