



Beaumaris RSL Sub Branch

Temporarily located at Beaumaris Sports Club
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July 2019

MEMBERS NEWS

Dear Member

We have certainly had a very busy couple of months indeed! Our annual ANZAC Day March and service was very well attended, the Beaumaris ANZAC Appeal had significant engagement with the local community, raising much needed welfare funds and our business planning sub-committee has presented an updated proposal to the State RSL Board.

I hope you enjoy reading all the news (including the back issue of an Arm Chair Chat with our very own Jim Spotswood) and to see you at our Wednesday night Stand To or the upcoming Christmas in July lunch. We intend to hold a members update meeting in August and will confirm in late July.

ANZAC Day 2019

Another terrific day with all hands on deck to lend a hand. John Douglas led our great team in this year's March and Service. We had a fantastic turn up of marchers very well supported by service men and women from Navy and Army. Our guest Reviewing Officer, Air Commodore Michael Rawlinson and MC CPO Jane Lapa did a sterling job and the later speeches during the Service were second to none. The annual fly past of the Formation Flight of light aircraft were right on time and certainly added a great deal to the event. Lastly the Police Pipe and Drum Band provided an extremely competent performance, both during the March and Service. Well done to all involved and we look forward to 2020!



Parade Commander addressing the troops.



Members of HMAS Cerberus Ships Company lead the March



CPO Jane Lapa (Beaumaris Sub Branch Membership Officer) and Reviewing Officer, AIR COMMODORE Michael Rawlinson receive the 'Eyes Right'.



Books and Wreaths beautifully presented by the Beaumaris Women's Auxiliary

Catafalque Party made up of Charlie Company, 5/6 RVR, based at Labuan Barracks, Royal Avenue, SANDRINGHAM



Pre-Game Ceremony at Banksia Reserve.

ANZAC APPEAL 2019

Our Appeals Officer Andrea McCoy and her team of helpers had stalls at Bunnings, the Concourse and trays in local schools and businesses. Our tally was over \$12,000 which is an outstanding achievement for the sub-branch. All funds raised go directly into Welfare activities for veterans.

Business Planning Update

The BRSL business planning committee along with the President provided a presentation of our updated proposal to be accommodated at the Beaumaris Sports Club to the RSL Victorian Board in May. The key change to the plan since October 2018 has been the negotiation of a direct 49 year lease of the 'Banksia Room'.

This model meets the criteria of the RSL Building and Patriotic Fund, provides tenure, removes any uncertainty and is within our budget. Our plan continues to include a proposed extension to the building to properly accommodate our memorabilia collection and spaces to meet our members needs.

An added development to the plan is to work with Mentone RSL on identifying areas of mutual benefit including the use of BPF funds. Considerable discussion at the board meeting took place regarding the two sub-branches and potential joint activities. Our committee is very comfortable with combining some of the roles and tasks that are needed to be undertaken each year.

We were given a very good hearing and provided with clear steps to take to progress the proposal into a finalised and approved document. Our on-going discussions with the BSC and Bayside City Council will continue as we refine our proposal.

It is not surprising these negotiations are taking time given much of the work is done by volunteers and is very complex. The good news is progress is being made and every week the Beaumaris RSL Sub Branch continues to gain members, gets stronger and enjoys the company of a vast range of members who are regularly frequenting our temporary accommodation.

Clarke Martin
President
Beaumaris RSL Sub Branch
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Please contact Jane Lapa our membership officer with any enquiries.
Phone 0415 935 513 or email jane.lapa@icloud.com

If you have any feedback or an item you would like to include in the newsletter please email it through to beaumarisrsl@gmail.com

MARCH 2014

PAGE 7

"An Armchair Chat"



by Neal Stewart

In this issue we are going to have a bit of a chat with one of our stalwarts who has been a Beaumaris RSL member since 1959. Jimmy Spotswood is a Club regular and an enthusiastic participant in the Schools Extension Programme that focuses on Year five, six and seven pupils from our local schools.

A local Williamstown lad, Jimmy reckoned that "Every young bloke from Williamstown joined the Navy." So it is somewhat unsurprising that Army call up was preceded by an application to join the Navy and the mandatory three months Basic Training subsequently took place at HMAS *Cerberus*.

So let's take up the story with Jimmy and see where it leads us.....

NS...Where were you posted on the completion of you Basic Training?

JS...It is a bit of a funny story Neal because a dozen of us were sent up to Darwin and we travelled overland via Alice Springs. We all reckoned it was pretty odd with these young sailors in the middle of the desert!!

I was in small ships doing patrols across the top end and I remember at one stage being in an old pearling lugger. At base we were assigned to work parties and I had to man a floating dock in the middle of Darwin harbour. Again, at the sounding of the air raid siren, it was a bit of a joke to see a couple of young sailors in a little dingy rowing like crazy to get away from the dock!

NS...Were you in Darwin for very long?

JS...About eighteen months and then back to Melbourne. After a while I got a draft to HMAS *Diamantina*. She was one of eight River Class frigates that were constructed in Australia. Worldwide 130 were built mainly in the UK and Canada. The eight that were made in Australia were all named after Australian rivers. They were commissioned from January 1944 through to April 1947. My ship was built in Maryborough, Queensland and had her trials in Harvey Bay. She had a crew of 147. I was a Seaman/Gunner on her 4 inch guns.

NS...Jimmy, she was launched on the 6th April, 1944 and did her trials immediately. On completion of these she headed north to PNG?

JS...Yes, we did a lot of transportation of injured troops from around the Solomon's and Bougainville to the medical facilities in Torokina on the west coast of that island. We also did some bombardments where we stood off shore and pounded places like Sohano and Saposa. I remember on one occasion we were close to shore on the west coast of Bougainville south of Torokina and we absolutely saturated the tree line of dense palms and jungle with a barrage of fire power from our two 40mm Bofors and five Oerlikons - it sure messed up the jungle.

MARCH 2014

PAGE 8

"An Armchair Chat" *cont'd*

Note: In Peter Nunan's book "HMAS *Diamantina*" he records- After the surrender Kanda asked to pay tribute to the Australian dead of Bougainville. Permission was granted. So, in the small open garden, under the Australian flag, the Japanese faced General Savige in two rows with the senior officers in front. Kanda then led them in removing their caps and deeply bowing, standing rock still and silent for a minute.

In response, the Australian addressed the Japanese, "Thank you for this tribute from a leader of troops who have fought so tenaciously." He went on to "...hope that the blood shed by both sides would cement a better understanding and contribute to good will in the future."

NS...Jimmy, after this you then headed to Nauru and Ocean Island to participate in other surrenders?

JS...Yes, we did. On the way to Ocean Island we stopped at Tarawa. There had been fierce fighting here and the shore line had been totally laid to waste. There was not a tree or palm standing. The whole shoreline was lined with abandoned American landing barges. On this island of less than one square mile, 1,000 Americans and most of the 4,000 Japanese defenders had died.

The surrenders took place on the quarter deck of *Diamantina* and I had a bird's eye view of proceedings as I was in the Guard right behind the party of signatories.

NS...Jimmy, you've said that you were discharged in May, 1946 in Sydney but have, over the years maintained a close relationship with HMAS *Diamantina*.

Yes, she was paid off to reserve in 1946 and recommissioned in 1959 as a Survey and Oceanographic Research vessel. In 1980 *Diamantina* was presented to the Queensland Maritime Museum and I am able to regularly go up and visit her. My grandchildren who are in Brisbane often visit with me and think it is pretty special that Pa was on this ship. Sometimes I just sit there looking at her and the memories come flooding back.....

