



Official Magazine of
**WODEN VALLEY
SUB-BRANCH R.S.L.**



The SERVICEMAN

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CHRISTMAS EDITION

NOVEMBER 2019



The Sub-Branch marquee at the Government House open day, Saturday 12 October 2019 with Sub-Branch President Jim Gilchrist, Anthony John, Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, Bob Cremer and Peter Eveille.

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The SERVICEMAN

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RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

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OFFICE BEARERS 2019-20

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New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia

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The Sub-Branch meets on the last Tuesday of each month except April and December at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Corinna Street, Phillip at 7.00PM. Membership Subscription is due on 1st January annually and should be posted to Grant Cameron Community Centre, 14/27 Mulley St, Holder ACT 2611.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Bob Cremer



Another successful Floriade and on Veterans' Day we had a speech by ACT Minister for Veterans Mr Gordon Ramsay and a rifle drill display by a contingent of the Federation Guard. A very impressive display for the gathered audience.

On 12 October it was Open Day at Government House where we had some interest from the general public, although it would have been good to see a better roll-up of Sub-Branch members also attending on the day.

We were just one of the many exhibitors at 'A Volunteering Expo' at the Old Bus Depot Markets on Saturday 26 October which attracted many visitors and a considerable amount of interest in the many stalls on display. We also had a stall at 'SouthFest', down by the lake in Tuggeranong. Hopefully we may get a new member and/or a volunteer or two from these events.

Our annual 'Poppy Appeal' during the week of 4-11 November was a busy time and while I only attended to the proceedings at Cooleman Court at Weston, I have to say that I was very impressed by the generosity of the general public to our worthwhile cause of support for our veterans, especially with so many other organisations collecting for their own funds. We were also limited by fewer volunteers manning our collection points.

Another year coming to an end so at this time I would like to wish everyone a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Take care and will see you all in 2020.

FALL IN

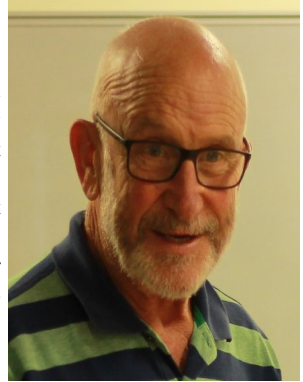
*A warm welcome is extended to the following
new members.*



Matthew Le Pavoux, Allan Sjaarda, Christine Lamb,
Emily Kelly, William Kelly, Sandra Goddard, Craig Bickell

President's Message

Jim Gilchrist



With my apologies to our long-suffering Editor, Bob Cremer, I have at last put my fingers to the keyboard and write this message. My only excuses for my tardiness are that we have been a bit hectic at work and I have wanted to report on a couple of exciting activities that have occurred recently. While our workload continued at what remains an ever-increasing rate, some staff and volunteer absences meant that we had fewer people that are needed to readily meet our service delivery responsibilities, and arrange activities and some special events.

The highlight of the special events was our visit to Government House for morning tea. Having been invited by Mrs Hurley, some 50 elderly members and volunteers shared morning tea with Their Excellencies, General David Hurley and Mrs Hurley on the 19th November. While some who attended this function were familiar with the surrounds, for many it was a new experience. Their Excellencies gave freely of their time, engaged with most of their guests and offered *roaming rights* to those who wished to explore the Ground Floor. It was an excellent visit and was greatly appreciated by all who attended.

The second major event was a workshop and planning session we held on the evening of the 19th November. While this made for a long day for some of us the workshop provided an opportunity to work to discuss with stakeholders the nature and extent of our workloads and identify synergies in what we know is a resource intensive area. After some frank discussion, we agreed on some tasks that we could address to optimise the support we offer to the veteran community in the ACT and region. In what should be refreshed relationships, we clarified some of our immediate issues and prepared to develop plans for a sustainable future.

We also attended or arranged a screening of the movie *Danger Close*; had stalls at the Government House Open Day, the Volunteering ACT Expo and SouthFest; and, participated in a brief tribute to the Light Horse as part of the *Road to the Jericho Cup* horse race at Thoroughbred Park. My wife, Kay and I attended a dinner at which our Patron, Her Excellency Dame Annette King, farewelled the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson, prior to his retirement from this role. This was a great honour that affirms our Sub-Branch's relationships with the New Zealand High Commission and the AWM. I took the opportunity to thank Brendan for his contribution to veterans generally and to our Sub-Branch in particular.

At the OGM Dinner in June, the Chief of Airforce, Air Marshall Leo Davies, spoke on the evolution of the RAAF to its present state and noted some highlights of his career, before responding to some questions to round out his presentation. We were also honoured by a video presentation from the retiring Governor General, His Excellency, General Sir Peter Cosgrove, in what was one of his last official tasks in that role.

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Given that both Air Marshall Davies and Sir Peter were due to retire from their respective roles within a week of this dinner, we greatly appreciated their contribution and general support for our Sub-Branch. At the October dinner, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Cullinan spoke of his ascent of Mount Everest some 25 years ago. The audience was enthralled by Pat's delivery and modest account of this extraordinary feat and the background required to prepare for and support it.

Each month about 30 new clients sought our support with their claims and appeals. Many members and widows and others from the veteran community requested assistance from our welfare staff and volunteers on a regular basis.

Concurrent with these activities, the Sub-Branch continued to look after its members and do those basic tasks that ensure we comply with relevant governance and management standards and practices. To this end, Brooke Thorpe, Ashley Willis and Anthony John stood down from our Board for personal reasons. Alex Meiliunas had not stood for re-election at our AGM in May. Former Branch President, Peter Eveille, was elected Vice-President Service Delivery and former Sub-Branch and Branch President, Peter MacFetters (formerly Collas) was elected Deputy President. Although we now have fewer directors, we amended the Constitution to assist in the efficient and effective operations of our Sub-Branch.

From a resourcing perspective, I iterate that, while I believe that people are our biggest risk, we must obtain substantial and sustainable funds if we are to continue to achieve our present outputs. To this end, I thank our members for supporting the Board's recommendation to draw down on the AMF assets for the last two and a half years. I also thank those who supported the further increase in this draw down at the Special General Meeting on the 26th November. While this approach will inevitably reduce our ability to earn money through our investments, these funds will give us the time and resources we need to meet our present workloads while we continue to seek external support.

In relation to the *people risk*, our volunteers remain our greatest asset, with most in our current pool having been the backbone of our operations for many years. However, we need to attract more volunteers, and, then, train and resource them appropriately. The second *people issue* relates to our clients who continue to present in increasing numbers, with many facing complex issues that are beyond our capabilities and for which we must seek external support. Thirdly, we must continue to meet the basic needs of more than 600 members, many of whom are both elderly and in need of general support.

Despite the relatively small group of volunteers available for the Remembrance Day Appeal, we raised about \$18,000. With some \$20,000 we received for a BEST Grant, these funds will contribute to the VSC staffing needs. We also received some smaller grants that were tied to specific tasks or purchases and without which we would not have done certain activities or bought some much needed equipment.

To assist with our governance and management responsibilities while continuing to grow our capabilities and capacities, the Board is developing a strategic plan that will identify and support needs and projected needs in a rolling five-year program. >>>

This will be complemented by a business plan that will operate on a two-year rolling basis. These plans will replace the Outline Plan that has guided our development for the past five years or so, and will provide a base from which we will develop annual budgets and will demonstrate our responsible work practices to potential supporters.

As reported separately in this edition of *The Serviceman* and in newsletters, the Eddison Day Club, the Burrangiri lunches and the Volunteer Information sessions continued to attract interest and gave our members opportunities to gather in good company and engage with others. While the Day Club bus trip to Cowra made for a long day, it was well supported and appreciated by all who attended it. Throughout the past several months, we continued to develop our relationships at various levels with DVA. This liaison and practical work included senior DVA staff, delegates, case coordinators and service delivery elements such as Open Arms, formerly the VVCS. We also continued to liaise with many service providers within the ACT and region.

In that context, I again thank all our volunteers and staff who support our members and clients. I also thank those who work in leadership positions and those who provide the back-office support without which we could not operate. At the same time, I ask readers to bring a friend along to any of our activities and encourage them to join one of our many teams as we will find a job for anyone who wants to help. In closing, I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and my best wishes for a happy, healthy and safe 2020.

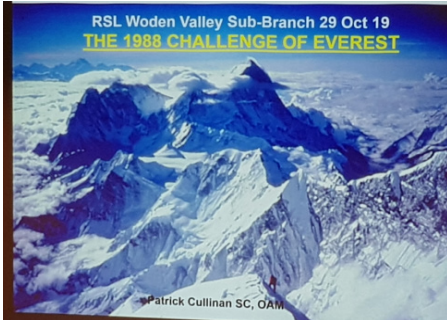


At a Morning Tea at Government House hosted by His Excellency General David Hurley and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley on 19 November for over 40 Sub-Branch veterans.

Attending were Mr Jim Gilchrist, Sub-Branch President, Mr Adrian Roberts, Long Tan veteran, HE Mrs Linda Hurley, HE General David Hurley, Mr Les Cook, WWII veteran and Mrs Betty Mills, Nursing Corps, Malaya veteran.

Sub-Branch Dinner 29 October 2019

The dinner at the Southern Cross Club on 29 October was a successful and well attended by Sub-Branch members and invited guests. The guest speaker was Mr Patrick Cullinan SC OAM who spoke of his exploits during the 1988 Challenge of Mt Everest.



Photos of the evening's proceedings kindly provided by Peter Eveille

Legacy Widow - Canberra Legacy
Legacy Address by Kathryn Christie
Legacy Week National Launch - 2 September 2019
Australian War Memorial

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

I am Kathryn Christie. I am a mother, an Army Officer, a war veteran and recently I became a war widow.

Today we launch National Legacy Week, the annual national appeal to raise awareness, and funds for the families of veterans who've given their life or their health. It was an honour to be asked to speak about how much Legacy means to me. However, this privilege also asks that I reveal the hardest experiences of my life. I do this publicly for the first time, a momentous challenge, but also an incredible opportunity given the highly respected audience here today.

In particular I acknowledge:

- The Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd),
- Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley,
- Mr Rick Cranna OAM, Chairman of Legacy Australia,
- and my boss, General Angus Campbell AO DSC, Chief of the Australian Defence Force.

I want to talk to you today about my story with Legacy. I'll start out about my support for Legacy in my youth - and then turn to how I became a war widow and turned to Legacy for support, and how their assistance has helped me thrive. I hope that by witnessing Legacy's transformative work, you will be called to support their work that helps families who suffer the collateral damage of modern-day service while at the same time support those widows and widowers from previous conflicts.

I'll start with the easy part. I remember being a young child, shopping with my mother in our country Victorian township. Mum always stopped to support Legacy pin sellers. I remember later, as a cadet at the Australian Defence Force Academy, volunteering to sell Legacy pins around Canberra, a tradition I continued as a young officer. After literally a lifetime of supporting, I never considered what it would be like to be a recipient of Legacy's support.

Now for the harder part of my story. Three years ago one of my best friends, Brydie, died of cancer. A promising young Naval officer, she and I had graduated from ADFA together. Brydie left behind her husband, Mark, and two little boys, my Godsons, Benji and Jack. Recently Mark told me that Legacy caught him in a rough time, and they kept him afloat more than they could ever know.

But now for the hardest part of my story. Two years ago, my husband of ten years violently turned on me. Andrew had experienced a terrible and largely secret battle with chronic pain, depression and PTSD and this shifted a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour into physical violence. I was scared for my life. I managed to escape with our two-year-old daughter Imogen.

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When the police came to tell me Andrew had been found dead, presumably suicide, I knew how close my run had been. That week, I entered Legacy House in Canberra. Bereft, traumatised and battered, I walked in a fog of shock and grief.

My story now takes a turn for the better. Two kindly gentlemen invited me to sit down and asked me to become a member of Legacy. They asked me for copies of all our personal documents and to sign permission for them to advocate for me. Many of you here today have also lost a loved one. Maybe you also have experienced first-hand the tsunami of paperwork which descends upon you when you are feeling least capable to handle it. After years of hiding depression and PTSD, I realised Andrew's condition had exacerbated our administrative chaos. Suicide seems to add further layers of complexity to the paperwork.

However, when I walked into Legacy House, I had no idea what I was in for. I was in a daze when I signed to allow Legacy help navigate me through administration such as the funeral payments, accessing Defence insurance, veterans affairs support and securing Andrew a commemorative plaque. The act of Legacy administratively advocating for me was profound. When you are in a state of grief, the mere sight of a form can be overwhelming, let alone the trauma of constantly having to re-tell your story to strangers. The Legatees who handled the mountain of post-death, back-of-house admin took an enormous load off me - and allowed me space to grieve, parent and carry on during this terrible time. My situation was depressingly bureaucratically complex. Much of the support I was entitled to was withheld because I didn't have a Death Certificate. I had to wait for ten months before the Coroner confirmed Andrew's death was suicide.

Our family income had dropped to one wage overnight so during the day I did my Army job, the competitive and challenging course at Command and Staff College. Then as a single parent, I organised dinner, read stories, and got my daughter to bed. I prepared for the next day at work, finishing assignments and keeping up with the significant workload, then tackling other pieces of admin - another form to be filled out, another financial puzzle to be unravelled, another system to navigate. This took at least an hour or two each night. The administrative burden lasted a whole year, but if it weren't for Legacy taking a significant bulk of it on their shoulders, I would probably still be doing it now!

The next part in my story is about something profound that happened. The un-glamorous, tedious administrative burden that the Legatees carried was essential for practical reasons. But it was also one of the practical mechanisms in which my trust in men was restored. When the Legatees met me, I was coming to terms with the traumatising experience of being violently abused and then abandoned by the person I was supposed to be able to trust most. Having witnessed violence, and seen her mother fear for her life, Imogen was also understandably wary of men.

In this context, the restorative impact of caring and practical male Legatees was immeasurably healing. They were a steady presence in our lives at the time Imogen and I needed positive male role-models. These role model men were present, they listened, and then they rolled up their sleeves and in a very determined and practical manner, helped resolve problem after problem.

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They found me legal, financial, welfare and social support. They organised time for my friends and family to holiday in the Legacy apartment by the ocean. They got me in touch with other widows in Canberra. They found activities for Imogen to join with kids who have also lost a father. They found me a beautiful Legatee family that we catch up with regularly.

Most weeks during the first six months I came to Legacy House for a cuppa, and I still do pop in regularly now.

I am not diminishing the incredible work of the devoted Legatee women who helped us too, nor the other, friends and family, many of them good male mates, who stepped up to help during our time of darkness. Far from it, these people were amazing too.

But the simple fact that the male Legatees were a beacon of 'positive masculinity' in the context of our experiencing the worst of 'toxic masculinity' made a profound difference.

My story concludes with evidence of the Legatee's restorative work. As the first year wore on, I moved house, graduated from College with a Distinction grade, posted into a new job, and Imogen turned three. The second year anniversary since Andrew's death was only a fortnight ago. In this last year I have been promoted, posted to a new job again, and bought and renovated a home for us. Most importantly though, I now know what I want to do with my future.

Tomorrow I fly to Paris before walking the Camino de Santiago, the famous 780km Spanish pilgrimage. When I return in October, Imogen and I will move to Melbourne to be close to family, and I will commence my transition to a creative life, fulfilling my dream to go to Art School.
Don't worry Sir, I still love the Army and will continue serving in the Reserves!

Imogen is now four. She is so proud because she had just learnt to whistle, ride a bike, and she now has pet fish. All four of her fish are named Splash. She is a delightful, happy and well-adjusted little girl. She still talks about her dad most days and says when she remembers him she get a tummy ache. We watch videos of them together to make the tummy aches go away. It seems like a lifetime ago when I was Imogen's age, my mum supporting Legacy by buying pins with me. Neither of us would have guessed that my own daughter and I would be supported by Legacy one day.

However, I have every confidence that Imogen and I will be well cared for. Legacy has already proven themselves during the very worst times, and I know that they will continue to support us as we enter our bright new future.

Today my story ends with hope. I'm hopeful about our future, and I'm hopeful that more people will support the purposeful work of Legacy.

Thank you for listening and for caring for Imogen and myself.

Vietnam Veterans' Day 18th August 2019

Mick O' Donnell

The Annual Vietnam Veterans' Remembrance Service was held on Sunday 18 August at the Memorial in Canberra to honour the memory of those who served, suffered and died as a result of the Vietnam conflict between 1962 and 1975. Air Force Marshal (Retd) Chris Deeble AP, CSC gave the keynote address. Also in attendance was the new Governor General David Hurley AC DSC, and former Governor General Mike Jeffrey AC, CVO, MC, and hundred of veterans.

The ceremonial was provided by serving members of the Federation Guard. An RAAF Hornet flew down ANZAC Parade to honour the occasion. Rev Mick O'Donnell delivered the Peace Prayer; he served during the Borneo Confrontation in 1965, the Vietnam Conflict in 1971 and is a former Chaplain to the AFP.



Photos from the Annual Vietnam Veterans' Remembrance Service on Sunday 18 August.



The Eddison Day Club goes to Cowra

Ian Gollings

Friday 20 September was the day chosen for members of the Eddison Day Club to take a bus trip to Cowra to see the Japanese Garden and other sites related to the tragic prisoner of war breakout in 1944. Nearly 40 of us were waiting at 9:00AM for the bus which included a RAAF Chaplain from the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) and 5 young ADFA officer trainees there to assist those who needed mobility support.

Our excellent bus driver, a patient gentleman named Linden, gave us a rest with tea and biscuits two hours later at Boorowa, then we proceeded to Cowra. First stop was the former Prisoner of War Camp, Number 12, which, after 1941, held captured Italian and Japanese wartime enemies. The Italians were there because the British Government asked Australia to look after them after they surrendered during WWII warfare in North Africa. The Japanese were captured by American and Australian servicemen after Pearl Harbour was attacked.

By 1944, there were around 2,000 Italians in the camp and they were generally quite relaxed about being there. Many of them worked on local farms and in growing vegetables for an Edgell cannery. We saw that very little is left of the camp, much having been destroyed in a Japanese breakout on 5 August 1944, the remainder dismantled when the war ended. There were around 1,100 Japanese POWs there at that time and most of them were ashamed because, according to their military code, their country disowned them if they were captured. The rule was: death is better. Led by hardliners, plans were made to incite the Australian Army guards to forcibly react to an armed uprising in which the shame would be removed. The time came unexpectedly on 4 August when the POWs were told that all of them below the rank of lance-corporal were to be moved to Hay in South-West NSW, to remove overcrowding. Within hours, at 2:00AM the following day, a Japanese bugle call started the self destructive breakout which ultimately led to the death of 234 Japanese and five Australian soldiers. No Italian prisoners were involved and no civilians were hurt. It was the biggest POW breakout in modern war history.

At the next stop in Cowra we looked at the quiet and beautiful twin war cemeteries - Australian and Japanese. After the breakout, the huge task of burying 234 Japanese was resolved by interring them in long trenches, close to where other Japanese had already been buried. The Cowra Sub-Branch of the RSL, which had been looking after graves in the Australian War Cemetery, voluntarily assumed responsibility for tending the Japanese graves. After ten years of discussions between the Australian and Japanese Governments, land where the Japanese were buried was permanently leased to the Japanese Government and a beautiful cemetery was constructed to a plan designed by Mr Shigaru Yura, a Japanese architect who was working at Melbourne University. Each prisoner has a headstone with his name on it, and there's a facility for religious ceremonies, which take place every year. The Australian war cemetery is adjacent to it and both are maintained by the Australian War Graves Commission. The Japanese Government pays the Commission for its services.

We reached the Japanese Garden on time at 1 o'clock and found it looking its Spring best with its cherry blossom trees in full flower.

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A taste of country-style lunch of sandwiches, scones with jam and cream and plenty of tea and coffee was enthusiastically enjoyed in the Garden Café. Then, in the warm weather, and with the Japanese maple trees blooming, many Day Club members were driven around the gardens by the ADFA trainee officers in golf buggies (provided free by the garden management) while others looked at the exquisite cultural centre.

After a friendly exchange of greetings between Peter Sutton, on behalf of Woden Valley Sub-Branch and Tony Mooney, on behalf of Cowra Sub-Branch and also on behalf of the Japanese Gardens committee, we moved to a Japanese-style pavilion alongside the Cowra Shire Chambers. The pavilion houses the Australian World Peace Bell, and while we watched from our bus Peter and Wayne Ross, the ADFA Chaplain jointly tolled the bell with our wishes for peace. It is a coincidence that the day after our visit was World Peace Day.

Thanks are due to all who made it possible, including Chaplain Wayne Ross and the trainee officers, our driver, Linden, and the good folk at the gardens who looked after us so well. But it was Terry Colhoun who shared his knowledge of the sad events at Cowra during WWII who made this a special event in the 15-year history of the Eddison Day Club.



A few of the highlights from a very successful day at Cowra, enjoyed by all those from the Eddison Day Club and invited guests.





LEST WE FORGET

“The price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance”



*“They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them”.*

SNOW

*Dedicated to Sgt. “Snowy” Kerr, of the Desert Column, 1915-1918
From ‘The Fuzzy Wuzzys Angels’ by Sapper Bert Beros*

It’s a cemetery of Beersheba, now the dust begins to stir,
For a Khamsin starts a-blowing as I think of Snowy Kerr,
He was my mining cobbler, whom I knew in days gone by,
In the hallowed acre men he knew and loved, in slumber lie.

I conjure up a picture of the old light horse Brigade,
And I see, in one quick moment, the brave hot charge they made,
They are resting from their battles, ‘neath the crosses neatly ranged,
Where their names will live forever, in memory unchanged.

I thought of him in Syria, when I tasted Eastern brew,
And things that I indulged in, just like Snowy used to do.
I would like to change the Khamsin, for the cool Bedourie blow,
In the far north-west of Queensland, have a drink again with Snow.

*I visited the cemetery at Beersheba with a lad from Dubbo.
His elder brother had been killed at the charge of Beersheba in 1917.
His mother had asked him to get a photograph, if possible, of the grave.
We found it, beautifully cared for by the Australia War Graves
Commission. I thought of my old mining mate, Snowy Kerr,
and the tales he told of Beersheba.*



Geoffrey Morgan, Reginald Andrew, Barbara Atkins,
Marcus Quinlivan, Don Cameron, Kenneth Parratt,
William Gynn, Arthur Hillier

The Serviceman - Bound for Greatness

Bill Smith & Bob Cremer

Widely recognised as a leading magazine in its class, steps are now underway to further cement *The Serviceman* in the history of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch. It has served us with honour since first published decades ago by reporting on a wide spectrum of subjects. From the very start it earned the support and respect of the Sub-Branch membership and beyond by its service to us and yet has not featured itself as a topic in its own pages - or beyond.

As the 40th year anniversary of its first publication in January 1962 is fast approaching, in our capacities as the current Editor and Past President involved in its' resurrection, we decided to present a collection of bound volumes of *The Serviceman* to the Sub-Branch library. The gathering of past copies since its revival in 1988 is underway. This covers a thirty-year publication span to also include copies of the associated special Schools' ANZAC and Peace series from its inception in 1999. It will result in a set of ten bound volumes that will include this issue and a comprehensive index. When lodged in the Sub-Branch library, it will be made readily available to members and researchers for at least the next thirty years. *The Serviceman* is of great interest because it has grown steadily in structure and content for over fifty years. As the official magazine of the Sub-Branch, it has kept members up to date on management aspects of our organisation, advice on programs of meetings and events with mention of members involvement where appropriate. It also provides a forum for members to share past personal experiences of operations enriched by the spread of Army, Navy or Air Force involvement.

The growing tempo and spread of activities within the Sub-Branch, particularly in maintaining an expanding welfare support program, required *The Serviceman's* role to be supplemented by the monthly e-newsletter. However, the monthly e-news has elevated the value of *The Serviceman* that consistently provides context for real life stories through articles on historical and current events. In addition, the collection of bound copies will reflect the changes in publication techniques, material availability, styles, paper quality, size and design including the introduction of colour photography. The bound volumes will contain these changes that in turn are part of our history.

Lest *The Serviceman* collection be considered to be a pseudo history of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch, it is important to point out why that notion would fall short of the requirement. While the bound series will form an essential research tool for historians, the collection does not contain details of actual management decisions, funding considerations and the personnel involved in the development of the Sub-Branch, or the RSL of which it is part.

The Serviceman was introduced as a magazine to appeal to the then small and specific audience of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch. The original editor, Blair Taylor, aimed to keep members informed of progress, performance and personalities relevant to their immediate aims. He gathered articles written by scholars, leaders and researchers to mix into the presentation of notices of events in a way that best enthused, entertained and enlightened that audience. It was valuable because the contents reflected past and present community interests of a military nature and provided proper context for their evaluation.

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The steady growth of the Sub-Branch can be attributed in large part to the popularity of the magazine. It began to rival professionally produced ACT Branch and National publications. It was unfortunate that the cost in time and resources took its toll when our building and expansion program coincided with increased National financial uncertainties. Eventually *The Serviceman* had to fall by the wayside and languish for some years while the Sub-Branch experienced a problem with ageing membership and worsening credit facilities. Our tenant Bowling Club was hit by similar problems and the sale of our property became the only sensible choice. Once the sale to the Southern Cross Club was completed and all debts discharged, the Sub-Branch established fresh financial goals. Details of these and other historic turning points in our history are found in records of committee and general meetings over the years. Names of key personnel involved in these events are usually included but seldom is reference made to the many team workers who made things happen. With the introduction of the whimsical Order-Of-Whatever-It-Is (OOWII) awards in 1992, an avenue was opened to give greater visibility to members who were contributing towards our progress. It follows that while *The Serviceman* is a rich source of information upon which to base a history of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch, there are equally important references to be consulted (including previous histories).

Perhaps we can conclude that *The Serviceman* has achieved greatness and should be bound to take its place in the Sub-Branch library. But more importantly, it would be even better if it inspires a similar move to collect, assemble and bind volumes of the original pre-1988 issue copies for posterity. In time, the process could lead to making records of relevant meetings and listing of OOWII recipients also readily available in the library.

Should our limited resources allow these tasks to be undertaken, care would have to be taken to give priority to the continuing task of continuing to maintain the integrity of the initial set. With three issues of *The Serviceman* published each year, each four year cycle will produce the need for another volume of the twelve issues and an updated comprehensive index to the set.

VOLUNTEERS

The Sub-branch has an ongoing need for volunteers to participate in the many and varied duties that are performed for our members. Hospital visiting or visiting older members in aged care facilities, or in their own homes is part of our program. This is not an onerous task for those participating, but comforting for those who may be in hospital or just in need for someone to talk to. For further information contact the Sub-branch office — **6285 1931**



RSL POPPY APPEAL
Mon 4th to Mon 11th November 2019



Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch wishes to acknowledge the partnership between **WESTFIELD WODEN, MIRVAC** and the Sub-Branch in providing sites in Woden Plaza and Cooleman Court for our Poppy Appeal. Other sites for our Poppy Appeal are Kambah Village Shops, Wanniasa Shops and the Canberra Hospital. These facilities contribute significantly to the success of the Sub-Branch important fundraising activity.

Appeal Coordinators: Jan Properjohn & Chis Hammond

Sub-Branch Notices

Christmas Party	Wed 4 th Dec 12:00 for 12:30PM	CSCC Orion Room
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Closing date for the 2020 ANZAC Edition of 'The Serviceman' - Fri 14th Feb.

***Closure of Sub-Branch Office over the
 Christmas/New Year Period***

The Sub-Branch Office will close at Midday on Friday 20th December 2019,
 reopening at 0900 on Monday 6th January, 2020.



Christmas Party

Wednesday 4th December 2019

Venue — "Orion Room CSCC"

12.00 for 12.30PM - Dress Casual

*For Members & Partners Take special note of the time
 OOWII 'Gongs' should be worn.*

Make a note in your diary for this year's Christmas Party.



The Danger of Ignorance

Les Cook

Accidental happenings are responsible for many casualties in war, and some of these, at least on the ground, are the result of carelessness or ignorance. Perhaps the majority fall into those categories. We all came to accept them as inevitable, although, in most cases, retrospective analysis showed that they might have been avoided. The trauma (we hadn't heard of that word in those days) suffered by a person who had accidentally killed one of our own, however extenuating the circumstances, probably affected them for the rest of their lives.

We had arrived at Gona on 19 November 1942 to find the Japanese well-prepared. Their main defensive positions consisted of strongly-constructed bunkers, very well-camouflaged and impervious to any weapon we had. Even the 25 pounder field-guns when they came into action a few days later, could not make any noticeable impression on them. The air-force medium bombers also had been unsuccessful, and it was decided to try the big four-engined B17 bombers using 1,000 pound (440kg) bombs with the hope that the heavier bombs might be effective.

Our lines and the enemy lines were only a few metres apart in some places, and the entire battle area was small, being probably less than 6 square km in all. The inaccuracy of heavy bombers operating from a great height was well known, and it was decided to withdraw our people to positions about 2km back during the hours of darkness the previous night to reduce the risk of the bombs falling on us by mistake. It was hoped, forlornly as it happened, that the heavy bombers would have so devastated the area that the remaining enemy could be subdued relatively easily.

The withdrawal was carried out successfully, but not without the enemy becoming aware of it. Speaking to the men from one company the next day, several had seen what each believed was a Japanese soldier standing beside the track watching them go. Uncertain in the darkness of his identity, and, as the withdrawal was necessarily being carried out in complete silence, no action was taken against him. Men on their feet in these circumstances are extremely vulnerable, and nobody was prepared to take the risk of challenging him.

The Japanese apparently interpreted our withdrawal for what it was, and immediately moved into the positions we had vacated. By so doing most of them escaped the worst effects of the bombing. In the event, none of the bombs fell on the positions we had vacated, although, under Murphy's Law, I'm sure this would not have been the case if we had remained there. For that matter, the bombs didn't hit the enemy bunkers either.

We had withdrawn before midnight. After digging our weapon-pits, those not on guard went to sleep. We were in open kunai-grass country, the grass being more than one and a half metres high in most places, and this made for limited visibility. It was a bright moonlight night. I was awoken to go on guard a few hours after we arrived and was sitting on the edge of the hole unable to see much beyond a couple of metres in front of me where the grass had been flattened. When I had gone to sleep I knew that there were none of our people between us and the enemy.

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Suddenly a man stood up less than 10 metres in front of me and started to walk towards me. He was not wearing a steel helmet, which would have identified him positively as friend or foe, but I could see in the moonlight that his hair was black. He came a few metres then stopped. I had aligned him in the sights, had taken up the first pressure on the trigger, and was about to say quietly, “Who’s that?” before firing when I heard the sound of a cork being pulled from a water bottle. This homely sound caused me to realise that another unit had moved in front us.

As I hadn’t known that they were there, I assumed that they also would not know that we were just behind them, so I decided not to challenge the man for fear of alarming him and perhaps the others. After standing for a few seconds the man walked back and disappeared below the grass, presumably to lie down to sleep.

We found next morning that another unit, withdrawing some hours after us, had indeed moved in just in front of us, and neither knew that the other was there. It is easy to say that this potentially dangerous situation should not have been allowed to occur, but it had. If I, or one of the other guards from either unit, had fired at sound or movement there would have been a general exchange of fire and certainly some casualties before the error was discovered. Even though, in the circumstances, none of us could have been blamed, it was us who would have had to live with the consequences.



The Edisson Day Club

Peter Sutton

Chairman & Co-ordinator

The last few months have been very busy. On 26 July we had Mr Doug Hurst, a local military historian return to speak of ‘Maritime Operations during the Cold War’.

Attending on 2 August Ms Elizabeth Moss from ‘Capital Health Network’ informed us about the collection, retention and security of patient’s medical health records. Maj. Gen. Michael Jeffery AO CSC gave an interesting talk on what he now does since retiring as Governor General of Australia. He is now the ‘Advocate for Soils’ and spoke of the work being done to preserve and improve the soil used in agriculture and horticulture in Australia.

To commemorate Vietnam Veterans’ Day, Mr Ian Gollings AM spoke of his time in Vietnam in the early 1960s. We had an Australian poetry day on 23 August, with people reading poems and ‘U-tube’ readings of Australia’s favourite poems. Canberra Fire and Rescue Station Officer, Mr Jeff Dau came on 30 August to speak of the latest technology to assist keeping the Canberra population informed about the fire threat. This was very informative and timely as we approach what may be a very serious fire season this summer. With the arrival of Spring, Ms Kath Holtzappel, a long-time volunteer at the Australian National Botanic Gardens and a regular speaker at the Day Club, spoke on some of the new features at the gardens and about some of the significant and unique plants and trees. Ms Liz Lumb returned to entertain us by playing the keyboard. Words projected onto the screen allowed members and volunteers to join in the sing-a-long to many favourite and popular tunes from yesteryear.

>>>>

On 20 September we had a bus excursion to Cowra, arranged by Mr John Kent, Mr Ian Gollings AM and Mr Terry Colhoun AM ORS*. We had five trainee Officers and an Air Force Chaplain to assist the less mobile members. Several ladies supplied biscuits and slices which were appreciated.

It was only a short journey on to the ruins of the ‘Cowra Breakout’ which occurred on 5 August 1944, 75 years ago this year, and to view the manicured lawns around the gravesites there, cared for by the Cowra RSL for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. After a short stop and a commentary by Mr Terry Colhoun AM, ORS* on the history of the breakout, we proceeded to the café at the Gardens for a delicious lunch of sandwiches, tea and coffee. The ‘scone fairy’ arrived with warm scones, strawberry jam and cream. These disappeared very quickly.

We were joined at lunch by Mr Tony Mooney ORS*, a life-member of the Cowra RSL. After lunch some less mobile people had a ride around the gardens in golf-buggies whilst others walked and took photos of the beautiful gardens.

Before we departed a reporter from the local newspaper, who had been contacted by Tony, arrived and took photos and stated that he intended to write an article for the local newspaper about our visit.

Then a long drive back to Canberra arriving about 5.30PM. A long but very enjoyable day. We thank ‘Horizon Coaches’ for a comfortable and safe journey.

** The Order of the Rising Sun (ORS) is awarded by the Japanese Government.*



Photos from a very enjoyable day spent in Cowra.

My adventure to Crete to honour our Veterans

Rania Kalimeris

Working at the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch over the last two years has given me the opportunity to meet many Veterans who fought in the numerous conflicts to uphold the dignity and freedom of our country. While many of the stories they have shared with me are humorous and entertaining, there have also been many stories that reflect the horrors of war and their experiences during their service.

Two gentlemen in particular, Les Cook and Frank Atkins, inspired me to travel to the island of Grete, in Greece to lay poppies in honour of them and all the Australian soldiers who fought to support the country of my ancestors in World War II. It was hard for me to understand how someone had the courage and strength to fight and risk their life in a strange land on the other side of the world.

I was determined to visit Crete and see for myself the terrain where the battles took place, the airport in Maleme that was taken by the Germans allowing them to bring in reinforcements, resulting in their victory in the Battle of Crete, and the place where German paratroopers landed on 20 May, 1941. The dropping of paratroopers was the first airborne invasion in military history by Nazi Germany and resulted in very high casualties. I also wanted to visit the memorial at the Souda Bay Allied War Cemetery that was dedicated to honour the men who died in Crete.

I flew to Crete with a good friend who was also fascinated by the stories I shared with her. We put on our hiking shoes and set off for the Samaria Gorge, walking the spectacular 13kms from Xyloskalo to the seaside town of Agia Roumeli. This gorge was created by a small river running between the White Mountains and Mt Volakias. It led us to the shores of the Libyan Sea, which we dived straight into at the end of the walk, overheated and with sore legs but a big smile of contentment. The rugged terrain and steep cliffs made it very obvious how difficult fighting here would have been. For us it was the subject of spectacular photos, but for the soldiers who fought here it was the land that physically challenged them and protected them from the enemy. >>>



As the final part of my journey, I travelled to the Souda Bay Allied War Cemetery. Here I placed poppies with very mixed emotions. Firstly, tears of joy for having fulfilled my dream, but also sadness reflecting on the ultimate sacrifice made by all those who fought and gave their lives during the war to protect the Greek people from the invasion of the Germans and Italians. So many families left without their loved ones.



The stillness and beauty, azure sky and a soft breeze inspired me to say a short prayer asking for peace and love in the world and thanking all those who died fighting for us, and for those left behind with the scars of war and left to remember their mates who didn't make it home.

They may not feel like heroes but will always be mine.

Volunteering Expo 2019
Saturday 26 October - Old Bus Depot Markets



Rania, one of the Sub-Branch volunteers looking after the display at the Bus Depot Expo

A Gunners Story - Alex Reynolds

Mick O'Donnell

I first met Alex in 2009 when he was a volunteer at the Australian War Memorial, during one of the hundreds of enlightening tours that he conducted between 2004/16. Like a pied piper he led people from all nations to displays, exhibits, and exhibitions, narrating without notes. Here in the Korean Memorial Hall; in the Borneo Confrontation, in the Vietnam conflict display to name a few. He easily embellished the tours by honouring something close to his heart - the Australian Army, the Artillery, the Infantry; the stories just roll out of him because he had lived them and researched them meticulously. Questions are asked by the AWM tourists, and he answers frankly, about the Malaysian campaign, Terrendak in Malaysia: "Oh, yes that's interesting" he characteristically says. "It's about 15Ks north of Malacca". He joined Infantry from Artillery as the Army was short of officers, then Korea threatened: "You know, I saw my first helicopter there and had a ride in one of those Bell bubbles like in MASH".

Born in 1930, Alex had a taste of the military from his father who volunteered for the militia, then there was exposure to the school cadets. The Army has been his world in those formative years, and it's easy for him to go back to 1949 when he arrived at Duntroon aged 18, being commissioned as an officer in 1952. "Discipline was severe; no smoking, no drinking, and return to barracks by 22:00. Yes, Duntroon, that was interesting. Did you know that the lights of Canberra went out at 22:00? If you were heading back from a night out and the lights went out as you passed over the old wooden Kings Avenue bridge, you knew you were in trouble".

These years with the Army instilled in him a sense of discipline, responsibility and positive thinking. His postings reflected a stint with the United States Armed forces staff college at Virginia. "Very competitive" remarked Alex. "Interesting, you know, I couldn't understand their way of planning, not methodical enough".

Alex served with distinction until 1977 retiring with the rank of Colonel.

My most memorable encounter with Alex was at one of the popular Sub-Branch dinners at the Southern Cross Club. He was hugging another RSL member, David Adams, and thereby hung another story of their service together in Singapore between 1965-67. David was Alex's trusted WO2 and their stories together would make a great comedic filmscript, and away he goes again, "Yes, that's interesting. We were organising a church parade which was still compulsory in the British Army - I was brought up by the Christian Brothers - and somehow my orders were misconstrued by the British; something to do with 'a lawful command'. "When the British regiment of which we were part, ordered a Church parade, I ordered one for my Battery. This was an unlawful command and two of my soldiers made a complaint against me afterwards. They subsequently withdrew and I suspect David might have had something to do with it". Stories about their antics with the thrown-down rugs in the barracks, and the woolly bears. Don't ask about his dilemma when he 'lost' Prime Minister Whitlam, and his affection for wife Margaret. Alex tells these 'mostly true' tales with an infectious smile.

>>>

I sat with Alex and his dear friend Ann Guerin one evening. They team up and contribute with regular visits to veterans in hospital. It's that old 'mates helping mates thing' he says. Occasionally he mentions Thea his first wife whom he married in 1985, then Helen in 2007 and the beautiful children Alexandra and Helen and now the precious 5 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

Were there any lasting disappointments, I asked him. "Not being posted to Vietnam, and probably mostly the changes that had been made while I was away in the United States. There was too much fear in proposing policy, concern at confronting each other. So, I resigned on 14 April 1977: I well remember that date".

Alex retired without much idea as to what he wanted to do, and ended up in Real Estate for a while, then he did the books for the Smith Family Charity, later becoming the full-time administrator of the Canberra branch of the Smith Family. After passing the Public Service exam, he joined as a Clerk in the pay section of the Patents Office managing personal computers in the Patents Trademarks and Design Office, eventually becoming a recruitment officer and retiring in 1995 at 65 years.



But the compassion of caring for the diggers stayed with him. He joined the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch in 1985 and Queanbeyan Legacy. He became Sub-Branch President twice in 1993 and in 1996/7.

I really enjoyed the encounters with Alex. He is inspirational, he is reflective, he is disciplined, he is in love with life, and he is a fulfilled man with a thousand stories to tell.

"I've lived beyond the normal span", he reflects, "I live in a great city. I'm a happy man, Yeah!".



2019 Inaugural Veterans Community Day

The Inaugural Veterans Community Day was held at the Margaret Whitlam Auditorium, at the Canberra Arboretum on Sunday 10 November. It was hosted by the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their families.

After the welcome to country by Ngunnawal Elder, Serena Williams, Brigadier Alison Creagh CSC (Retd) addressed the large attendance. The Commemorative Address was given by Navy Veteran and AWM representative Gerard Pratt, before a wreath laying and the unveiling of the Turkish Pine Forest Sign that will be mounted near the newly established trees near the auditorium. Attendees were taken to the forest to see the young trees that have already been planted in lines along steep contours; the Turkish Pine, a prominent landmark tree at the ANZAC battle site at Gallipoli.



Attending the Veterans Community Day is Cora O'Donnell (former WRAN), the host for the day, Gerard Pratt (Navy) and Bugler Catherine Savage.

Special Screening of the movie ‘Danger Close’

A special screening of the movie ‘Danger Close’, organised by Anthony John and Dave Jenkins was held at the Manuka Cinema on Friday 6 September. A very appreciative audience of approx 120 watched as Australian and New Zealand soldiers faced overwhelming odds as they fought for their lives during the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam.



President Jim Gilchrist and guests at the ‘Danger Close’ movie screening.

The tragedy of the Smith family in World War I

Peter Sutton

Of all the hundreds of thousands of losses suffered by families of sons and daughters to the ravages of war, none is comparable to that of the Smith family, and is unique in Australian history. Unlike the American film, 'Saving Private Ryan', where a sole survivor policy existed excusing a person from military service after the death of their brothers, Australia did not have a similar policy during World War I or World War II.

All seven sons of Frederick and Margaret (Maggie) Smith enlisted in WWI and this families tragic loss was the greatest of all in Australian history. The family came from the tiny hamlet of Yongala, in South Australia. The two youngest, Errol and Aubrey, enlisted under false names as they were underage and thus avoided having to obtain parental consent. Only the eldest, Francis returned after the war only to be killed in a tram accident in Adelaide in 1923. The eldest brother killed during the war was Herbert William was only 30.

The other six brothers killed in action were Herbert William, Frederick Walker, Alfred Ernest, Clarence Leslie MM, Errol Victor and Aubrey Lyall (known as Jack).

More than 2,800 sets of Australian brothers were killed between 1915 and 1918 in campaigns ranging from Gallipoli, Palestine and the Western Front. More than 150 families lost three sons, with at least five more having four sons killed, but none greater than the six sons of Frederick and Maggie Smith.

This incredible and tragic story has remained lost to history, until told by Mr Chris Fox. His maternal great-grandmother, Lotie, who lived to 99 years old, and the only girl in the family of eight, once showed him her most precious possession. This was a red one penny stamp that was attached to a letter sent home by younger brother, Aubrey from the front. Many soldiers often inscribed on the back of stamps sending home private messages and thus avoided being redacted by the harsh military sensors. This stamp was given to Chris Fox and is now preserved for future generations in a glass case. Apart from the episode with the red stamp, Lottie never spoke of her dead brothers.

The farm belonging to the only surviving son, Francis, was sold whilst he was away at the war. He never recovered from that setback and the shock of the deaths of his brothers. The circumstances surrounding his life after the war, and his death in 1923 has never been established, whether accidental or deliberate.

This article was taken from 'The Sydney Daily Telegraph' published on ANZAC Day, Friday 25 April 2014. The section of the article used was written by Mr Ian McPhedran and referred to recollections as told to him by the seven brother's great-nephew Mr Chris Fox. Photos of all the brothers were published in the original article but I have not sought permission to include them.

Challenge It??

Don Balfour

HMAS Vigilant, a small sea-going ship of the RAN, on which I later served, was present in Darwin on the occasion of the Japanese air-raid on 19 February 1942.

Following that event, Vigilant was required for a time to undertake lengthy off-shore patrols out of Darwin to give warning, if possible, of a Japanese invasion which, at that time was considered to be a distinct possibility. Scott Derrick, a crew member at that time, and with whom I corresponded for a couple of years post-war, told me of such a patrol.

‘One darkish night when the visibility was surprisingly good, we picked up a large ship. To us it seemed enormous. Everyone took turns looking at it through the night glasses. There it was, with guns sticking out all over it. Obviously a man of war. Everyone went dead quiet.

“Cod’ (the skipper, Lieutenant T.F. Roberts, later Lieutenant Commander, and well known in naval circles as ‘Cod’) set course to close the thing, until it seemed to us to be very close. We could see the bow wave and hear the rhythmical thumping of the ship’s engines. After a moment or two ‘Cod’ told ‘Winky’ (the telegraphist/signaller) to challenge the monster with the Aldis lamp.

‘Challenge it?’ whispered Winky?

‘Yes, challenge it’, said Cod.

‘What, now?’ breathed Winky.

‘Yes, now’, said Cod.

A trembling Winky raised the Aldis lamp and sent flashes of brilliant light towards the ship which showed parts of the ship’s superstructure which had until then been dark shapes against a dark background.

Almost as quickly as the first flash of light would have hit the ship we could envisage the loud ringing of alarm bells, the shouting of orders, and the frantic activity of a crew reacting in accordance with recognised procedures. In our minds we could envisage the noise and movement which scrambled a small city of individuals into a fury for survival.

In amongst all that activity there would have been engine room telegraphs calling for full power. Without answering Vigilant’s challenge, the giant ship suddenly churned out a mass of white foam and disappeared into the night at a speed which left us silent with amazement. There was also much relief. As easily as the ship disappeared it could have exploded us into oblivion.

But Vigilant had done its duty. It had seen a warship and challenged it. A coded message was sent to Darwin. Days later, when we returned to Darwin there was the cruiser HMAS Adelaide, the ship, we found, which we had challenged; and which had treated us with such contempt.

But we were happy because we knew that we had scared the tripe out of them, if only for a few minutes.

Canberra Southern Cross Club



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6283 7200



TUGGERANONG

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PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE VETERAN COMMUNITY



SouthFest Expo at Tuggeranong and a couple of photos from that event with Sub-Branch volunteers attending to the various duties on the day.



The following letter taken from Alfred's Navigation Notebook

Dear Sirs,

It is with deep regret and haste that I write this letter to you. Regret that such a small misunderstanding could lead to the following circumstances and in order that you receive this report before you form any preconceived notions and opinions from reports in the British press. I am sure that the press tends to over-dramatise in their reports on such casualties.

We had just embarked the Pilot and the Deck Cadet had returned to the wheelhouse after changing over the 'G' flag ('I require a Pilot') to the 'H' flag ('I have a Pilot on board'). This being his first trip, he was having difficulty in rolling up the 'G' flag before stowing it. I therefore proceeded to instruct him in the correct method of rolling up a signal flag. Coming to the last part of this instruction I told him to "let go".

The lad, although willing enough, was not too bright and this necessitated my having to repeat the order in a somewhat loud and sharper tone, "LET GO". At this moment the Chief Officer appeared from the chartroom, having been plotting the vessel's progress, and thinking that it was the anchors that were being referred to, repeated the "Let Go" to the Third Officer who was on the forecastle. The port anchor, having been cleared away but not walked out, was promptly let go! The effect of letting go the anchor whilst the vessel was proceeding at full harbour speed proved too much for the windlass brake. The entire length of the port cable was thus pulled out by the roots, depositing the anchor and thirteen shackles of cable on the harbour bed.

Whilst this was happening the braking effect of the port anchor naturally caused a sheer to port, right towards a swing bridge that spanned a tributary to the river on which we were navigating. The swing bridge operator showed great presence of mind by promptly opening the bridge to my vessel. Unfortunately, he did not think to stop the vehicle traffic first. The result was that the bridge opened and deposited a Volkswagon, two cyclists and a cattle truck on the foredeck. My ships's company is at present rounding up the contents of the cattle truck, which I gather from the noise outside, are pigs. In his effort to stop the progress of the vessel, the Third Mate dropped the starboard anchor, too late to be of any practical use as it fell directly onto the swing bridge operator's cabin - a poor reward for his quick action in opening the bridge.

After the vessel had started to sheer through the accidental letting go of the port anchor, I gave a "Double Ring" of Full Astern on the telegraph. I also personally rang the engine room to verbally order 'Maximum astern revolutions'. I was thus informed by the duty Engineer that the sea temperature was 53 degs Fahrenheit and asked if there was to be a movie on that night. My reply, whilst colourful, would not add constructively to this report.

The fact that we were passing over a cable area at the time may suggest that we might have touched something on the riverbed. It is perhaps lucky that the high-tension cables, which were brought down by our foremast and landed on the foredeck and bridge, were not "live", otherwise I might not be now writing this report.

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Possibly the cables had been replaced by an underwater cable. Owing to the blackout ashore, it is impossible to ascertain where the electric cable pylon fell.

Up to now I have confined my report to the activities at the forward end of my vessel. Down aft they were having their own problems. At the moment the port anchor was let go, the Second Mate was supervising the making fast of the aft tug. The sudden braking effect of the port anchor caused the tug to run under the stern of my vessel - just at the very moment the propeller was answering my double ring of Full Astern. The prompt action of the Second Mate in securing the inboard end of the towing spring delayed the sinking of the tug by several minutes, thereby allowing the safe abandonment of the vessel by her crew.

It never fails to amaze me - the action and behaviour of foreigners during a moment of crisis. The Pilot is huddled in the corner of my dayroom crooning to himself after having drunk a bottle of whiskey in a time worthy of inclusion in the Guinness Book of Records. The Tug Master, on the other hand, reacted quite violently and had to be forcibly restrained by the steward. He is presently handcuffed in the ship's hospital where he is telling me to do impossible things with my ship.

Enclosed with this report are the names and addresses of drivers of the vehicles and cyclists that fell onto my foredeck, together with the details of their insurance companies. These particulars will enable you to claim for the damage they caused to the railings, coamings and deck around No.1 hatch when they landed there from the swing bridge.

To conclude this report, I wish to point out that, had the Cadet not been a 'First Tripper' and had more experience, he would have realised that it is not necessary to fly the Pilot Flag in the dark - and none of this would have occurred.

Yours faithfully,
Master.





Royal Commission into veterans' suicide not best way to go.

*Media Release
8 November 2019*

The Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) does not support the conduct of a Royal Commission into veteran suicide in Australia.

The RSL says many initiatives and programs have been developed and are in progress to support veterans and these are starting to have a positive impact.

A Royal Commission would cost an enormous amount of money that could be better spent in other areas to assist veterans and would also create a serious distraction for those who are working hard to support ex-servicemen and women.

National President of the RSL Greg Melick says although veteran suicide was an extremely concerning issue, it was a complex and multi-faceted problem that would not be solved by a Royal Commission.

“While veterans face enormous challenges and issues such as depression and re-assimilation into the community and the fact that suicide amongst veterans is unacceptably high, a Royal Commission would be unproductive and would undoubtedly impact adversely on programs supporting the veteran community,” Mr Melick said.

“As well, claims that the veterans’ system in Australia is broken and over-burdened by bureaucracy, are not backed up by the facts. The reality is that Australia is performing well and comparatively better than most other nations in processing veterans’ claims and in developing and implementing support mechanisms.”

Mr Melick said while health issues, support for re-assimilation into society, psychological, legal and other support, and the fact that even one veteran taking his or her life was one tragedy too many, it was simplistic in the extreme to blame the DVA or ‘the system’ for all the problems, bearing in mind the vast majority of DVA’s clients were complimentary about the service they were receiving.

“This is particularly so when any fair analysis demonstrates that the Department is supporting veterans and dealing with their claims more effectively and faster than most other countries.”

Mr Melick said the RSL and other veteran support groups were continuing to work with the DVA and other bodies on the crucial issues of veterans’ health, psychological support and particularly the unacceptable suicide rate. “We want the very best outcomes for those who have served and are serving our country and will continue to pursue these matters with the Department and the highest levels of Government. “A costly and unwarranted Royal Commission will only disrupt these efforts, as well as the good work being undertaken by veterans’ support groups and the Department to assist veterans,” Mr Melick said.

Floriade Veterans' Day 2019

Bob Cremer

A visit to Floriade on Veterans' Day, Friday 27 September to enjoy the exceptional floral display and hear an address by MLA Minister for Seniors and Veterans, Gordon Ramsay followed by a display of professional weapons handling by a contingent from the Federation Guard. Along with the many garden accessories on sale, food outlets and other assorted displays was a marquee on behalf of, and manned by members of the War Widows Guild.



War Widows Guild members and the poppy wall display



SUB-BRANCH SERVICES

Sub-Branch Office Hours. The office is open from 9:00AM until 3:00PM Monday to Friday, except public holidays. The services of the Sub-Branch are available to all Sub-Branch members, and all serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and overseas defence forces.

Office Manager. Joyce O'Brien administers the Sub-Branch office and is responsible to the Executive for the efficient day-to-day routine of the office. Joyce will supervise all Sub-Branch matters including membership, correspondence, functions and access to Sub-Branch services.

Veterans' Support Centre (VSC). The office is open from 9:00AM until 3:00PM Monday to Friday, except public holidays, and at other times by appointment. The services of the VSC are available to all Sub-Branch members, and all serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and overseas defence forces.

Entitlement and Advocacy (E&A). A team of trained advocates and entitlements/pension officers, both male and female, is available to provide assistance with claims under the Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA), the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA), and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA). We also provide support and advice to war widows and widowers regarding pensions. Andrew Properjohn, the E&A Administrator, will assist you with your enquiries.

Community Support. Florence Sofield co-ordinates the provision of welfare to Sub-Branch members and their families. Advice is available on a case by case basis to access services through DVA, My Aged Care, Centrelink and the ACT Government.

Hospital Visiting: Volunteers visit each of the three southern hospitals, The Canberra Hospital, Calvary John James and National Capital Private Hospital. They aim to visit every veteran, RSL member, Legacy widow and widowers.

Hospice Visiting: Visits can be arranged for Sub-Branch members in Clare Holland House.

Christmas Visits: In December each year, all Sub-Branch members 80 years of age and over, and all Sub-Branch widows and widowers receive a home visit and a gift.

Health and Fitness Program. Arrangements between the Southern Cross Health Club (SCHC) and Sub-Branch members relating to gym use have changed. For details call the office on 6285 1931.

Sub-Branch Publication. The Sub-Branch Publication, *'The Serviceman'* is published three times per year and distributed free to all Sub-Branch members, widows and widowers. A special edition is also published for schoolchildren attending the annual ANZAC and Peace Ceremony at Eddison Park.

Eddison Day Club. Sponsored by the Sub-Branch, the Day Club caters for members, their spouses, widows, widowers and the general community. It meets every Friday from 10:00AM to 2:00PM (except Good Friday) from mid-January to mid-December at the Irish Club, Parkinson Street, Weston.

If you know of any member who would benefit from any of these services, but is reluctant to apply, please let our office know.