



Beaumaris RSL Sub Branch Inc.

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MEMBERS NEWS

Dear Member

Some months come, some months go and some months never end. Since the Melbourne lock downs began in March this year you could say nothing has happened or the whole RSL world has turned upside down. I tend to think it is a bit in between. It has been great to see members still checking on one another and sharing news and bits of pieces. I hope you can attend our zoom meeting later in the month. Our meetings to date using this service have gone very well providing an opportunity to see all the familiar faces. We will also provide an update on our accommodation project. The more video contact in these times the better.

Long Term Accommodation Project

As reported in our last newsletter our business planning sub-committee has been working with the three clubs on new models of management of the Banksia Reserve Facility.

We can now report that the Beaumaris Football and Cricket Clubs have agreed to take on the head lease initially for 3 years with the Beaumaris Lawn Tennis Club and Beaumaris RSL entering into supplementary agreements. The next step in the process is for Council to endorse the concept and provide a five month formal negotiation period ending in January 2021 to work through the details with the parties.

BRSR has restated our needs which include the display of our memorabilia, providing suitable shelving for books and furniture for members to enjoy, having day time access to the facility by our members including the Heathland Day Club & Probus, continuing our Wednesday nights, holding our ANZAC and Remembrance Days and other functions.

Clearly there is a lot to do leading up to the January 2021 deadline including costs but I am sure you'll agree the current lock down could not provide a better time to undertake such work.

Although the last 6 months have been very difficult this next step provides us with the opportunity to secure accommodation and the ability to build on the negotiated terms over the first 3 years of the lease.

Members ZOOM meeting

We are holding a members meeting on Wednesday 26th of August at 8pm. We will be providing an update on our long-term accommodation project and news from the State Branch. To gain access to the meeting please email our Secretary Gina Scott beaumarisrsl@gmail.com by Tuesday 25th of August. If you do not know how to go about this please just give Shayne a call on 0418 318 862.

75th Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific

This Saturday from 10-30am a service will be broadcast on ABC from the Shrine of Remembrance concluding with a 2minute silence at 11am to mark this most important occasion.



Our WW2 Veterans

Roy

Our very own Roy MacIntosh was an ack ack gunner on an Australian destroyer which was attached to the British Pacific fleet, in turn attached to the American fleet, operating off Japan on this very day.

Previous to the actual ceremony they accompanied the fleet which went into Tokyo Bay to accept the surrender of Japan. On entering Tokyo Bay HMAS Napier detached itself from the main fleet as their Captain (Capt Buchanan RAN) was detailed to accept the surrender of Yokosuka Naval Base with HMAS Napier being his headquarters.

This was performed 2 days prior to the ceremony where General McArthur formally accepted the surrender of Japan on board USS Missouri on 3 September 1945 (Australian time). They then proceeded to assist in organising Japan for a peaceful future.

On the actual day of surrender they were still attacking Japan and Roy noted his thoughts at the time or thereabouts. Roy has provided us with his diary from that day below and it is so extraordinary that battle was still occurring! We also provide the Fire Side Chat piece from Roy a few years ago. Please think of Roy and all our WW2 Veterans this Saturday.

Recollections of 15/8/45 with a Diary as a reminder

As an A.A3 Gunner on board HMAS Napier with the British Pacific Fleet off Japan near Tokyo

Pre Dawn No confirmation of a Japanese surrender so the fleet was flying off a 400 aircraft strike on Tokyo.

0700 Recall strike

1000 Cease fire order flashed to the fleet

1115 (or 12.30) Attacking aircraft overhead with a near miss on K.G.V. on our port bow. Admiral Halsey U.S.N. signalled to shoot down any attacking aircraft in a friendly way. We closed up for about two hours while enemy aircraft flew around rather close. Altogether four aircraft shot down.

Next Day “Splice the Mainbrace” order. The captain issued one bottle of beer per man to celebrate victory

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH ROY MACINTOSH THE NAVY DAYS

The Navy was very different from anything in civilian life. Up early, jump to it, obey orders without argument and that sort of thing. Being very fit from work in the pine forests, I don't remember being overcome by any of it. We first had to do a seamanship course which was necessary before we could go on a ship.

One part was to be able to swim. I didn't pass that bit and I still can't swim. The PT officer said where are you going to swim to anyway if your ship is sunk; so he probably passed me to get rid of a problem. The photo in the charcoal drawing that my granddaughter, Bianca, did, was taken at this time.

A gunnery course followed immediately after. This was very much to my liking, and, being a country lad used to firearms allowed me to excel against the other 33 in the class, who were all from the city. With both seamanship and gunnery courses passed it was two weeks leave and off to war. We crossed the Nullarbor to Perth by train, either third class carriages or cattle trucks for us. We were due to catch a ship to cross the Indian Ocean to join our various battle stations or whatever.

I will now include a "Fireside Chat" that was conducted by Neal Stewart of the Beaumaris RSL

Today we are going to have a bit of a chat with Roy McIntosh. Roy is a long term Club member and of course many will know Roy's lovely wife Mairi through her amazing work with the Beaumaris RSL Women's Auxiliary.

Roy served his country in the Australian Navy during WW2 as a Gunner aboard the "N" Class destroyer, HMAS Napier. HMAS Napier was one of five similar vessels on loan from the Royal Navy. She was commissioned in December 1940, finished service in October 1945 and scrapped in January 1956. Early service saw her: Convoy escorting in the North Atlantic, into the Mediterranean for the evacuation of Crete, harbour defence at Port Said, lead ship of a seven Destroyer flotilla doing escorts in the Mediterranean and Red Seas, action at Tobruk and Malta and the Madagascar Campaign. She commenced patrols of the East Indian Ocean in October 1942 and in March '43 joined the Atlantic Anti-Submarine Fleet based in South Africa. After a major refit at Williamstown, she returned to the Eastern Fleet in November '44. She was HQ Ship for the landings at Akyab, Myebon and Ramree. She was re-assigned to the British Pacific Fleet in early '45. She was present in Tokyo for the signing of the surrender.

Ok, let's now see where Roy fits into the frame.

Q. At age 17 you were pretty young to join the Navy. Was there any particular reason that led

you to this decision?

A. Yes there was Neal. There were twelve children in our family, six boys and six girls. My eldest brother Doug was with Gull Force in Ambon where he had witnessed terrible atrocities

by the Japanese rounding up and bayoneting civilians and allies. Doug managed to escape and make his way back to the mouth of the Normanton River in northern Australia. I wanted to do my bit so joined up in March '43.

Q. You've told me that you were a country lad from Casterton where handling rifles was a natural part of country life. Did you follow this experience when you joined up?

A. For sure. All I ever wanted to be in the Navy was a Gunner. We trained at HMAS Cerberus where I completed the Gunners Course. It came naturally to me to handle weapons and I was a Gunner for all of my Navy service.

Q. I'm sure readers would be interested to know where on HMAS Napier were you stationed? Did you move from weapon to weapon or specialise?

A. After training, in October '43, I boarded M.V. Glenstrae bound for Colombo and immediately joined the destroyer HMAS Napier. A lot of people say there were no Ack Ack weapons on "X" deck but this is where I spent all my service-as a Gunner. Gunners usually did not move around a lot but rather stayed with the one station. I led our small Team and consequently managed to avoid swabbing duties!!

Q. Roy, what sort of actions was Napier mostly involved in during these earlier times after you joined the crew?

A. Well, before the year was out, we were on escort duties and investigating sub sightings. In the New Year we were doing the same with subs being very active in our area around Mombasa, Aden and India. By February '44 we were based at Trincomallee in North Eastern Ceylon where we experienced more air raids and of course floating mines as well as a probable Jap Carrier Force which had attacked shipping in the vicinity of Madras. In pursuit of this Force we lost one of our Troopships with very heavy loss of life and they lost one sub for sure. We often got a "ping" and we would drop a pattern of depth charges but you had to be lucky to get them.

Q. So you stayed in this area for some time?

A. Yes, we continued to sweep the Bay of Bengal as the Battle Fleet was building up for us to have a crack at Sumatra. We caused a lot of damage to planes, shipping, wharves, oil installations and the like. In May '44 we called at Exmouth Gulf to and from a raid on Surabaya. This time there were four American ships with us the largest being Saratoga which could keep seventy planes in the air. Massive destruction was caused to the Jap base.

Q. Roy, the time back in Australia for the refit at Williamstown must have been a welcome break?

A. It certainly was. We had a 30 day break and during that time we were able to be reunited with our families but we were soon back to it.

Q. After the refit, I see that Napier joined the Eastern Fleet where you were assisting the Army bombarding Jap positions along the Mayu Peninsula in Burma.

A. Yes, we could approach within a few hundred yards of shore, close enough to see the men we were assisting as well as the enemy. We were now constantly attacked by Zeros. These planes just hop over the mountain range and attack within seconds.....still they got the worst of it!

Q. Pretty scary stuff eh Roy?

A. You bet. I'd harness myself into the Oerlikon, knees shaking like hell.....out of excitement I suppose and say to myself "You're the Gunner, they're relying on you!" The first raid cost them four planes out of seven. The nearest bomb was four feet off our starboard amidships and luckily did not explode!

Q. From here, in January '45, you were the first ship into the harbour when Akyab Island was retaken and assisted the Army with its' landing at Myebon, fifty miles from Akyab. Again you got into a pretty difficult situation here.

A. Yes, there was plenty of opposition here with heavy losses to our Army. To assist the second wave of our troops we went in a bit close to assist and were locked the wrong side of a sand bar until the tide came in many hours later. The Japs took this opportunity to give us hell but lost a lot of planes without a direct hit on us. The Army presented us with a Jap Field Gun which is now in the Canberra Museum.

Q. From here you attack Ramree with Capital ships to assist you.

A. Yes, they stood out to sea and it was great to hear the one ton shell roaring overhead.

Q. The next big show was the attack on Rangoon but you went off to join the British Pacific Fleet which joined the American navy operating in the Philippines, Okinawa and the Formosa Islands. Here there were more hazards to look for-floating mines and Kamikazes, not to mention cyclones and typhoons. The mines must have been a menace?

A. Yes, from time to time it was my job to sink the floating mines. My gun was obviously in the best position on X Deck. I lost count of how many I blew up. During this stint of duty we were over seventy days without stepping onto dry land.

Q. The end was near now?

A. The morning after the second Atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki we were sailing north east of that position when we passed through a strange dark cloud hugging the sea. It has since been confirmed that it was some of the fallout from that bomb.

Q. I understand that you were all very proud of the fact that your skipper, Captain H J Buchanan, was the first Commonwealth Officer ashore after the surrender and took control of the huge Yokosuka Naval Base near Yokohama.

A. We certainly were and we were certainly glad the war was over.

Q. It has been wonderful chatting with you Roy, many thanks.

WARTIME REMINISCENCES

In response to many requests for anecdotes from my war experiences, I include the following, with a reminder that reference was made to previous notations but some reliance was placed on my memory.

When doing parade ground training at HMAS Cerberus I put my hand to my jaw. The instructor demanded why. I said I had a toothache. He said, "Well, go and have the tooth out," which I did. On returning to the parade ground he told me to approach him and told me to open my mouth. When he saw that the tooth had been extracted he could not believe it and expressed himself in such a way that it cannot be written here. When doing live gunnery practice it was the norm for the instructors to throw large fireworks to explode at your feet. This was a bit like the real thing when in action with the enemy, good training but not nearly as dangerous.

Half way across the Indian Ocean on Glenstrae, its engine stopped dead. We all went on deck with our 'Mae Wests' on without a word being said as we realised how dangerous it was to be alone and helpless.

Guarding a warehouse on the outskirts of Colombo at night during an air raid, we were forgotten; so we 'entered' the property to ring our depot to collect us.

When boarding Napier for the first time I was banned twice, first put your cap on properly, second do up the shirt button second from the top. I am not sure why I was picked on unless it was an exercise of authority.

While based on the east coast of Africa, many of us fell ill with what was called influenza (which it was not) and as we were at sea searching for a sub only the Doctor could order us back to port, which he did.

When in action against airplanes it was pleasing to see them release their bombs too early to hit us.

They must have been more scared than we were. The fact that their guns were still firing, as I recall, seemed not to matter.

I was wishing a landing craft close on our starboard side good luck when it was blown apart by an acoustic mine that it passed over. Thirty out of thirty four were pulled out of the sea okay.

We broke Radio Silence once with a Catalina aircraft in a failed attempt to draw out any Japanese Navy that were at Singapore. None came after us, but high tailing it for base in a choppy sea made most of the crew seasick.

Going in close to assist the Army on the Burma coast we crossed a sandbar. However, the tide went out before we had finished our job and we were stuck for a few hours. The enemy attacked us while we were at a disadvantage as we could not manoeuvre the ship to dodge the bombs and strafing, but they still got the worst of it.

During practice manoeuvres the Rotherham crossed our bows so close that a shipmate was

able to throw an old spanner onto their deck. The skipper sent a signal saying, "Another coat of paint and we would have hit you." I saw it loom out of a smoke screen and thought it had to hit us.

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten visited our ship, jumped on top of the torpedo tubes and told us to gather around so he could easily talk to us. That evening some of us went ashore to watch an army outdoor picture show and one of the army asked if he had visited. When we said 'yes' he replied "So you are in the next show as well." This is what he did before sending his men into battle.

Admiral Lord Mountbatten was our Commander in Chief at that time.

Going ashore at Akyab Island to stretch our legs, some of us were inspecting a large building with a lot of rubble in the centre of the floor. When looking up you could see a very large hole in the second floor and the roof. On looking down we recognised an unexploded bomb. We vacated that building quick smart.

Also, on the same island, I was on my own when I saw something glint under a bush. On close inspection I recognised a set of teeth. The army chap was so well camouflaged and could not stop grinning when I didn't see him. Lucky for me he was one of ours.

At one stage my gun got so overheated that the recoil spring broke and a piece fell on the deck, making us think we had been hit with a piece of shrapnel until I recognised what it was.

When landing Commandos at Akyab Island, a sergeant said to me "I will be glad to get off this rotten ship." I got very annoyed as we were rightly very proud of our ship. He then said "What I mean is I am scared stiff." Actually we had over 300 of them on board and we were doing 25 knots as well as zigzagging and as he was not used to this he would rather face the enemy.

Coming around south of Australia escorting a couple of British ships, we were hit by a wave so hard that our ship rolled over 60° and we turned 180°, to have us going in the opposite direction. This was near King Island and we lost two men overboard. We searched for hours but could not find them. Our sister ship HMAS Nizam lost ten men the same way near Cape Leeuwin. When later attacking Japan we had a total of six typhoons to contend with and several times had to suspend operations because of them.

On the way up the east coast of Australia after losing the two men and losing a lot of time as well and no leave we needed to call in to Sydney to refuel, the wharfies, although on the wharf, had not completed their lunch hour and when a line was passed to them one made a bad decision and with his foot pushed it back into the water. This was a bad thing to do after what we had been through; so our skipper got on the loudspeaker system and said "McIntosh, man your gun," which I of course did and aimed it at the wharf. He then had another line passed to the wharfies. This time they pounced on it and held tight. One wonders what would have happened if they had been stupid enough to push it into the sea again.

Early one morning, approximately one o'clock, our radar picked up a blip then later two in Mid Pacific. We had not been advised that friendly ships were in the area; so we had to presume they were enemy. Of course we had to challenge no matter what the odds. As

they were estimated to be two cruisers we could be in trouble. Luckily they were Yanks half asleep as we were only about ten miles off before they saw us on their radar.

It was when we were attacking the Japanese mainland that I suffered a gash to the left eye ball. The Doctor bound it, told me not to look left or right for a couple of weeks and not to take part in any practice shoots. The eye survived and now the optometrists cannot see any sign of injury having occurred.

We had no dentist on board; so when one visited via Boson's Chair I had a tooth drilled and filled. He used a pedal sewing machine to drill and even with the ship rolling about 30° at the time I felt nothing.

One Admiral's inspection with about twenty of us lined up to greet him he stopped at the first man, the tallest and asked "What made you join the Navy, sailor?" He replied "To have the pleasure of getting out of it, Sir." His next stop was me and he said, "A bit young to be in the Service are you not?" My reply was "2 years overseas to date." He wasn't having a good day.

Being on watch on the Bridge gave me a good view of a floating mine that we were headed for. Luckily we missed it by a very small margin, then it got caught in our Bow wave, which then brought it back to about amidships. There were two seamen leaning against the handrail when they saw it and I have never seen men move so fast. Luckily it did not hit. Had it done so and exploded none of us would have had anywhere to run.

It has been accepted by the Department of Veteran Affairs that we sailed through the fallout of the Nagasaki atom bomb. It was a strangely dark cloud hugging the sea. I was not affected by it, probably because I would have been wearing anti-flash clothing at the time, being close to the Japanese shore. At the time we did not realise how dangerous it was.

August 27th 1945, we anchored in Sagami Wan, just outside Tokyo Bay. On August 30th we entered Tokyo Bay not far astern of the USS Missouri, which was the ship used for the signing of the surrender by Japan. We then diverted to the Yokosuka Naval Base as headquarters for the landing force. Our skipper, Captain H J Buchannan, had the honour of being Commanding Officer of this landing force.

While being anchored close to three abandoned Japanese ships, one night some of us decided to go souveniring. After getting quite a lot, on attempting to return to our ship the American guard ship directed its spotlight directly on to us. We waved back, then they lit up our ship and our guard waved back, getting us out of trouble. Unfortunately, our guard amidships was not informed and when I was hoisted on board by the others he came out on deck and, thinking maybe I was something else, drew his revolver and stuck it in my ribs, stuttering something. Luckily he got the message as to who I was but two days later he was still shaking. I have some of the souvenirs that have been returned to me by recipients.

Vale

Many members would remember Doc Rankin and his wife Judy. We are sad to report the passing of Judy in May this year. The Beaumaris RSL sends our condolences to Doc and his family

LEST WE FORGET

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Please contact Jane Lapa our membership officer with any enquiries.
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If you have any feedback or an item you would like to include in the newsletter please email it through to beaumarisrsl@gmail.com