



Naval Historical Society  
of Australia

*Victorian Chapter*

### PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS – SEPTEMBER 2017

At our August meeting we viewed our last Naval Video Time Capsules presentation, Part 2 of 'The British Pacific and East Indies Fleets'. As we have come to expect of these films from the archives of the IWM in London, we were witness to much historic footage, formerly not readily available to us. The late Roland R Smith compiled and presented the 11 episode series which we have viewed over the past 5 years or so. It is an excellent series and made available to us by David McFall of the NHS in Sydney. David is the proprietor of the Maritime Model Museum at Mona Vale, and they stock the Naval Video Time Capsules, plus many other items of nautical interest. I have visited David's museum and urge you to 'Google' it and view some of the exhibits. They are just fantastic! I spent a **most** enjoyable day there with David, and our fellow NHS colleague, Richard Francis. ***The Maritime Model Museum, 15/20 Bungan Street Mona Vale, is well worth a visit and easily accessible by bus from Manly. Phone: 02 9986 0688 or 0419 287 140.***

***Email: [maritimemuseum@bigpond.com](mailto:maritimemuseum@bigpond.com).***

*Our AGM on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October is normally not a protracted event, so after the formalities we indulge ourselves with 'Show and Tell'. For this segment we invite you all to bring your Nautical treasures with you and share them with your friends. Each presentation only takes a few minutes and is a light hearted and often hilarious interlude! To finish off our evening Tony Wilson has provided his IWM Video entitled 'The Royal Navy at War' for us to enjoy. We will view the Commissioning of the Battleship HMS Howe, a Ministry of information short film from 1942 covering sea battles early in the war, plus film of a Flower Class Corvette on Convoy duty. Also we will have a conducted tour of the Cruiser HMS London in Scapa Flow.*

### ***USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD6) Visited Melbourne for a port visit on August 28th.***



The ship had spent the past month in the Shoalwater Bay Area taking part in the multi-national Exercise Talisman Sabre 17. The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in the LHD deploys elements of the Marine Landing Force in amphibious assault operations by helicopter, landing craft, amphibious vehicle or any combination of these methods. Bonhomme Richard embarks the Commander of the Expeditionary Strike group, the Commander of

the Amphibious Squadron and their staffs.

BHR is one of eight Wasp Class Landing Helicopter Dock ships and was commissioned in August 1998. She has a crew of 1200, troop carrying capacity of 1800; she is powered by two conventional steam propulsion plants. BHR has a Hospital of 600 beds, including 6 operating rooms.

On Tuesday August 29th Alf Batchelder and I joined a party from the Navy League to tour the ship.

We entered a large receiving area towards the rear of the ship. As we walked towards the stern we passed a MV22B Osprey. The V-22 is a multi mission aircraft with vertical take-off and landing capability. It performs missions effectively as a conventional helicopter while also having the long-range cruise abilities of a twin turboprop aircraft. Then came multi wheeled 'duck' like landing vehicles, heavy trucks, jeeps etc and then down a ramp to



the well deck, some more trucks and three 'Hover Crafts' termed Landing craft Air Cushion. I've seen these in action whilst in the US and they can travel at more than 45 mph over sea and land so that Marines and their equipment can penetrate deep into a battle zone from a ship that is beyond the horizon. The rear hatch of the ship opens and the well deck fills with water in order to facilitate the LCAC's and Amphibious Assault Vehicles etc. to become seaborne. The AAV's are enclosed



aluminium hulled craft which carry up to 25 fully equipped marines on sea or over land. They are equipped with a turret mounted 12.7 mm machine gun. We were then taken to the hospital operating rooms etc. Very impressive! Our tour then took us to the main deck where we saw a AH-1W Super Cobra utility or Attack helicopter, which can be used against tanks, helicopters and for troop support. They can carry 37 troops, cargo to ships etc. The AH-1W is armed with missiles,

rockets, cannons and machine guns.

BHR is the last of the Wasp Class to still have the AV-8B Harriers. Unfortunately they had been flown off at the time of our visit. The Harriers are to be superseded by the F35B-STOVL Joint strike fighter. This is the Marine version of the F35 fighter.

BHR's armament includes the NATO Sea Sparrow Missile system, the RIM-116 Rolling Airframe Missile, and the Phalanx Close in Weapon System.

*We have sourced the story of the first USS Bonhomme Richard, and the Battle of Flamborough Head. It makes interesting reading! [See Below](#).*

***Something else you won't want to miss is Ian Pfennigwerth's talk 'RAN in the Pacific War' at the Shrine on October 4th. See you there!***

**YOURS AYE!**

*Rees Williams*



Painting of the Battle



Model of the Bonhomme Richard





## Information sheet no 036

### Battle of Flamborough Head

In 1779, the American War of Independence was at its height and Spain and France had joined forces with the Americans against Britain. Britain had to rely even more heavily on its trade with the Baltic States to maintain vital naval supplies of timber and hemp.

On 23 September 1779, a large Baltic convoy of forty-one ships, escorted by the frigate HMS *Serapis* and the sloop HMS *Countess of Scarborough*, was sailing along the Yorkshire coast. They were intercepted off Flamborough Head by an American and French squadron led by John Paul Jones. The squadron had sailed from Lorient on 14 August with the frigates *Bonhomme Richard*, *Alliance*, *Pallas* and two smaller ships. They had cruised along the Irish and Scottish coasts taking several prizes before meeting the convoy off Flamborough Head.

The action began at 7.20pm and was watched by crowds on the shore. HMS *Countess of Scarborough* was soon captured by *Pallas* but the major event of the action was the battle between the *Bonhomme Richard* and HMS *Serapis*. The engagement lasted over three hours until 10.20pm when Jones finally succeeded in forcing the British ship to surrender, overcoming a more powerful adversary. Unfortunately, *Bonhomme Richard* sank the next morning as it had been badly damaged by the action. Jones succeeded in getting his prizes back to the Texel and finally to France.

The Battle of Flamborough Head was the first major success of the new American navy.

*Note: The use of the abbreviations HMS in this information sheet is to clearly define the ships of Royal Navy. The abbreviation did not come into common use until c.1790s.*