

Sea dog hooked on history



Sea dog LCDR Richard Francis at the RAN Heritage Centre, Garden Island-Sydney. Pic by LCDR Mick Gallagher.

By LCDR Mick Gallagher

After 46 years of Naval service sea dog LCDR Richard Francis is a walking-talking history of naval life.

Seen on his many sojourns around Garden Island-East, or the corridors of MHQ, the bearded 'Fishhead' seaman officer is always easily distracted to break into stories of yesteryear, naval lore, traditions and yarns.

He has been a member of the Naval Historical Society of Australia since 1986 and was editor of the society's publication the Naval Historical Review from 2000 until 2005.

He has been its Vice President for the past two years.

LCDR Francis attended the society's last meeting where CMDR Peter Poland Rtd gave a presentation on his visit to UK in 2005 for the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

"We are always finding out something new about the naval hero, Lord Nelson, who has made such a significant historical contribution to the navies of the Commonwealth," said LCDR Francis who eagerly awaited the opportunity to spin more yarns at the HMAS *Kuttabal Sydney/Emden* mess dinner held on Nov 9.

Born in central Africa the year Singapore fell, Richard joined the Royal Navy in 1960 as an officer cadet. Early sea time in his training ships saw him serving in the Icelandic cod wars in 1961-62 and subsequently in ships of the Far East Fleet, including the Indonesian Confrontation in the period 1963-66.

In 1967 he participated in the

Canadian centenary celebrations while serving in the Western Fleet flagship, HMS *Hampshire*, and in her, toured South America in 1968, rounding Cape Horn in a stiff gale where 'I lost my cap overboard,' he recalls philosophically.

In 1970 it was back to the Far East in the helicopter cruiser HMS *Blake* and then the 1970 British trade show in San Francisco.

Between 1973 and 1976 he served in the amphibious carrier HMS *Hermes* as an NBCD specialist on NATO amphibious exercises, which included a return trip to Canada and a visit to Turkey, both flanks of the NATO area, then Arctic exercises in Norway.

His NBCD experience gave him the opportunity to visit Australia in the period 1976 to 1978 on RN/RAN exchange when he was CNBCD/OIC NBCD School HMAS *Penguin* in Sydney.

After returning to the UK and serving as XO in the Exocet missile frigate HMS *Sirius* 1979-80, he transferred from the RN after 20 years service and joined the RAN in 1980.

"One of my most memorable experiences in the Royal Navy was when we saved lives at sea, including those of our enemies, who tried to sink our ships," he said.

LCDR Francis went on to serve 26 years in the RAN with postings to Fleet Training Group 1980-81, RAN Staff Course 1981, ship repair projects at GI-East 1982-85, First Lieutenant HMAS *Watson*, and DTRIALS Canberra 1985-89, conducting the first RAN MCM vessel shock-trials off Townsville.

He was the RANLO onboard the French cruiser *Colbert* on its Australian bicentenary cruise around Australia in 1988, and liaison officer for DSTO at Pymont-Sydney 1990-91.

After 12 years in the PNF, Richard transferred to the Reserves in 1992 and became DNW Reserve Staff Officer with the Coastal Geographic Information System project in 1992-94.

He was office manager with ship repair/staffing projects/book writing/shore safety 1993 - 2005, and contracts manager for RAN technical training/garrison support contracts re-tendering process with Naval Industry Engagement Contracts Bureau 2004 - 06 at Garden Island-Sydney.

Richard currently holds the Maritime Headquarters OPS Division position of FAMTO (Fleet Activities Management Tool Staff Officer).

Former Navy Reservist LEUT David McFall, and now Public Affairs Officer for the Naval Historical Society, congratulates LCDR Richard Francis on his great contribution to the Society and to naval history.

"I encourage current serving personnel to become members of the Naval Historical Society," said the enthusiastic 'sea dog'. "It will help reinforce the great traditions and proud history which are part of our Navy today."

For info on the activities of the Naval Historical Society of Australia Inc, check out website: www.navyhistory.org.au or Email: secretary@navyhistory.org.au.

DG'S HEADS UP - CDRE Ranford Elsey



DGRES-N CDRE Ranford Elsey

Aug 06 -

- NR Professional Studies Program invites applications for the Matthew Davey Award (Overseas Study Grant).
- Promotions
- Preview of Reserve Remuneration Review case to go before DFRT.
- Cadets - 'the country face of the Navy'.
- *Out in Force* - Reserve Forces Day recognised around the country.
- Dive Team 9 surveys Darwin.

Sep 06 -

- *Reserves Cashed Up* - results of DFRT hearing with removal of the salary discounting, and award of a Reserve Service Allowance to become effective from Sep 1, 06.
- *Sea Lines of Communication - The Transmission Mode* - MTO Reservist LCDR Peter Martin departs on 90,000 tonne LNG tanker, SS *Northwest Swan*, for voyage to China and return.
- RRP-NSW feature.
- Reserve medics in hospital ship, USNS *Comfort* and working in Indonesia.
- NRCEP positions tabled.

Oct 06 -

- How promotions are considered.
- Preview to SA Navy Week - HMAS *Success* to visit.
- Naval Intelligence Reserves - A brief history.
- Reservists help out Sea King accident BOI.
- Cadets - exchange with Russians and Swedes.
- Nov 2, 06 -
- Employer awards dinner held in Melbourne - top employers of Reserves are recognised.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all Reservists to say how proud I am of Reservists' efforts in supporting Navy through the provision of both supplementary and complementary capability and their contribution to outputs not only at home in Australia but in many places around the world.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your support and contribution to Defence and to thank also those loved ones who in turn support you in this important work - it is greatly appreciated. I look forward to an increased NR contribution in 2007 and in the first edition next year, I will be outlining some developments and initiatives to enhance NR capability and outputs within Navy and the wider Defence network.

To you and your families a blessed, safe, and happy Christmas and New Year.

It's been a very challenging and eventful year for the Naval Reserve. It's also been a very productive and rewarding period of time and to highlight the fact, I asked the Editor, LCDR Tony Underwood, to provide a selection of events as portrayed in *Reserve News* throughout 2006.

Two prominent events placed markers in the calendar. The first was the launch of the NR Capability Enhancement Program (CEP). The NRCEP is gathering momentum and a check of the uptake of positions within the FEGs and NR specialisations reveals an encouraging picture. The second revolved around the Reserve Remuneration Review and the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal's (DFRT) findings on August 31.

Feb 06 -

- CN lays down the challenge with wide variety of new positions for Reservists (at the NR Symposium on Feb 3).
- NRCEP capability statements first published - emphasis on more sea service for Reservists. The NRCEP gets an extra \$5.2 million over three years.
- Exercise Executive Stretch in Victoria supported by Naval Reservists from Victoria.

Mar 06 -

- Dedication of divers stained-glass window at HMAS *Cerberus*.
- DGRES-N forecasts firming up of duty statements for the new NRCEP positions.
- MWG54 marks the opening of a new Goorangai memorial.
- DGNPT CDRE Coates indicates changes to be introduced by the NRCEP - continuation training for Reservists and the ability to maintain currency with new equipment; movement and travel of Reservists to enable unrestricted movement to where they are needed; recognition that Reservists need to be current if full capability benefits are to be achieved.
- DGNCP flagged '...lack of sufficient numbers of Reserves to meet the challenge... as the biggest single risk factor to successful implementation of the CEP'.

Apr 06 -

- Reservists encouraged to apply for the new Australian Defence Medal, and renewed efforts to clear medal backlog.
- *DG's Heads Up* points to upcoming NRCEP information sessions around the country.

May 06 -

- Reserve Dive Team special - New NR Dive Team for Cairns.
- First NRCEP workshops conducted.
- Report on ANZAC Day activities with many NR personnel marching.
- NR brothers in Government House jobs - in ACT and Qld.

Jun 06 -

- \$600 pa Health Support Allowance for Active Reserves is promulgated.
- Employer awards dinner held in Sydney - top employers of Reserves are recognised.
- Consecration of Reserve Chaplain Mark Burton as an Anglican Bishop in WA.

Jul 06 -

- *Angels Flight* - MTO Reservist in Brisbane provides airlift for needy patients.
- LCDR John Polglaze wins environment award.
- Navy Reservists in Operation Astute in Timor-Leste.
- Employer awards dinner held in Brisbane - top employers of Reserves are recognised.

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Keep up with RANR changes - check the members' area of:

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