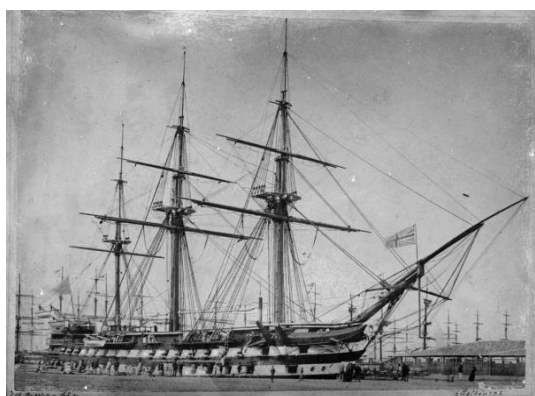


President's Musings – October 2017

Currently I am assisting my NHS colleagues in Sydney with the revamping of the Naval Historical Society of Australia web site by researching HMVS CERBERUS. Having access to HMAS CERBERUS on a weekly basis has enabled me to delve into the archive boxes in the Museum and the collection in general to research the 'Pride of the Victorian Navy', HMVS CERBERUS. *The passage in London of the Colonial Naval Defence Act in April 1865, cleared the way for Victoria to build, man and maintain their own Navy under the British flag. Sir George Verdon, Victorian Treasurer and Minister of Defence, and Captain Charles Payne, C.O. Naval Forces, were instrumental in achieving the aim of having an armour-plated monitor or turret ship built for Victoria in England. Part of the deal was that a wooden line of battleship, with steam power, would be selected and given to the colony, with such masts yards and necessary stores as have been specially appropriated to her. Other costs to be borne by Victoria. Consequently our HMVS NELSON, the ship in question, was commissioned on 22 July 1867, and on 20 October she sailed for Australia. NELSON was not presented as a straight out gift, but was transferred on a 'permanent loan' basis. I have long been fascinated by our HMVS NELSON's story and happily share it with you.*



HMS/HMVS NELSON - 120 gun Line-of-Battleship 1814.

This three deck ship of the line was laid down in December 1809 and launched at Woolwich on 4th July 1814 in the presence of Tsar Alexander of Russia, the King of Prussia and Marshall Blucher. She was the first three decker to be launched in England after the victory at Trafalgar. NELSON was 2617 tons burden, and originally had 32 x 32 pounders on the lower gun deck, 34 x 24 pounders on the middle gun deck, 34 x 18 pounders on the main deck, 6 x 12 pounders plus 10 x 23 pounder carronades on the quarter deck, and 2 x 12 pounders plus 2 x 32 pounder carronades on the forecastle. NELSON was ordered just a month after the Battle of Trafalgar, and her design reflected lessons learnt from the battle. The design of NELSON's bow was round, rather than the old square beak-head bulk head. The raised round bow gave additional strength allowing the guns to be mounted further forward and the combination of the raised bulkheads and bow, provided protection to raking fire from ahead. The raised bow was incorporated as a direct result of Admiral Nelson's successful tactic at Trafalgar of crossing the 'T'.

HMS NELSON was certainly an impressive symbol of the might of Britain and of her 'wooden walls'.

In 1854 NELSON was chosen along with several ships of similar type for conversion to an auxiliary steam vessel and was to be cut down to a two decker, lengthened and fitted with a steam engine driving a single screw. In 1859-60 these major changes were completed and she was reduced to a two decker with 46 guns, the largest being 2x7"x 68 pounders, and the others including 20 x 64 pounder rifled muzzle loaders.

Her Majesty's Victorian Ship NELSON was commissioned on 22 July 1867, under CMDR C.B. Payne RN, and on 20 October, 53 years after her launching, she sailed for Australia.

Sailing by the Cape, she reached Hobson's Bay Victoria on 4 February 1868. She was first employed as a reformatory vessel, but later became a training ship for the Victorian Naval Brigade. On 9th March 1870 a new ensign was approved for the Victorian Navy and with much celebration and pride was flown for the first time from HMVS NELSON! It was similar to our current national flag in that it incorporated the Union flag with five stars on a blue field.

In 1874 NELSON was the first ship to enter the new Alfred Graving dock at Williamstown. Following a series of 'Russian scares' in the 1870's, NELSON was converted in 1878-1881 into a fighting ship, being cut down to a single decker with fore and mizzen masts removed together with several of the old muzzle guns. Her armament now consisted of: 2 X 7" x 68 pounders and several 64 rifled muzzle loaders; 2 x 4.7"; 2x12 and a half pounders; 2 x 9 pounders and 2x 6 pounders, all the smaller guns being breech loaders.

In the 1880's the Colony of Victoria experienced a succession of financial crises, and Naval expenditure drastically reduced. Sadly, NELSON was one of the first ships to go, being paid off in 1891 and was laid up at Williamstown. Her boilers were removed in 1893, and on 28th April 1898 she was sold for two thousand four hundred pounds. A few weeks later she was towed to Port Jackson (minus her guns, which were not included in the sale), and moored in Kerosene Bay. The upper section was dismantled, and the lower portion was used for 10 years as a coal lighter. Sold again in 1908 she was towed from Sydney to Beauty point on the Tamar River, Tasmania to be used as a coal storage vessel. In 1915 she was towed to Hobart where she served for a further 5 years as a coal hulk, after which she was sold for breaking up. In August 1920 she was finally dismantled at Shag bay where the last remains were fired in order to recover brass fittings.

Vale HMS/HMVS NELSON 120 gun ship of the line! A major source for the HMVS NELSON story recounted here was an article by John Bastock in our NHS Review published December 1979. You are welcome to access this article by going to the N H S of A website and clicking 'Reading' on the Home page. There are over 1200 great articles and book reviews for you to access. Our HMAS CERBERUS museum contains several artifacts from HMVS NELSON including her wheel, her figurehead is at the NMM of Australia in Sydney, some guns are at Hamilton and Fort Queenscliff plus other places I believe, and you will find her anchor at Williamstown. There are great photographs of her on the web as well!



and the detail is superb. Enjoy the photo. Also we share a photo of an excellent model made by Malcolm Darch, of Nelson's favourite ship HMS AGAMEMNON 64 gun ship of the line. As Captain Nelson, he joined her in January 1793 and served in her for 3 years and 3 months, serving in the Mediterranean. Present at the 1st Battle of Copenhagen, she unfortunately ran aground and missed the battle. She certainly redeemed herself at the Battle of Trafalgar, when she forced the surrender of the Spanish four-decker



As Australians we are rightly very proud of our Royal Australian Navy, its heritage and traditions. Sired by the Royal Navy we share the glorious history of our parent and thus every October we celebrate the Battle of Trafalgar and the brilliance of the 'Little Admiral', Vice Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson, Royal Navy. Our friend and colleague, David McFall proprietor of the Maritime Model Museum of Monavale in Sydney, has recently completed a new model of HMS VICTORY commissioned by a client

Santisima Trinidad. Our thanks to Julian Stockwin, author of the Kydd Series for the photo. Great books, by the way!

Our Secretary, LCDR John Redman's address to us in September was excellent. John enlightened us about the huge enterprise that was the Royal Dockyards. Strategically placed around the world they enabled the Royal Navy to 'Rule the Waves' and maintain Britain's far flung Empire for so long!

Don't forget we have the AGM, Show and Tell, plus some archive film from the IWM to share this month!

YOURS AYE!!

Rex Williams