

## President's Musings – September 2016

October this year sees the end of an era for us and heralds a new beginning for our organisation. For many years the Melbourne Naval Centre has been our meeting place in Melbourne, thanks to the generosity of the Melbourne Naval Centre Inc Committee.

Not only did they fund our meeting place but they also facilitated space within the ESU Building for us to house our library, and they funded the building of the purpose built cabinets in which the books were kept.

*Our heartfelt thanks go to the President of the Melbourne Naval Centre, Captain David Garnock CSC RAN Ret, his committee, and indeed all the members of the MNC, past and present, who for so many have supported the Naval family in all their endeavours!*

From February this year our meetings will be held in the Sunset Room at Waverley RSL, 161 Coleman Parade Glen Waverley. The Sunset room is an excellent facility and ticks all the boxes for a first class venue in which to conduct our meetings. With this move we have the added advantage of being able to avail ourselves of the 'Warramunga' restaurant for a meal prior to our meeting at 1830, the facility being open from 1730. The food is good, the prices reasonable and it is a very pleasant venue.

We realise that not everyone attending the meeting will wish to have a meal and a drink prior, but feel it is another avenue for even more fellowship, and will also be most enjoyable!

Our 'End Of Year Celebration' on Monday November 28th will also be held in the Sunset Room at the Waverley RSL. We are delighted to advise that our Speaker this year is the renowned author Pattie Wright. Pattie is a film producer and director by profession and a writer by circumstance. Her first book 'Men of the Line' resulted from a simple personal desire to learn more about Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop and his and his colleague's POW experiences. Subsequent research on the Australian POW Experience lead to her award winning book 'Ray Parkin's' Odyssey, a remarkable biography, illustrated by 100 paintings and sketches, which is the first full and comprehensive account of CPO Ray Parkin AM RAN's life and wartime experiences, which includes his time in HMAS Perth 1, her sinking, and his time as a POW.



Ray Parkin



Pattie Wright will be speaking to us about her new book called 'The Skiff Party' which involves, in part, Ray Parkin and other survivors of HMAS Perth. It will be great to have both Pattie and Dennis amongst us on November 28th. Mark it in your diary now!!

Thank you to my friend Nicholas Cree for sharing his Father's colour films of HMS Kent's War at our August meeting.

CMDR Charles Cree DSC RN certainly enjoyed an interesting and distinguished Naval career, and we found Nicky's account of his father's adventures to be of great interest.

Leut Keith Nichol RANVR was a very brave sailor, a staunch friend, entertaining companion and a loyal member of our NHS. Keith passed 'over the bar' on September 4th in Adelaide, and we understand that a memorial service is planned in the Botanic Gardens in early October. Details to be advised.

A member of the Yachtsmen Scheme, Keith served with distinction both in the English Channel and in the Mediterranean in small boats both combating German E boats and mine sweeping. We were delighted when he was recognised by the French Republic with their highest honour the Legion d' Honneur, and saddened when he left Melbourne to return to his home town of Adelaide. Our member Jan Roberts Billett

has conducted extensive research into the activities of the Australians who served in the Yachtsmen Scheme and I quote from her 'Memories of War': Members of the Naval and Military Club Recall World War II. These were 50 Interviews conducted by Jan and published by The Naval and Military Club Melbourne in 2004. Pages 472-490 pertain to interviews with Keith on 17 December 2001 at Donvale. I quoted excerpts from Jan's summary of these recorded interviews with Keith in my Musings of June 2014, and because of our respect for Keith we publish them again in this issue of our Three Headed Dog.

*Keith was born in South Australia on 21 December 1919. When war was declared he was studying chemistry at night school and working with the Shell Company by day. When Coventry was bombed Keith decided to enlist and with some background in weekend sailing, in September 1941 he volunteered for the Yachtsmen Scheme to serve overseas with the Royal Navy. Initial training was at Flinder's Naval depot, before his group of 19 'Yachties' sailed in the 'Stirling Castle' via New Zealand and Panama for the UK. On arrival in Liverpool in December Keith, together with his group, was sent to HMS Collingwood. He was then drafted to a motor gun boat flotilla at Dover where they were involved in the landing of commandos (Lord Lovett's Scouts were one unit) for raids along the French coast including Dieppe and also air-sea rescue work. He was twice wounded in gun actions. By Christmas 1942 Keith was sent to Lancing College, King Alfred for Officer training and then attended Greenwich Naval College for navigation training. Further specialist training in mine warfare and torpedoes at HMS Vernon, Whale Island followed. His first appointment, as First Lieutenant, was of a Harbour Defence Motor Launch-destined for the Mediterranean – the trip was an experience! Their main duties were night patrols around anchorages, dropping underwater charges to counter limpeteers. Keith was then promoted into the 3rd ML Flotilla with headquarter on Malta. They were involved in pre-assault mine-sweeping along the southern Italian coast, southern France and the Adriatic. The Flotilla also transported partisans to Yugoslavia. In May 1945, Keith was enroute back to Australia, where he was appointed to the Hydrographic Service, to Bangalow, based at Rabaul. He was released from the RAN in June 1946. END OF QUOTE.*

Our Patron, Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Tim Barrett AO CSC RAN, was the guest speaker at the RUSI Lunchtime address on Thursday September 15th at Defence Plaza. John Redman and I attended as members of the RUSI and were pleased to note that other members of the Naval Family in general were there to hear what their chief had to say. The RUSI welcome other like-minded organisations to their meetings, as we and others including the Navy League do. The more we are able to enjoy each others' company the better. We all love our Royal Australian Navy!

The C of N's topic was 'The Navy: A National Enterprise' and his address was very well received. We look forward to catching up with him again when he joins us for the Seafarers Church Service at Saint Paul's in October as part of Navy week.



Our member Alf Batchelder takes some great photos and we have some of the Jubilee Trust's sail training ship 'Tenacious' to share with you. She is the largest wooden tall ship of her kind in the world. She arrived in August and will be here until November. Berthed at Sea Works Maritime Precinct at Williamstown, they are conducting day sails during their stay and I look forward to sailing in her. More photos can be seen on

our website <http://navyvic.net/associations/nhs/gallery.html>

The successful relocation of our library and opportunity for our membership to still access the collection was down to three people who researched the collection, physically dismantled cabinets, and transported the books to their new location. Our librarians Sue and Roger were well to the fore in this endeavour, and they were ably assisted by Mike O'Brien. Our sincere thanks to them all.

Roger has written an article for this THD (see below) to assist you in accessing the books in their new home in Victoria Barracks, as part of the RUSI Library. This library is an excellent repository of military literature and is indeed an asset to our state.

*Rex's Odyssey Part 9 will continue next month with an account of the new display at The National Museum of the Royal Navy at the RN Naval Dockyard in Portsmouth, entitled '36 hours: Jutland 1916-The Battle that Won the War. During my recent trip to the UK I spent a few days in Pompey and visited the Royal Marines Museum, D Day Museum and Jutland 1916.*

YOURS AYE!!

REX WILLIAMS

## **Your NHSA Library**

As we have to move from the Melbourne Naval Centre at the English Speaking Union, it was necessary to find a new location for our library. Unfortunately we were not able to find a new meeting place where it would be possible to keep the book shelves containing our library books.

Rather than sending all the books to the NHSA in Sydney, which would not want them as almost all would be duplicates of books they already have in their library, and where they would be unavailable to our members, the committee has obtained a better solution. Our books that were not already held in the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) library have now been incorporated into the RUSI collection, where they will be available to our members. The RUSI library is the best military and naval collection in Victoria and consists of books, pamphlets, periodicals, digital books, DVDs and Video cassettes.

The RUSI Library is located in Victoria Barracks and is open from 0900 to 1500 on Mondays and Thursdays. Because of the strict security, it will be necessary to give 48 hours notice to Bob Hart, the secretary, so that he can inform the main gate on St Kilda Road 24 hours before your arrival. This is a great nuisance, but this is the environment we live in these days.

To visit the library on a Monday, let Bob know by pm the preceding Thursday.

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Just tell Bob you are a member of the NHSA and give him your name and when you wish to visit.

**You will require photo identification at the gate.**

Contact Bob Hart as follows:

- by email at [secretary@rusivic.org.au](mailto:secretary@rusivic.org.au)
- by phone on 9282 5918
- by mobile or text on 0412 435 025

You will be met at the gate and escorted to the library (all visitors have to be escorted).

RUSI has just moved to a new building (the old 1862 guard house) and there are comfortable chairs in which to read and tables where you may spread out research material. You can also have a cup of tea or coffee.

**The library staff will be very pleased to see you!**

Arrangements for our duplicate books are still under negotiation, and this will be notified in the Three-Headed Dog when negotiations have been completed.