

A Night on the *Waratah*
by Richard Lawson

In early December, the Cruising Division enjoyed an opportunity to renew our relationship with the Sydney Heritage Fleet by having our end of year get-together on the heritage steam vessel *Waratah*.

The majority of our group began by meeting at Milsons Point at the Luna Park ferry wharf and catching the excellent Transport NSW ferry service to the National Maritime jetty at Pyrmont. We walked 200m to the Casino Wharf, where we met up with the remainder of the Cruising group, and boarded the *Waratah* for a 90 minute harbour cruise around the foreshore of the Eastern Suburbs and west to Long Nose Point.



We were very fortunate with the weather, as a lot of the bushfire smoke had dissipated somewhat, although there was some haze about. The most memorable aspects of our excursions with the Sydney Heritage Fleet were the crew who run the vessels and the quality of the food provided. On each occasion we have enjoyed the company of very friendly and knowledgeable volunteer staff and have had free access to all parts of the vessels, of which the crew are so proud.

As was the case with our previous visit to the James Craig two years ago, the quality of the canapés was outstanding with many compliments passed to our waiter, who was a fascinating young man. The Heritage Fleet certainly know how to host their guests, as the only item we had to provide was our own liquid refreshment.



The *Waratah* is a wonderful example of what a group of dedicated individuals, all members of the Sydney Heritage Fleet's restoration team, have achieved. Thank goodness a large part of our maritime heritage is in their hands. Crew dedication was best demonstrated by the Maori lady who spent all evening stoking the boiler with coal, thus creating steam to drive the steam piston motor. I only saw her come on deck once for a breath of fresh air! I believe we were all in admiration of our host crew.





Although these visits are somewhat difficult to arrange, I believe the Cruising Division's long term relationship with the museum is worth pursuing, as many Squadron Members are deeply engaged with the Heritage Fleet, and our small involvement and contribution supports their hard work.

I think it will be quite difficult to find such a satisfying activity for the 2020 end of year gathering, and invite you to send me your suggestions please!

