**PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS OCTOBER 2015.**

Each year on October 21st we commemorate the 'Battle of Trafalgar' and focus on our shared heritage as members of the British Commonwealth. Just 12 months ago it became very obvious to me, how much the Royal Navy has influenced our RAN and indeed navies right around the globe. I'm reflecting on observations made during the '*FANTASTIC '* International Fleet Review' in October last year in Sydney. The similarities in uniforms between the Navies of the world, the traditions, the way they generally operate are distinctly marked. Of course there are exceptions and various colonial influences which prevail, but having been the leading Naval power in the world for so long certainly was influential, especially amongst emerging nations in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Trafalgar spirit was never more evident than in 'The Battle of the Atlantic' during WWII, when because of mounting losses of merchant shipping in 1941,Britain's back was really ' against the wall '. LCDR Roger Buxton CD RCN Ret spoke to us in September, of 'The Transformation of the Royal Canadian Navy during WWII'. Roger detailed the incredible efforts of the Canadian people to assist 'the old country' in her hour of need. Through words and pictures Roger explained just how amazing the transformation was .In 1940 Canada had just started to build patrol vessels for the protection of her own coasts, placed orders for 26 X 10,000 ton cargo ships and soon after for Naval corvettes/mine sweepers. By war's end her ship building industry had expanded from 3 shipyards to 90 plants on the east and west coasts, the Great Lakes and even inland .More than 126,000 men and women were employed in the shipyards building 4,047 naval vessels, most of them landing craft, but including over 300 anti submarine warships, amongst them 4 Tribal class destroyers, and 410 cargo ships. The expansion of the RCN herself in personnel was no less impressive. Roger spoke of training issues encountered, mistakes made, etc. but our sister Navy certainly 'Answered the Call'.

Trafalgar day 1944 saw our 8" cruisers HMAS AUSTRALIA and SHROPSHIRE and Destroyers ARUNTA and WARRAMUNGA together with the US 7th Fleet in action off the Philippines. The troops had landed the previous day and General MacArthur had landed and said his piece! Our ships were providing covering fire for the troops ashore. Commodore John Collins RAN was the Officer Commanding our Australian Squadron and in his article, published in our Naval Historical Society's 'Review' in 1972 entitled 'Leyte Gulf. Biggest Sea Fight in History' he describes the Kamikazi attacks and the carnage caused on our own HMAS AUSTRALIA in which Captain Dechaineaux and 29 others were killed, with 64 Officers and men , including Commodore Collins, wounded. VADM Sir John Collins, as he later became, wrote an excellent article and we appreciate being able to republish part one in this THD. Our NHS Website contains a treasure trove of stories such as this, readily down loadable. Check it out!

***How proud Horatio Nelson would have been, were he alive today, that the esprit d 'core he engendered amongst his 'Band of brothers' and their ships crews was so evident, not only in the Royal Navy, but the RAN, RCN,RNZN and other Commonwealth Navies, plus I would dare to add our cousins in the USN to the list!***

**HMAT ORVIETO EMBARKATION** Sixteen ships left from Station Pier (then known as Railway Pier),and Princes Pier, between 17th and 21st October 1914,heading to Albany, WA, before joining the convoy that would take then to Egypt. At around 1430 on 21st the Governor General Sir Ronald Munroe-Ferguson came on board ORVIENTO to farewell the troops and their leader, the Commander of the First Australian Division, Sir William Throsby Bridges. Troop transport HMAT ORVIETO was one of the largest ships to embark from Port Melbourne for the war, and she carried 1457 men and women. A short while later the GG disembarked, the Band of the 5th Battalion played 'God Save the King,' and the ships departed. Enjoy the photos which were courtesy of the Anzac events Website of the Victorian Government.

On Sunday October 19th there was an re-enactment of the embarkations at Station Pier by 'Centenary of Anzac events in Victoria'. Well done Ted Baillieu and his crew!. As part of the celebrations there was a cocktail party on board HMAS ARUNTA berthed at Station Pier which our editor and I thoroughly enjoyed. Navy hospitality at its best!

***D-Day veterans to be awarded the Legion d'Honneur:***

***Press release from the Ministry of Defence (UK) dated 25th July 2014***

The French Government is to recognise D-Day veterans with the country's highest honour.

The Government of France has told the UK Ministry of Defence that it wishes to recognise the selfless acts of heroism and determination displayed by all surviving veterans of the Normandy landings, and of the wider campaigns to liberate France in 1944, by awarding them with the Legion d'Honneur.

This recognition extends beyond the troops who actually landed on and fought their way up the beaches 70 years ago, and will include Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel who operated in support of the landings.

The release then goes on to advise further steps to be taken.

***At our September meeting we were advised that Lieutenant Keith Nichol RANVR Ret has received correspondence suggesting that he might like to put in an application. Keith has yet to find out if his application is successful.*** Whether or not his application is successful his exploits certainly contributed to the defeat of our foe! In September 1941 Keith volunteered for the Yachtsmen Scheme to serve overseas with the Royal Navy. After training in the UK Keith was drafted to a motor gun boat flotilla at Dover where they were involved in Commando raids along the French coast, including Dieppe and also air sea rescue work. Keith was twice wounded in gun actions. By Christmas 1942 Keith was selected for officer training, including navigation and specialist training in mine warfare and torpedoes. Appointed as First Lieutenant of a Harbour Defence Launch, destined for the Mediterranean, Keith found he journey on to station quite an experience. Their main duties were night patrols. Service with the 3rd ML Flotilla based on Malta followed, mine sweeping etc. All of the above information was published in Musings of June this Year, but deemed worthy of republishing it at this time. The original research was obtained from 'Memories of War 'Members of the Naval and Military Club recall World War II, written by Jan Roberts Billett and published by the Naval and Military Club Melbourne.

**YOURS AYE!!**

**REX WILLIAMS**