



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



The **SERVICEMAN**

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NOVEMBER 2021



42 for 42 Memorial and Remembrance Garden opened on Saturday 16 Oct 2021 at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium and dedicated to the 41 veterans lost in Afghanistan - the 42nd representing all defence force personnel who have lost their lives due to depression, PTSD and other issues.

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Front Page: A small portion of the 42 for 42 Memorial Garden. The huge background mural shows a sniper aiming towards a Bushmaster vehicle. In the foreground a soldier is kneeling down to help an Afghan child, representing the help and care given by our troops.

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The SERVICEMAN

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Bob Cremer
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OFFICE BEARERS 2021-22

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The Sub-Branch phone number and for 'The Serviceman' [02] 6285 1931.

Email: admin@rslwoden.org.au **Web:** www.rslwoden.org.au **E&A:** entitlements@rslwoden.org.au

Welfare: welfare@rslwoden.org.au **Office Hours:** Monday to Friday 0900-1500



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Bob Cremer



An interesting article I happened to read was asking people back in 2015 what they expected they would be doing in five years [2020]. What has happened is something I am positive that nobody expected, and I am sure that all would like to forget. It will be nice to get back to whatever the new normal is destined to be probably in 2022.

However, I am sure that whatever the future holds for us, we will continue to survive and overcome the challenges in the new year.

A fantastic story in this issue of ex-Sapper Curtis McGrath severely injured in Afghanistan and in an interview details his recovery, rehabilitation and eventual successes around the world and finally with Gold Medals in Toyko at the 2020 (2021) Paralympics. An inspiring story.

Another very interesting article is the official dedication of the 42 for 42 Memorial Garden on Saturday 16 October 2021, in the grounds adjoining the small Anglican Church adjacent to Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium. A fitting memorial.

Sadly, we are losing two valuable members of our Welfare Team, Peter Eveille and Rania Kalimeris, Peter who is taking a break from a very busy area and Rania who is travelling overseas. You will both be missed by everyone.

The end of another year, and as I said earlier, let us hope that 2022 is a great improvement on what has been a pretty ordinary 2021. Merry Christmas to all and take care of each other. Things are going to get better!!

FALL IN

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



Chris Jobson, Margaret Manley, Jennifer Woodward,
Helen Tidd, Michael Crane

President's Message
Jim Gilchrist



Although it doesn't seem long ago when I drafted the 2020 Christmas message and noted that Christmas was nearly upon us, 12 months on and it's nearly Christmas 2021. We've all faced another unusual year that again brought out the best in many of us who supported our members and others in the Veteran Community who were struggling with poor health, compensation advice and support, and the overall effects of the COVID situation. We remained open during the year and did our best to apply a business-as-usual approach to all functional areas. Thus, I begin this message by thanking our staff and volunteers who contributed to these outcomes.

As most of the issues I raise in this message were reported as they occurred, I'll only note some of the highlights, one of which was the weekly newsletter that kept our members informed of key issues and helped mitigate some of the adverse effects of the lockdown period. We have continued with a weekly bulletin that includes items of interest, of which there are many. In thanking Alex Solecka and Joyce O'Brien for their efforts in producing these documents, I congratulate Alex for her editorial skills particularly while she was working from home for several weeks.

Some of the initiatives we introduced last year, such as the telephone call rosters and small gatherings, continued this year and from all accounts were much appreciated. The Welfare Team led by Peter Eveille and Rania Kalimeris, and members of the Eddison Day Club were instrumental in ensuring we stayed in touch with as many of our members as we could. The Veteran Health Week activity provided some exercises suitable for some of our ageing members as well as providing useful social interaction, as did the Carers' Friendship Group gatherings. Similarly, the Day Club has been gathering for informal lunches at the Irish Club for the past several months and will continue this approach into 2022 while they rebuild after a confusing period. I offer my thanks to Peter Sutton and a few of his stalwart colleagues for arranging these lunches. The Friday morning coffee catchups also provided welcome relief to what has become quite a close knit group.

Although we were unable to hold the ANZAC and Peace Ceremony this year, we had an excellent ANZAC Eve Dinner and brief service on ANZAC Day. We also managed two OGM dinners early in the year and are expecting a good attendance at our Christmas lunch in mid-December. *The Corey Room* continues to evolve as a library, a popular meeting place and as a Board room. I thank Bill Kelly for his efforts in cataloguing more than 1,000 books that have been donated to the library and Wade Cooper and Bill for rearranging the room so we can better display some of our memorabilia.

While we again received some financial relief linked to the COVID restrictions, we recently received a BEST Grant allocation of \$113,365. As the BEST Grant is based on the level and nature of compensation and welfare support that ESOs provide, this grant is testament to the support we provide to our members and others in the Veteran Community through the VSC. >>>

These financial packages and grants significantly reduce our reliance on the AMF to fund our operations. They provide breathing space as we continue to seek sustainable external financial and other material support to ensure our continued sustainability and maintain our ability to meet the current and expected workloads.

We recently held two OGMs and several Board meetings in the Grant Cameron Community Centre that provides a practical solution to the COVID restrictions while the Southern Cross Club has limited accessibility. The Board continued to work on its business processes and its continuity plans to provide for the sustainable future; the future of the Sub-Branch is not at any risk, the operations of the VSC will require external support as soon as possible. Work continues on the staffing review, our renewed IT system, that provides data management, our website and our communications that are in increasing demand as many organisations now rely on video conferencing rather than face-to-face meetings and briefings.

For the past several months, I have represented the ACT Branch on a revitalised NVAC that provides a forum to voice the issues that affect our current operations. I was recently invited to join a National committee to oversee and manage the League's involvement with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans' Suicide. This committee has been meeting on a weekly basis; it is chaired by the National CEO and comprises senior representatives from each Branch. While the task is somewhat demanding, the role offers opportunities to liaise with the major branches and express our views, especially the challenges we face in the ACT and at the Woden Sub-Branch.

In thanking the staff and volunteers who provide services or support the day-to-day operations of the Sub-Branch, I acknowledge the links we continue to develop with DVA and other ESOs. I specifically note the leadership and the contributions that Ross Thomas and Peter Eveille provided throughout the year to the Compensation and Welfare Teams, respectively. Sadly, Peter is taking a well-deserved rest from his hands on role as a welfare advocate and has handed over the reins of the Senior Volunteer Welfare Advocate to Peter Sutton who will bring his own experience, knowledge and skills to this important role.

Rania Kalimeris is also leaving us as she is returning to Greece to catch up with family; she plans to enrol in tertiary studies when she returns. Rania has been inspirational in her energy and enthusiasm for the past four years and will leave a large hole in our capabilities and hearts.

I offer my special thanks to Bob Cremer who continues to produce and edit this magazine.

In closing, I again thank everyone for their contributions to what has been an unusual year in which our Sub-Branch met all the challenges it faced. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Christmas Party and I wish all our members, their families and our friends a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.

Military Poem

Joshua Dyer (a 14 year old English schoolboy) was tasked at school to write a poem for Remembrance Day 2019. An hour later (and without help) he wrote and illustrated the following:

ONE THOUSAND MEN ARE WALKING

*One thousand men are walking
walking side by side
singing songs from home
the spirit as their guide*

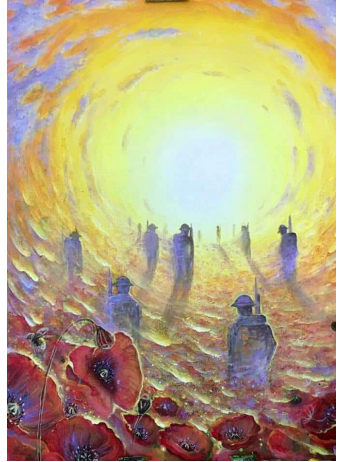
*they walk towards the light milord
they walk towards the sun
they smoke and laugh and smile together
no foes to outrun*

*these men live on forever
in the hearts of those they saved
a nation truly grateful
for the path of peace they paved*

*they march as friends and comrades
but they do not march for war
step closer to salvation
a tranquil steady corps*

*the meadows lit with golden beams
a beacon for the brave
the emerald grass untrampled
a reward for what they gave*

*they dream of those they left behind
and know they dream of them
forever in those poppy fields
there walks one thousand men*



REMEMBRANCE DAY
Lest We Forget

Lest We Forget

Report From Eddison Day Club - October 2021

Peter Sutton - Co-ordinator

Our volunteers are continuing to call the members and other volunteers on their lists allocated to them in the middle of March last year. Apart from the lockdown there have been no other major issues.

The Eddison Day Club has not been able to meet since 6 August, the ACT going into lockdown on 11 July. Just before closure we celebrated Mrs Merna Gillard's 90th birthday presenting her with an OBN (Over B.....Y Ninety).

Since the last edition in August, there have been 10 birthdays. Mrs Jean James and Mrs Joan Glover celebrated their 85th and 79th birthdays on 12 August. Mrs Margo Condoleon celebrated her 64th birthday on 15 August. Margo is travelling in the Northern Territory and is unable to return to the ACT. She told me when I rang her that she may never return. Mrs Val Baker celebrated her 90th birthday on 23 August and Mrs Pat Harrison her 88th on 24 August. Mrs Heather Schmitzer celebrated her 92nd birthday on 9 September. Mr Max Tinkler AM celebrated his 91st birthday. Max died on 26th September. Another death was Mr Denis Stubbs who died in July. Mr Richard Lee celebrated his 75th birthday on 15th September and Mrs Fay Neil celebrated her 79th birthday on 19 September, while Mr Reg Gillard celebrated his 89th on 7 October. Reg returned from Sydney in late August following heart surgery just after lockdown. Mrs Jacqui Thorpe celebrated her 72nd birthday on 10 October. Mr Judith Rowe celebrated her 85th birthday on 11 October.

All those with birthdays were sent a birthday card as we could not meet and sing happy birthday at the Day Club. They also received a phone call on their special day.

The Canberra Irish Club will open again on 29th October, but with restricted numbers to comply with ACT Health Regulations. Following discussions with the management of the Irish Club, members and volunteers will be returning to meet for an informal lunch on 12th November. At present the plan is to be able to have unlimited access to the club from 26th November when all restrictions are expected to be eased. Before the Club closed at the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the Eddison Day Club was averaging between 40 to 55 patrons each week. When we returned on 15th January this year we slowly built up to 25 persons each week. We have only had two entertainers this year and no guest speakers. "Sunny Side", a musical group and Mrs Liz Lumb for Christmas in July. Mrs Mary Collier, President of the Irish Club, and our patron, Mrs Sue Sarantos were special guests for our 17th birthday in February. We have not been able to have self-serve coffee and tea and are having meals served to the tables by Club staff.

We are hopeful that we can again attract many of our entertainers and guest speakers that we have had come to amuse, educate and entertain us over the last 17 years. We have missed them over the period of restrictions. We were using an 'eftpos' machine to assist those who do not wish to use cash to pay for their lunch. An 'ipad' provided by the Irish Club is used to record contact details for those who do not have a modern mobile phone to scan the QR code. We will, no doubt, have to present proof of having been fully vaccinated.

42 for 42 Memorial Garden

Janny Poate

On Saturday 16 Oct 2021, the 42 for 42 Memorial Garden was opened in the grounds of Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium honouring those soldiers who died in the Afghanistan conflict and those veterans who returned home and have lost their lives to depression, PTSD and other mental issues.

41 Australian soldiers lost their lives during the Afghanistan war. The 42nd in the name represents those soldiers who have taken their own lives and regrettably, have continued to do so since returning from that conflict. This number now exceeds 500.

In 2015 four combat engineers, led by Corporal Sean Mulqueen, who lost some of his men during his deployment in 2010, started the ball rolling with a mission to build a memorial garden in Brisbane in remembrance of the men and explosive detection dogs who were killed in Afghanistan. 42 for 42 has also become a network of support for contemporary veterans to help them rehabilitate into civilian society. The memorial is being built solely by volunteers comprising veterans and family members of fallen soldiers.

42 for 42 was formed by veterans, is administered by veterans and is serving veterans and their families. None of the volunteers or administrators are paid. 42 for 42 is a charity in the true meaning of that word. This charity is fortunate to have MAG GEN Susan Coyle and Brigadier John Carey as its patrons, both of whom have been very passionate supporters.

The memorial is being built in a lovely garden setting on a parcel of land adjoining a small Anglican Church adjacent to Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane. It has taken six years to raise sufficient funds to architecturally design the memorial, receive council approvals and have plaques and artefacts made. The official opening was held on 16 October this year.

The Memorial Garden will include a plaque and photo of each soldier and explosive detection dog lost in Afghanistan. The plaque of each soldier will also incorporate a unique feature, a QR code. Visitors will be able to click on the QR code with their mobile phone to see a written and pictorial history of the soldier from his childhood through to his service in Afghanistan. Each pictorial story line is being provided by the family of each soldier. The Garden includes three large bronze statues. One is an Australian soldier with his arms opened in the direction of another, a young Afghan girl as though he is helping her. The third bronze statue is an explosive detection dog.

Fund raising commenced in 2016 primarily from two events - an annual luncheon and an annual '42 for 42 walk'. The 42 for 42 walk has been the main fund-raising event and involves walking around the concrete concourse of Suncorp Stadium for 42 hours carrying a pack weighing 42kgs. Every hour is dedicated to a soldier in the order in which they were killed, his photo displayed on the large screen at Suncorp Stadium for his hour. It commences with Andrew Russell who was the first soldier killed. Our son Robert is honoured for the 36th hour which is usually about 3AM. It is a long 42 hours!

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While some walkers like to be alone, most soldiers are represented by a team in which each member shares the burden of the 42kg pack for various circuits of the stadium during their soldier's hour. Most teams include family members, veterans and current serving members from battalions of the deceased soldiers. The teams pay what they can afford to enter the event, and many are also sponsored by some large corporate organisations.

Janny has participated every year since it commenced and has walked well over 100kms around Suncorp in the earlier years. She now knows every crack in the concrete of that concourse and takes meal and rest breaks. Walking together and supporting each other, while remembering those who have made the supreme sacrifice has been a powerful force for a common good. In addition to raising funds to build the memorial, many new friendships and support groups have been formed over the years.



For those wishing to find out more about the 42 for 42 memorial visit the website:

www.42for42.org.au

Left Kelly Walton, whose partner Rick Milosevic was killed along with Robert Poate is with Janny Poate and a veteran of the war in Afghanistan.

below: the background mural with the Ode and a small section of the Memorial Garden with some of the individual plaques.





ANZAC Courage - Curtis McGrath

Kathryn Spurling

During August and September 2015 Australian Army Sapper, Curtis McGrath, added more medals to the cabinet. At the ICF Canoe Sprint & Paracanoe World Championships in Milan, Italy, in late August he defended the World VL2 200m title he won in Moscow in 2014. Even more remarkable, he won silver in the World KL2 200m and secured a billet for Australia in the 2016 Rio Paralympics. Curtis only took up kayaking in 2015, after the VL2 200m was dropped from the Rio Paralympics program.

During September 2015, there was another silver medal in a competition held at the canoe/kayak Olympic course in Rio de Janeiro.

I first met Curtis in 2015 at the Australian Para Kayak and Canoe Championships. He graciously agreed to an interview between events. He prefers not to talk about himself. When you spend time with Curtis you realize his words are measured and you cannot help but be aware that this soldier has seen more, been subjected to more than all but very few of us can imagine, let alone survive. His smile is easy and generous as Curtis admits to confused loyalties. He was born in 1988 in New Zealand and then his family relocated to Australia. These juxtaposed allegiances were no better personified than within the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), so in 2006, at age 18, Curtis enlisted as an Australian Army Combat Engineer. An accomplished sportsman Curtis excelled at the physical dimension of his chosen career. As for those divided loyalties, his mates called him 'Kiwi'; on his right arm the Maori name for New Zealand, 'Aotearoa'; but there was also the map of Australia tattooed on his back and the words 'For Honour, For Country, For Brother, For ANZACs'.

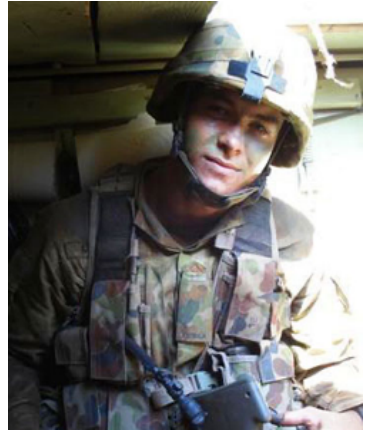


The slogan served him well and as a member of 2 Combat Engineer Regiment in support of the 8th/9th Battalion, RAR, Curtis served with the Timor-Leste Battle Group and then in Afghanistan in support of the 6th Battalion, RAR, Battle Group Mentoring Task Force 1 (MTF1). Exactly halfway through their six month deployment, his unit was on a five day clearance of a hillside unoccupied police checkpoint in Khas Urozgan District, Uruzgan Province. Curtis was experienced and competent. 'You can't check everything, but you have to check what you think in your threat assessment is an IED (improvised explosive device), but yep, I missed one'.

Curtis doesn't remember the blast, just opening his eyes, and how dark it was, lots of dust falling and it was strangely quiet - his eardrums perforated. 'I looked down at my legs and they're gone... it looked like an octopus but red'. It was then the pain hit with an almighty whack. Curtis was the advance first-aider in his unit and his training took over.

>>>>

He needed to stop the bleeding of his right leg and his right hand went deep into a bloody cavity on the back of his thigh. He looked over at his left leg and there was blood 'spraying everywhere'. He was having trouble sitting. He couldn't understand why he couldn't apply the tourniquet, now realising that his left wrist and hand were a shattered mess of bone and ligaments, and burns extended from his fingers up his left forearm. 'I thought, "I am not going to die here. Afghanistan is not where you want to die"'.



Amazingly he remained calm enough to instruct fellow soldiers. 'I am going into shock, losing a lot of blood, get an intravenous line in quick, hurry up, hurry up'. They too were desperately struggling with the situation. Curtis told them he needed morphine. "They asked how much", and where do we put it?" His answer was probably a little brusque and colourful but it did involve the breaking the vial, filling the syringe and stabbing him with it - no, he didn't care where. The rescue chopper was on its way but would take 45 minutes, and 45 minutes back, 'it seemed to take forever, and that's when I thought I was going to die ... it's the waiting that kills you'. It was common knowledge that there was a golden hour - an hour to get a seriously wounded soldier to hospital otherwise survival chances were minimal. The world went into slow motion and the surreal. A fellow soldier who had been walking behind him on patrol knelt down, gripped his hand and said; "You're not going to die!" Curtis realized his mate had blood on his face, Curtis's blood. Curtis reached up to wipe it off, 'I wouldn't come off. That is something that will probably remain with me forever'. As he was stretchered to the helicopter Curtis heard himself say, 'you will see me in the Paralympics but you guys won't see me in the green and gold, but black and white'. The rapid retort from unit members still makes him smile, 'Well we'll drop you here'.



Memory of the next days and weeks are fragmented, in and out of consciousness and terrible pain. Military doctors amputated his left leg below the knee and his right leg at the knee. He was loaded on a large US medical evacuation aircraft and flown to a US military hospital in Germany, the only non-American in a sea of broken, damaged bodies and attentive, dedicated medical personnel. It was sobering, 'I definitely wasn't the worst person on that plane'. Stabilised, he was flown back to an Australian public hospital. The smile creases his face again as he remembers being asked by hospital admission staff: 'Was I in a health fund and was this a workplace injury?' Another hospital and weeks of rehabilitation surrounded by military veterans of all ages, this helped and inspired.

Goals were set. Firstly, he was determined to walk again by the time his unit returned from the six month deployment.

>>>

There were many operations, medical procedures and hours and hours of rigorous physiotherapy. The first attempts to walk on his prostheses were simply awful due to severe nerve end pain. More procedures and adjustments ensued. Curtis was around 196cm when he left for Afghanistan, he is now 192cm, 'it is easier'. With two fellow soldiers helping him balance Sapper Curtis McGrath walked that welcome back parade.

Next goal was to become a Paralympian. Just eight months after picking up a paddle, Curtis won the V1 200 canoe at the 2014 World Championships - wearing green and gold. According to him credit belongs to others, particularly the Australian Army for its continued support - he doesn't mention his own resolve. 'A challenge comes along in life and you just have to accept it and get on with it'.

In 2015 Canberra artist, Margaret Hatfield, persuaded this soldier to be the subject in her 1m x 1.5m painting titled, '**ANZAC Courage**'. Curtis is very uncomfortable if anyone tries to apply the title 'hero'. The word hero should be saved for really, really significant people ... I was just trying to make Afghanistan a better place'. How does he feel about Afghanistan? There is a slight shake of the head and frown. Australian Defence Force veterans and PTSD is of concern - more and faster assistance can always be provided to military veterans. Curtis undertook an arduous 1,000km paddle from Sydney to Queensland to raise funds for the *Mates4Mates* organization, a charity that provides support for injured ex-servicemen and women, one he hopes more Australians will support.

'I miss my legs but I am still alive'. If another soldier had stood on the IED, 'it would have broken my heart', because it was his job to clear it - Curtis just wishes he had not cleared it exactly the way he did. 'I miss my legs but I prefer to concentrate on the opportunities that remain'. And concentrate he has with stoic perseverance few of us have. At the 2017 ICF Canoe Spring World Championships in Racice, Czech Republic, McGrath won gold medals in the Men's KL2 200m and Men's VL3 200m at the 2018 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships in Montemor-o-Velho, Portugal.



It was his eight World Championship gold medal. At the 2019 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships in Szeged, Hungary, Curtis won gold medals in the Men's KL2 200m and Men's V13 200m.

****Late News: Aug-Sep 2021 - Curtis went on to win Gold Medals at the Tokyo Paralympics**

As for the painting by Margaret Hatfield. She contacted Curtis to tell him she was entering it in the Archibald Art Prize. Curtis replied: 'I will keep all my fingers and toes crossed'.



'ANZAC Courage' by Margaret Hatfield



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”.*



THE CROSSES ON THE KOKODA TRACK

We pass the crude wood crosses on the wild Kokoda trail,
They mark the graves of soldiers who have died that we won't fail;
Australia mourns her sons today, who were so strong and manly,
They sailed away with buoyant hearts, to die on the Owen Stanley.

They're resting on a jungle peak, 'neath a canopy of trees,
And near them, just beside the track, are graves of Japanese,
Who met our men in battle for their greater Asia plan,
And now beneath the jungle lies a dream of old Japan.

Destroyed by sons of Aussie when they met the Rising Sun,
Rest on, rest on, Young Anzacs, yours is a job well done.
So we leave you on the mountain, with its canopy of cloud,
As the leafy boughs hang o'er you - an everlasting shroud.

***Dedicated to young ANZACs
whose graves are on Butchers Hill, near Iorabaiwa,
on the Owen Stanley Ranges, Papua***

From 'The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels and other verses...
by Sapper Bert Beros



Denis Stubbs, Jean McAlister, Janet White,
Stewart Hurst, Maxwell Tinkler, John Miller,
Lindsay Williamson, Jerry Cole

The Japanese Plan for Empire

At five minutes to eight, Hawaiian time, on the morning of Dec 7, 1941, a Japanese airman dropped a bomb on Pearl Harbour. It was the first of many to fall upon the great American naval base where the bulk of the US Pacific Fleet was moored on that never-to-be-forgotten day when a sneak attack drew the United States into World War II and Japan on to ultimate disaster.

Ironically, the United States, more than any other nation, was responsible for awakening Japan from her ancient isolation and sending her on her reckless quest for power and domination. Unwelcome though Commodore Matthew C. Perry was when his four warships dropped anchor in Yedo (now Tokyo) Bay in Jul 1853, his visit served to stir the dreams of empire that were soon to arouse the island people of Japan. Thus began, after more than 200 years of strict seclusion, a sudden exposure to Western ideas, production techniques and military systems. In the short space of 88 years, Japan turned herself from a feudal state into a nation with an army and a navy trained and equipped to rival those of the great European powers.

Prodded by her militaristic leaders, Japan launched an attack on China. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) gave victorious Nippon possession of Formosa (Taiwan) and the Pescadores. A few years later the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) broke out over rival claims in Korea and Manchuria. Russia was brought down in defeat, with Japan acquiring the southern half of Sakhalin Island and Port Arthur. (Russia's lease of Kwantung Peninsula, in the southern part of Liaotung Peninsula, Manchuria, was taken over by Japan in 1905 and renewed in 1915). The Japanese continued their expansion by annexing Korea in 1910.

Japan entered World War I on the side of Allies in 1914. She occupied numerous German colonies in the Far East and later, as a member of the League of Nations, was given a mandate over the Caroline, Marshall and Marianas Islands, with the exception of Guam (ceded to the US by Spain in 1898). Anti-Western feelings within Japan intensified when, at the Washington Naval Conference in 1921-22, the Japanese Government agreed to keep her Navy smaller than those of Great Britain and the United States in a 5-5-3 ratio. Two years later the US passed an immigration act barring Japanese and certain other nationalities.

For some time a master plan had been evolving to give Japan domination of South-East Asia and the islands of the western half of the Pacific. This meant the removal of all Western influence. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, as the territory was called, extended from the Kurile Islands south-east to the Marshall Islands, west to Netherlands East Indies (now the Republic of Indonesia), and in a great curve to India.

In 1931 the Japanese overran Manchuria, later turning it into the puppet state of Manchukuo. Condemned by the League of Nations for her act, Japan resigned her membership. Clashes with the Chinese blazed into warfare in 1937, in which Peiping (now Peking), Shanghai, Nanking, Hankow, Canton and the important rail centre of Tungshan (now Suchow) were captured.

>>>

In Feb 1939 Japan siezed Hainan Island, and after the fall of France in 1940, her troops moved into northern Indo-China with the permission of Vichy France. She occupied the entire country in the middle of 1941. The ultimate objective was the seizure of the rich Southern Resources Area.

A critical state in international relations was reached when the US clamped down a total embargo, freezing all Japanese assets in America. Negotiators were sent to Washington to try to settle the disagreement between the two countries. But the talks were only a blind. The plans of the Japanese war party were set; war was to begin with the attack on Pearl Harbour.

Surprise Attacks Across the Pacific

Triggered by the Pearl Harbour attack, Japanese forces invaded Thailand and Malaya. The islands of Guam and Wake were overrun.

Air attacks were made on Manila, Shanghai, Singapore and Hong Kong. On Dec 9, 1941, resistance to the invaders ceased in Thailand, and a treaty of alliance was signed with Japan.

The following day Japanese troops went ashore on Luzon, the northern island of the Philippines and overcame an out-numbered American force. At Corregidor, an island fortress in Manila Bay, and on nearby Bataan Peninsula, the last defenders of the Philippines made their stand, fighting until May 6, 1942.

The men of Nippon won victory after victory. Kota Bharu airfield in north eastern Malaya was taken after a bitter struggle. Hong Kong, the symbol of British power in the Far East, was forced into submission on Christmas Day 1941. Kuching, the capital city of Sarawak fell on the same date.

A major offensive was mounted against the Philippines, the attackers using from 80,000-100,000 troops. Manila was bombed and bombed again, even after being declared an open city. On New Year's Day 1942, Japanese soldiers entered Manila, also capturing the American naval base at Cavite.

Invasion thrusts were made in the Netherlands East Indies, at Tarakan, off Dutch Borneo and the Minahassa Peninsula in the Celebes. Kuala Lumpur in Malaya was overrun early in January, while Japanese forces crossed the Muar River, south of Malacca, after bitter fighting. The port and air base at Tavoy in Burma were captured on Jan 18. Landings were made at Rabaul in New Britain, at Kavieng in New Ireland and at Balikpapan in Borneo.

By the end of January, the Japanese offensive was running ahead of schedule, thereby seeming to forecast the successful establishment of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", and the early realization of the Japanese goal.

Extracts from: Illustrated History of World War II.

Allies Forever

Introduction by Author, Paul De Pierres

Given that the Great Southern Land of Australia could easily have been a French colony in the modern era, it is, to an Australian of French descent, a very acceptable outcome that the two great sovereign nations have become, in time, such close friends and allies. The special relationship that Australia has with both France and Belgium was shaped in the crucible of the Great War 1914-18. The service and sacrifices of Australian and New Zealand Forces on the Western Front in Europe during that brutal conflict has won their countries enduring gratitude and respect which manifests itself in many ways to the present day.

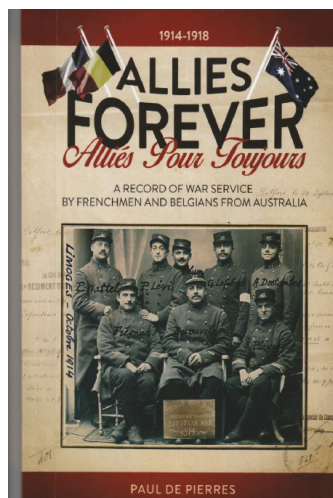
Another important galvanizing factor which has helped to perpetuate the strong France-Australia-Belgium friendship, has been the mighty Wool Trade. For so long large amounts of the Australian Wool Clip, which may I record that my own family has contributed to for nearly 100 years, have been acquired by French and Belgian interests. This has led to many wool buyers from those countries living in Australia since the mid 1800s and a natural integration with the local population. When the Great War erupted in Aug 1914, many of those European wool men and other French and Belgian nationals, my grandfather included, returned immediately to help defend their motherlands against the oppressor. As you will see in these pages a large number not only served but also perished in that defence.

As the war service record of my own family has become known to me I have marvelled at the harsh, unrelenting sacrifices that they and most soldiers in that war had to endure. Fortune smiled on my grandfather, Guy de Pierres, and though he faced death many times in four gruelling years of war service, he luckily survived. One of his brothers, Charley, lost an eye in shelling on the Somme and the other, Stéphane, won the Legion d'Honneur whilst laying down his life for France in bitter fighting in the Vosges Mountains. Four first cousins of my grandfather similarly paid with their lives. So my family's record of service was the initial inspiration for this project however, it may have gone no further without the arrival of Jacqueline Dwyer's wonderful book, 'Flanders in Australia', a history of the Belgian and French wool buying fraternity in the Antipodes and their contributions in two world wars.

This important work and its generous author gave me the incentive to proceed. The incredible online resources through the National Library of Australia's 'TROVE' website were also critical to the outcome of my research. They allowed me to find many names for the book and articles and photos to embellish them which I hope will make the final product interesting to the reader.

One Franco-Australian family's name stands above all others in this work and that is the Playoust family. Seven Playousts served in the Great War with three giving 'their greatest gift' to France.

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Not only for their war service are the Playousts to be admired but also for the integrity of the patriarchs Georges Playoust and his wife Marie Therese and Joseph Playoust with his wife Blanche who were all held in the highest esteem in wool buying circles and in Australian society in general. Their family epitomized the finest ideals of service and commitment for the good - whatever the cost!

The primary objective of this work is to list, as far as possible, all the French and Belgian nationals living in Australia who served in the First World War. However, I have used my discretion to include several who 'had connections' with Australia through their education, commercial endeavours or other reasons. In some cases I have included those who came to live in Australia soon after their war service and I have also taken the opportunity to list some of the Australians who served with the French medical services and Red Cross, during the conflict. As well there are listed Australians who had service with the French Foreign Legion before their Great War commitment. Some of them could have earned French citizenship by virtue of that service. Ideally I would have included a photo with each name but reality precluded this. I wish to record my profound gratitude to all who assisted my research especially Paul Playoust and Jacqueline (Playoust) Dwyer. Without those contributions completion of the work would have been unattainable.

I thank the Belgian ambassador and the French Consul for their assistance and genuinely hope that they will find the end result an asset to their reference libraries. Whilst thanking all contributors for information supplied I make special mention of my superb cover photo from Nick Lefebvre and Anita Knight. It précises the theme of this work showing eight French wool buyers from Australia who had returned immediately to their regiments in France for war service and tragically half of them would lay down their lives in the name of France and freedom. I have included all members of the 1st AIF (that I could find) who were born in Belgium, France or a French Colony even though they may have described themselves as 'natural born' British subjects at enlistment. So while the general thrust of the book is as previously stated, I have used 'author's discretion' to include on occasions. Sadly there will be omissions and I apologize in advance for these. However two years of hard searching has got me to this point and in my judgement it would be counter-productive not to now print as the centenary of the commencement of the Great War approaches.

In conclusion, I return to the thoughts that sparked the reason for this compilation. Reading the letter home in Australia from Legion d'Honneur winner René Tournouér shortly before his death in action with the 2nd Zouaves eloquently portrays the commitment, endurance and sacrifice that those whose names appear in these pages suffered in the quest for freedom. We of the modern era may find it hard to comprehend that, but we should try to in order to honour their memory. As an Australian of French descent who has worn the Australian 'Slouch Hat' with pride and whose forebears wore the 'French Kepi' with equal pride.....

I salute them all

Note: There are some 520+ photos and a brief history of French and Belgians who were living in Australia at the start of the First World War included in this publication. It also includes my father and three uncles who went off to the Western Front. - Ed.

Naval Attack on the Dardanelles

While the Australian and New Zealand troops were completing their training in Egypt, the initial blunder of the Dardanelles operations was committed. The Admiralty, with the sanction of the Imperial War Council, given on Jan 28, 1915, determined to attempt to force the passage of the narrow Straits by naval attack alone. It was indeed a desperate venture, and could succeed only in the event of the naval guns reducing the strong forts which guard the Straits right up to the end of the Narrows on both shores. The omission of supporting land operations at a time when they would have, in all probability, brought complete success, was a grave error of judgment. It was towards the middle of Feb that the combined Anglo-French fleet of pre-Dreadnought battleships, assisted by the newest super-Dreadnought, Queen Elizabeth, with the latest 15-in guns, assembled off the entrance to the Straits.

A terrific bombardment of the forts which guarded the entrance - Sedd-el-Bahr at the extremity of the peninsula, and Kum Kale on the Asiatic coast - was maintained incessantly. The great might of Anglo-French naval power resounded with an intensity never known before in naval warfare. With guns that far outranged the shore batteries, the naval gunners fired salvo after salvo with the precision and safety of target practice. The morale of the Turkish garrison was badly shaken and Kum Kale and Sedd-el-Bahr were abandoned. When naval parties landed and examined the silenced forts, they were astonished to find that the concrete and stone works of the forts alone had suffered. The earthworks were scarcely damaged. Even the gigantic shells of the Queen Elizabeth had little effect on the thick clay banks. The landing parties, with difficulty, completed the demolition of the forts. The first phase of this naval attack - the bombardment of Feb 19 ended with entire satisfaction to the navy.

Having silenced the entrance forts, the real difficulty of the bombarding fleet began. The Turks, under the direction of German engineers, had converted the whole shore line on both sides into two great fortresses. More dangerous and more difficult to silence than the forts proper - Nagara, Mejedieh, Chimilik, Chanak, Kilid Bahr and Dardanos - were the numerous concealed and movable batteries running into tunnels along the hillsides parallel with the narrow waterway. The redoubts, emplacement and gun pits were most carefully concealed, the flash of the guns alone disclosing their location. Once spotted, they were readily moved by rail to a less exposed position. Across the Straits, from Fort Kephez to Baikrah, a distance of two and a half miles, just below the Narrows, an extensive mine-field was laid. A vessel entering this zone, therefore, faced a triple danger - the treacherous mines below, the shore batteries on the broadsides, and aeroplane attacks from above; while it was generally believed that torpedo tubes had been placed at intervals along the shore to attack the warships in the event of the mine-field being cleared.

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Super-Dreadnought Queen Elizabeth

It was against the practically impregnable position that the Anglo-French fleet made its magnificent, but ill-fated, grand attack on Mar 18. An inferno of shells from the Queen Elizabeth, Agamemnon, Lord Nelson, Inflexible, Irresistible, and other battleships, enshrouded the Narrows' forts in an almost impenetrable mist, but, as events subsequently proved, the shells in most cases burst harmlessly on the glacis of the various defences. Even the highest power naval shell had slight effect against properly constructed earthworks. For a time, however, the bombardment promised to be productive of decisive results. The constant pouring in of explosives was having its effect on the Turkish gunners. Apparently, they retired from the gun positions, and for an hour during the afternoon the guns of the forts remained silent.

Then came the series of disasters which practically put an end to the naval operations. The French warships had moved to an inner position in the Straits, adjacent to the mine-field. Suddenly the Bouvet either struck a mine or her magazine was penetrated by a shell, for there was a tremendous explosion and in less than two minutes she disappeared beneath the waters, with the loss of almost her whole crew. The British battle cruiser Inflexible, at 1:15pm had been hit in the foretop by a shell which killed or wounded all but one in it. At 4pm she struck a mine, and left the Straits in danger of sinking. Fortunately, she was able to reach a safe anchorage.

The disaster which befel the Rouvet was followed a couple of hours later by the loss of the British battleships Irresistible and Ocean. At 4:15pm the Irresistible struck a mine and listed to starboard, but the destroyers gallantly rescued the crew under hot fire, the Turks emboldened by the disaster, having remanned the forts. The Irresistible floated till 5:50pm. The Ocean had been ordered to her assistance, but she also struck a mine at 6:50pm and sank. The crew was saved. The French battleship Gaulois was hit by a shell in a vital spot forward and left the Straits in a sinking condition and was beached on Rabbit Island.

A tremendous risk had been run with the Queen Elizabeth, but fortunately she kept outside the minefield. Having suffered the loss of so many ships, Vice-Admiral de Robeck ordered the withdrawal of the Allied fleets from the Straits, and the great effort came to a sudden and unexpected end. It was a wonderful exposition of English and French sea power, but it proved that the attempt to reach Constantinople by means of the navy alone was beyond the realms of possibility. The Admiralty determined to make no further attacks on the Straits until the support of an army could be obtained.

This story is an extract from:

'The All-Australian Memorial'

***A Historical Record of National
Effort During the Great War.***

***British-Australian Publishing Service
1919***





Media Release
The Hon Andrew Gee MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Unknown HMAS Sydney (II) Sailor
Named After 80 Years.

Eighty years after the Australian warship HMAS Sydney (II) sunk off the West Australian coast, the only body recovered from the tragedy has now been identified. New DNA evidence has confirmed Able Seaman (AB) Thomas Welsby Clark from New Farm in Brisbane as the previously unidentified sailor.

The Sydney sank on 19 Nov 1941, following an intense battle with the disguised German merchant raider HSK Kormoran, about 120 nautical miles (222km) west of Steep Point, WA. AB Clark is believed to be the only sailor to have made it to a life raft after the ship went down. Despite surviving the battle and the sinking, he tragically died at sea in the life raft. His remains were found near Rocky Point on Christmas Island nearly three months later.

DNA samples collected from his body in 2006 have been extensively tested over the past 15 years and revealed both mitochondrial DNA, passed from mother to child, and Y chromosome DNA passed from father to son. Research facilitated by the Sea Power Centre - Australia has successfully identified two living direct relatives.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the formal identification was a significant development in Sydney's story and an historic moment for Australia.

"To finally learn Tom's name, rank, service number and home town, 80 years after he was lost is truly remarkable. It says a lot about Australia that, despite the decades that have passed, our nation is still working so hard to identify those lost in war and ensuring we honour the sacred commitment to remember them. I know this is a terribly sad time for Tom's family. Like his brave shipmates, he died defending Australia, our values and way of life. His family should be immensely proud", Minister Gee said.

"The Office of Australian War Graves has agreed that next year Tom's grave in Geraldton War Cemetery will be marked by a new headstone bearing his name. He will be 'unknown' no longer. By identifying Tom, our nation honours all those who lost their lives in HMAS Sydney (II). His story helps Australia understand the immense sacrifice made for our country and also the loss and grief that is still felt by the descendants of those who perished on that day. Today our nation also extends its deepest sympathies to the descendants of the 644 other crew members who were sadly never recovered after that infamous battle. They gave their lives protecting our nation and fighting tyranny, and by ending the threat posed by the Kormoran they undoubtedly saved many other Australian lives. At the time we remember them and all of the 39,000 Australians who lost their lives in the Second World War", Minister Gee said.

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Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Mike Noonan said AB Clark was just 21 years old when he died and was representative of the many young lives lost in the battle. “Of Sydney’s total complement of 645 men no one survived. This includes six Royal Australian Air Force members, eight Royal Navy personnel and four civilian canteen staff. Eighty-two officers and sailors were killed in Kormoran”, Vice Admiral Noonan said.

“We revere the service and sacrifice of all who perished. Solving this World War II case involved specialists in DNA analysis, forensic pathology and dentistry, ballistics, anthropology, archaeology and naval history. I commend the combined effort spearheaded by the Sea Power Centre to confirm AB Clark’s identity”.

“The Australian Federal Police National DNA Program for Unidentified and Missing Persons was instrumental, as were the Australian National University, Australian War Memorial, University of Adelaide and University of Sydney, not to mention Able Seaman Thomas Clark’s family”.

“His long voyage is complete, may he Rest in Peace”.

Dr Leigh Lehane, (a retired academic) was surprised and saddened to learn her Uncle Tom was the unknown sailor.

“To be quite honest it was a bit upsetting”, she said.

However, she said establishing the truth was important. “I am so grateful for the many, many people, well over a hundred, who helped ascertain the truth about his identity”, Dr Lehane said.

She was born in July 1941, the month before her Uncle Tom joined Sydney. According to a family story he met his new niece on a final visit to Brisbane. “He came and held me as a little baby. That’s a very pleasurable thought because I don’t think anyone else is alive now who knew Tom sort of eye to eye”, Dr Lehane said.



HMAS Sydney II Memorial - Geraldton Western Australia

Remembrance Day 2021 at Warrigal Stirling

“To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die” - Quote by Thomas Campbell

Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch was honoured to be invited by Warrigal Stirling to be part of their commemoration for Remembrance Day 2021, a day to remember the end of World War One, and all those who served to defend our country.

The service was arranged by staff at Warrigal with General Manager, Kim Bradshaw showing appreciation on behalf of the residents for our participation. The informative and moving words by Peter Eveille touched the audience who, after the service added their own stories of loved ones that served. Kenneth Cartwright laid a wreath in memory of all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Kevin recited the ode on the eleventh hour. The poem ‘In Flanders Fields’ by John McCrae was read by Malcolm, one of the residents with Rania Kalimeris reading The Answer:

*‘Fear not that you have died for naught,
The torch you threw to us we caught.
And now our hands will hold it high,
Its glorious light shall never die.
We’ll not break faith with you who lie on many a field’.*

A time to reflect, remember, to show our respect and appreciation for those who fought for our freedom.



Back to Civilian Life

Terry Colhoun AM

Like most men and women who served in the armed forces during the Second World War, there came a time when I began to wonder what I would do after I was demobilised, whenever that might be. When a group of us sat around in the Recreation Hut at night we would get round to discussing what we do after the war ended. Some had jobs they wanted to go back to, others wanted a new start. Youngsters like myself who had not started a career before enlisting, listened and wondered.

I joined the RAAF a few days after my 18th birthday. I had left school at 15 to help my parents, who were still recovering from the Great Depression, and I had no special skills. At school I was a good student with a special interest in reading, writing history and geography. After I started working I pursued those interests by joining a library. Some time after enlisting I studied with the RAAF Education Service where I could advance my knowledge, and hopefully prepare for the career I wanted. Since before I started school I wanted to become a radio announcer, having been influenced by what I heard on my father's 'wireless'. I didn't have much confidence in my ability to acquire the skills I needed but I was always hopeful.

A love of music, specially classical, was a factor in my wanting to work in broadcasting. That's what really attracted me when I heard Dad's experimental wireless, although I did see myself as the man who introduced it. Dad was a professional musician, as were his parents, and I had played in a brass band as a boy. So it was natural that while serving at Point Cook I joined the RAAF Male Voice Choir. That meant a weekly overnight trip to Melbourne but I didn't mind that, I enjoyed the rehearsals and performances while I was improving my knowledge of music.

While working with 79 Wing at Batchelor in the Northern Territory and later RAAF Base Darwin, I joined a small team of airmen who 'broadcast' news and music for an hour every evening before dinner. Using a single turntable and microphone, I learned to introduce and play records provided by RAAF Welfare, and to select and read news from *Army News*, a daily paper published by the Army in Darwin. I had no trouble picking up the paper from the Orderly Room on the way to the 'studio', choosing what I would read and then reading it virtually 'at sight'. Even if our 'broadcast' went out across the camp via telegraph lines, I was on my way to becoming a radio announcer in a way I never expected, although I still worried over what my second choice might be.

At RAAF Station Darwin I was able to talk with Flying Officer Ellis Blain who, before joining had been one of the ABC's top announcers. He kindly spent some time pointing me in the right direction. His main advice was that I should get myself into a room on my own with a good newspaper and practice reading aloud. It was best, he added, to start with the paper's editorial because it was usually well written, unlike the pages of news reports. He said I should also practice the stock and station market reports and learn what they meant, because it was almost certain that I would start work in a country station where those things were important. That was good practical advice.

After the war ended I was posted to Airmen's Records in RAAF Headquarters, Melbourne and remained there until I was discharged in 1946.

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Having now decided what I wanted to do as a civilian I studied speech with a recognized teacher, in my own time and at my own expense, and before I was demobilised I had a diploma in speech from the London College of Music. I could now put the letters A.L.C.M. (Speech) after my name. My teacher helped by arranging for me to meet Sir Eric Pearce, Manager of 3DB, a major Melbourne radio station, whom I found to be a wise counsellor. After advising me that I wasn't ready for a metropolitan station, he gave my name to the General Manager of *The Victorian Broadcasting Network*, a small group of country stations owned by *The Age* newspaper. I knew I still needed a bit of good luck because, although I was a returned serviceman in a priority group of men and women who were looking for employment, I had little idea about how to find it. I was getting valuable advice.

Thanks to Sir Eric I received a message to report to Mr Rupert Fitts, General Manager of the *Victorian Broadcasting Network* at his office on the upper floor of the old offices of *The Age* in Collins Street. I was interviewed by Mr Fitts and one other man then given a sheaf of scripts covering general news, sports news and livestock markets. After about 10 minutes I was nervously ready to start an audition using a microphone and must have done well enough because I was immediately asked if I could catch a train to Sale the following day. Although I had no idea where Sale was I thanked them for the offer and we shook hands. I was told to come back the following day for a train ticket. I caught a tram home immediately, gave the good news to Mum and Dad and asked them where Sale was. They told me it was in Gippsland about 130 miles (200kms) east of Melbourne.

Arriving in Sale I was met by a gentleman who introduced himself as Mr Lewis, the manager of 3TR, the only local radio station. He drove me to a hotel where I checked in, put my bag in my room and we continued the journey to the studios. Mr Lewis (in those days personal names were not used as they are now) introduced me to the staff. There was general dismay that I had no actual broadcasting experience, so the program manager took me into a studio to teach me all that as a fellow-veteran and understood my need for guidance in where I was going, which was to get on to the announcer's roster as soon as possible. He got me there and I went on air the following day.

A slightly unpleasant thing happened a week or so after I started work at 3TR. I was walking from my hotel to start an afternoon shift. As I passed a group of ladies having a tea break outside their place of work on the opposite side of the road, they greeted me with rude whistles for no reason I could think of. I ignored them, but the next day they did the same. I crossed the road, introduced myself, told them about my RAAF service and showed them my Returned from Active Service Badge. They apologised for the whistles and after that I always go a friendly greeting whenever I passed them. It was part of my introduction to post-war civilian life that could have happened anywhere.

But I was in Sale, a quiet town of about six thousand persons that had begun its life a long time ago and was proud of its place as the centre of a prosperous dairy farming district whose members came in every week for stock sales and shopping. It had Anglican and Catholic bishops, three boarding schools apart from State and Catholic primary, high and technical schools and a daily newspaper. There was a RAAF base on the west side that was now a Migrant Holding Centre, but it was not sewerred - that was still a work in progress.

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For entertainment, there was a picture theatre and a couple of ageing halls where balls were staged annually by the Anglicans, the Catholics, the Masons and a committee called The Bachelors and Benedicts. It was a typical Australian country town, conservative and wary of newcomers until they proved themselves worthy of acceptance. This was the environment in which I was trying to adjust to a civilian non-regulated life. My previous four years had been entirely controlled by the RAAF and despite having spent the last 10 months living with my parents in Melbourne, I now had to make decisions about my life that were new to me. Accommodation was one thing. I had not thought about renting a flat and was still living on a weekly basis in a hotel that was too expensive for my low salary. (I was being paid very little above the basic wage with no allowances). After a while a friendly bank manager and his wife arranged for me to move into a well run boarding house I knew nothing about. There, I made new friends and steadied my bank balance.

After about three years at 3TR, I read an advertisement in *The Age* that interested me. The ABC was seeking applications from people with broadcasting experience who were interested in being Regional Officers. Three towns were named - Horsham, Albury and Sale. I went to Mr Lewis and sought his advice, which immediately was that I should apply for the Sale position. He offered his full support, particularly by commending me to senior ABC officers with whom he had previously worked. He told me he had already recognised that my future lay in the ABC, not in the commercial sector. I am sure it was his support that got me the job, and, in 1949, I started work as the ABC's first full time staff member in Gippsland, with the responsibility of creating a local station. This was a big challenge but this time I felt I was better equipped for it, mainly because of the training Mr Lewis had given me, and once I was appointed his support continued when he sponsored me for membership of the Rotary Club, and I was now permitted to address him as 'Ted'. I also became involved in several community organisations, including the Sale Choral Society, and that's where I found my future wife. We married in Sale and our daughter was born there.

When the 'Cold War', in which the USSR was pushing its Communist ideas around the World, started to look like it could become a hot war the Australian Government responded by forming recruiting committees throughout the country. I was asked by the Sale Mayor to be the local committee's secretary and because of this I came to know the Officer Commanding RAAF East Sale. In time he invited me to be an Honorary Member of his Officers' Mess which was an honour I gladly accepted. In one of my occasional chats with the OC we discussed the possibility of a general Call-up of WWII veterans and I wondered if people with experience like mine might be amongst the first to get the call. He thought it was more than possible and suggested I apply for a Commission in the RAAF Reserve. With the support of the Mayor, I received a document signed by the Governor-General, Sir William KcKell, appointing me a Pilot Officer. Fortunately a change in USSR leadership stopped the Cold War and the threatened Call-up never came.

As I approach my 90th birthday and look back on how I made the change from service life to civilian life I can remember the doubts and the fears, the loneliness in a small country town and the mistakes I made along the way. However, I was fortunate that there were people who saw in the immature young man that I was something they were ready to help. I am thankful for that because civilian life has been good.

A Snapshot in Time - Federal Police Making a Difference A Profile 2004-2008 of Chaplain Roger 'Mick' O'Donnell

You could find Australian Federal Police Chaplain Mick O'Donnell in any country where police members are deployed on overseas missions. Ordained in 1991, Mick's *home* parish is the AFP International Deployment Group (IDG) headquarters at Majura, Canberra, while liturgically he is attached to St Christopher's Cathedral in Canberra.

Particularly since the 9/11 bombing, hundreds of AFP and State police men and women (sworn into the AFP as Specials) are working in Peacekeeping activities throughout the world. 'Among the objectives of deployment are to quell civil unrest, encourage peace initiatives, institute modern training facilities and by example, restore the dignity and accountability of the local police force. 'In this way we regain and maintain their confidence and trust so they can feel safe again in their communities,' he explained. 'In many instances, the deployed members volunteer their time for construction, repairs and fund-raising for special projects.'

Empathy with love and compassion is the mainstay of any Chaplaincy. Chaplain Mick served 20 years in the RAN (including the Malaysian Conflict and Vietnam), then became Head of the AFP Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (BCI) Data Systems, before spending 3 years at the Marist Seminary at Hunter's Hill, and ordination in 1991. 'It was an easy transition to return to the AFP as their Chaplain a few years later,' he said.

Chaplain O'Donnell was part of the response to the Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta in Sep 2004, the death of an Australian Protective Officer, Adam Dunning who was murdered in Honiara just prior to Christmas 2004, the response to the 2006 riots in Honiara, and later the civil unrest in East Timor, the funeral of much loved Assistant Commissioner Audrey Fagan in Apr 2007 and with the Disaster Victim Identification Team, responding to the crash of a Garuda 737 in Jogjakarta in Mar 2007.

'Just being with the men and women is vital,' he said. 'The separation from their families, the loneliness, or perhaps standards of living come into the ministry - No matter their faith, or no faith, God is always there! I witness to God's love and compassion as I understand it.'

Each time Chaplain Mick returns to Dili, Port Moresby, Buka, Honiara or Djakarta he makes a curtesy call to the major church leaders, and often shares the altar with the locals, or perhaps conducts services in remote make-shift venues. People are very welcome to the police chaplain, hospitality is often followed by an invitation to speak at a function, village or school. It is also where the reality of the AFP influence can be better understood. 'The people are very honest and have no hesitation to tell you if they think we are doing a good job or otherwise.'

Postscript: Chaplain Mick and Cora have been married for 57 years. They have 3 married children, nine grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. Following retirement from the AFP at 65 years in 2009, Mick was invited to be the Chaplain of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch.



Chaplain Mick at a Memorial in Honiara.

Thousands of confiscated firearms are buried under this monument in a Honiara park as a powerful witness to 'no guns in the Solomons!' A RAMSI Initiative.

Sub-Branch Notices

Christmas Party	Wed 15 th Dec 12:00 for 12:30PM	CSCC Orion Room
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Closing date for the 2022 ANZAC Edition of 'The Serviceman' - Fri 18th Feb.

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

The Sub-Branch Office will close at Midday on Friday 17th December 2021,
reopening at 0900 on Monday 4th January, 2022.



Christmas Party

*Wednesday 15th December 2021
Canberra Southern Cross Club
Venue — "Orion Room"*

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 event.



A Special Kind of Bluebird

“For many years to come Australian women will be judged by you ... Just as each soldier should fight as if the results of the battle depended upon his individual effort, so each one of you will do her work for something else besides the love of it, for the reputation of our great country.”

(24/8/1916)

With these words Lieutenant Colonel A.B. Brockway of the Army Medical Corps heralded the start of World War I service for a group of exceptional Australian nurses. They were known as the ‘Bluebirds’, so called because of their distinctive dark blue uniforms with pale blue piping and hat band. The Bluebirds were not members of the Australian Army Nursing Service, rather they were a small group of selected professionals funded by the Australian Red Cross Society as a ‘gift’ to the French Government for whom nurses were in short supply.

The Bluebirds left Melbourne on the troopship *Kanowna* on July 4, 1916, keen to fulfill Brockway’s expectations of them as representatives of Australian women in a role that allowed a level of female participation in war that others could not come close to. This vital service saw women serve close to the front lines, share in the harsh conditions and deal directly with the effects of war as they fulfilled their nursing duties. The twenty women who served as Bluebirds were selected from 90 applicants who responded to an announcement in the press. They had to be medically qualified and speak French and were supported by the Department of Defence who arranged their passage on the *Kanowna*. The Australian Jockey Club paid their wages and the French-Australian League of Help assisted by providing each woman with a leather kit bag for her travels. The Bluebirds were initially engaged for 12 months service or for the duration of the war - whichever was shortest - and most of the women would not see home again for another three years.

Upon arrival in France the Bluebirds were separated and allocated to different hospitals where they dealt with all variety of conditions and cases, ran wards and managed staff and supplies. They developed an excellent reputation in France which was noted by Sister Grace Sheridan who wrote: ‘I am proud to say that all the doctors are asking for Australian trained nurses now.’ The Bluebirds nursed men of all nations, suffered in loneliness and harsh conditions and yet never seemed to waiver in their resolve that they were exactly where they should be, that their work was vital and their contribution crucial. (*Penny Hyde*)



The nurses onboard the troopship HMAT *Kanowna* with their French teacher.

This article is an extract from a publication ‘ALLIES FOREVER’ a record of war service by Frenchmen and Belgians from Australia, by Paul De Pierres and is copied with the kind permission of the author. Ed

70th Anniversary of Kapooka, ‘The Home of the Soldier’

On 12 Nov 2021, Kapooka (the Home of the Soldier) celebrated 70 years of training Australian soldiers to be among the best in the world.

Around 350,000 Australians have now passed through the iconic Army Recruit Training Centre (ARTC), located at Blamey Barracks in Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga in New South Wales.

This anniversary, marked with a graduation parade of around 60 of Australia’s newest soldiers, was attended by the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd).

Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the quality of our soldiers and the international regard in which they are held was testament to the training received at Kapooka.

“The standard of training, mentoring and leadership shown by the staff at Kapooka over the last 70 years has ensured our nation has been protected by soldiers of the highest calibre”, Minister Gee said.

“Generations of graduate soldiers from Kapooka have proven their worth in every conflict and emergency the nation has faced since the Korean War. The ‘home of the soldier’ is a uniquely Australian asset that contributes to both our national security and our national character, through the standards and loyalty instilled into every recruit”.

Member for Riverina Michael McCormack said the Blamey Barracks in Kapooka remains a world class training establishment right in the heart of the Riverina. Every Australian soldier begins their career at Kapooka, to learn the basic skills and the foundations to grow into capable, confident military leaders”, Mr McCormack said.

“We should admire and respect the achievements of this base over the past 70 years, and also recognise its previous service as the training base for Australian Army engineers in World War Two”.

Originally commencing operations in 1951 as the 1st Recruit Training Battalion, much of the base’s existing structures can be traced back to 1966, when the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Roden Cutler, VC, KCMG, CBE, opened the new facilities for both National Service and Regular Army recruits as the Vietnam conflict escalated.

Between 1965 and 1972 alone, in excess of ten thousand National Servicemen trained at Kapooka, and in 1985 Kapooka became responsible for the training of female recruits.

Soldier training at Kapooka includes fitness, weapons handling, combat skills, first aid, teamwork and self-organisation skills.

Smoke Gets in your Eyes

Les Cook

The American B25 twin-engine bomber (the Mitchell) could have been the most heavily-armed aircraft of its size in the early days of WWII. In addition to the normal machine guns, some models carried a 75mm cannon mounted in a forward position with the muzzle in the front of the aircraft body. We had been told that the primary reason for this somewhat unusual concept was to enable the pilot to fire an explosive shell directly at Japanese vessels transporting troops and supplies between the Pacific islands. We were to find out later that it did have other uses. Incidentally, and to add to their reputation, sixteen B25s under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Doolittle took off from an aircraft carrier in the Pacific in Apr 1942, flew across Japan, bombed Tokyo, and flew on to land in China because they didn't have enough fuel to fly home. Some ran out of fuel even so and had to crash-land in China. This world-famous mission took place just four months after the Japanese surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands. Apparently the raid didn't cause much actual damage, but could have been planned for its psychological effect on the Japanese people.

After the recapture of the town of Lae on the north coast of New Guinea in the latter half of 1943, we had moved up the Markham and Ramu river valleys to Dumpu village. There was a brief encounter with a Japanese forward patrol at the village of Kaiapit in the Markham valley and several more with the main force at Dumpu village and on the nearby hills. The Japanese had come over the Finisterre Range from the town of Madang on the north coast, presumably with the intention of coming up behind us in our attack on Lae. If they had started a few days earlier they could have achieved this.

The track from Madang came down from the top of the range on a long, narrow, steep-sided feature that became known to us as Shaggy Ridge. It was not given this title because of its topographical condition. When in a remote, unknown area it was customary for us to name geographical features after the name of the senior officer from the unit which was initially engaged there. "Shaggy Bob" was the nick-name of Captain Clampett, a Company Commander of the 2/27th Battalion. I can recall several other names from that area such as; Kings Hill, Palliers Hill, Guys Post, Johns Knoll, and of course there were many others. It was a fast, simple, and very effective system of identification.

We had been told that it was about 60 air miles (100km) from Madang to the summit of Shaggy Ridge and that the town was visible from this point, but I didn't see it. I was in a tent hospital run by the 2/5 AGH near Port Moresby when it was reached. While I was in that hospital my 21st birthday came and went without me even being aware of it.

The Japanese had prepared several defensive positions on Shaggy Ridge so it wasn't just a simple matter to take the entire ridge. It had to be dealt with in stages, and as the distance increased the target was getting beyond the range of our artillery on the floor of the valley.

We had been told of a forthcoming air attack, but I can't remember how detailed the advice was. We did, however, recognize the B25 bombers.

>>>

When they arrived the first went in above us flying parallel with the upper reaches of Shaggy Ridge and the cannon was fired. We couldn't believe what we saw! The aircraft appeared to stop dead for a fraction of a second when the gun fired then continued on in a straight line. We didn't know much about aerodynamics, but the general opinion was that if an aircraft lost forward momentum and stopped dead, even for a fraction of a second, it would fall, so what we were seeing was impossible.

The wiser ones among us used the term "optical illusion" to explain it. The 75mm cannon produced a lot of smoke when it was fired. This very visible smoke was blown forward initially at an infinitely higher speed than the aircraft was flying so went ahead of it. The aircraft flew through the smoke a fraction of a second later giving the impression that the aircraft had momentarily stopped. We couldn't confirm this of course, but it did not seem to be an illogical explanation. Anyway, at least it gave us something to think and talk about.

From Humour in Uniform from the War Years

The ocean was rough and visibility poor, and as our ship fell into the convoy column it bumped the stern of another vessel, but without doing any real damage.

The weather grew even worse with thick fog, and ships of the convoy became scattered over a wide area. Finally we received a coded radio message telling us where to rejoin the convoy. We changed our course, and a few minutes later there was a terrific crash. We had rammed the same ship a second time. Frantic, our Captain signalled, "Can you stay afloat?"

"Yes," flashed the other skipper, "You had better try again!"

The C.O. of our RAF Camp decided we should all take part in manoeuvres. Half the personnel were to attack the base, the remainder to defend it. This unpopular exercise had been underway for about three hours when serious rain began to fall. Blanks were being fired half-heartedly all around us. Suddenly we heard the whine of real bullets ricocheting off headquarters roof. Almost immediately the all-clear siren sounded and over the loudspeaker came this request:

"Would the airman who fired the shots that won this war please report to the guardroom".

Reporting for duty in 1944 on the island of Biak, off the New Guinea coast, I noticed a large group of men looking intently into the sky. I did the same, and caught faint sun flashes on the body of an aircraft. Figuring it was Japanese and that this would be my first experience under enemy fire, I wondered why the men didn't take cover. As the plane came lower and lower, I became more concerned. But instead of attacking us, the four-engined bomber made a graceful landing and everybody ran towards it.

It had taken off with the group's beer ration, up to 30,000 feet for an hour to cool it off.

(Jests, Jokes and Witty Anecdotes from the War Years)

Veterans' Health Week 16-24 October 2021

Despite the limitation of COVID with number restrictions, we had a good turnout of members attending the two sessions offered. This year's key focus was Get Moving (physical activity).

The energetic team from Strength for Life, Diane Percy and Duncan Craig, presented our veterans with excellent direction on how to add strength building into our exercise routine. Equipment consisting of resistance bands and acupressure balls were given to our veterans to spark their interest in physical activity. The sessions were interactive and informative.

The Strength for Life program provides an excellent incentive to get moving, socialise and be supervised which is important to ensure the exercises are performed correctly. Each program is individually tailored to each participant and designed to assist people to live safely in their homes for longer.

Strength for Life is conducted at various venues across the ACT.



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For the information of members and guests

KRAIT and Operation JAYWICK

Extract from an article by Peter Djokovic

“In order to make the attack, the canoes had to locate their targets and approach stealthily right up to the hulls of the vessels, apply the charges, with their time fuses, and make off again into the comparative safety of the night to their other targets”

***Krait in 1943 on the Brisbane River
AWM 300915***



On 2 Sep 1943, a captured Japanese motor sampan set out from Exmouth in WA bound for Singapore, well inside Japanese controlled waters. By the time they returned nearly seven weeks later, the crew of 14 had carried out one of the most successful clandestine raids in Australian history. The 68-ton *Kofuku Maru* had been seized by British authorities in Singapore following Japan's entry into the war. In 1943 she was renamed *Krait* and assigned to the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD), the parent organisation of the famed Z Special Unit, which was responsible for covert operations in enemy territory. The objective of Operation JAYWICK was for a group of Australian and British Z Special Unit members to attack Japanese shipping in Singapore using time delayed limpet mines. The operatives and crew included ten sailors and four soldiers.

Led by Major Ivan Lyon of the Gordon Highlanders who, along with Major Jock Campbell of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, had devised the plan in 1942 after they had escaped the Japanese invasion of Singapore. Essential to the plan was a vessel that could pose as a local fishing boat or trader. *Krait* was identified as suitable, however, persistent engine problems meant that the operation was abandoned early in 1943. The plan was resurrected later in the year when *Krait* had been made seaworthy.

In Exmouth in Aug 1943, *Krait* was loaded with her supplies and equipment, including three two-man canoes in which the Z Special Unit members would enter the selected harbours and attack the Japanese ships. She departed Exmouth on the evening of 1 Sep, and promptly broke a propeller shaft. USS *Chanticleer* assisted with repairs and *Krait* departed the following afternoon, her route taking her through Lombok Strait, across the Java Sea, along the southwest and west coasts of Borneo and then west to the Lingga Archipelago and the islands south of Singapore. The crew hoisted the Japanese ensign on 6 Sep and *Krait* approached Lombok Strait, the first 'danger area' of her voyage, just after noon on 8 Sep. The Eastern Archipelago Pilot promised 'very hazy' conditions at that time of year, but *Krait* approached the southern entrance to the strait in conditions of perfect visibility. The decision was made, however, to ignore the threat of enemy aerial reconnaissance and a course was set for Lombok Strait. Apart from the dangers posed by Japanese patrols, the strong currents in Lombok Strait posed significant navigational problems for *Krait*. Progress was excruciatingly slow, at one stage the current forcing the sampan backwards for an hour. It was nearly 24 hours before *Krait* left Lombok Strait behind and entered the Java Sea at 10:00 on 9 Sep. >>>

The 'promised' haze that morning assisted *Krait's* uncontested passage across the Java Sea. The crew applied dark dye to their bodies enhancing their appearance as local fishermen helping *Krait* safely make her way to the Lingga Archipelago. She anchored off Pulau Pompong on the evening of 16 Sep. Pompong had been identified as a possible disembarkation point for the operatives but as dawn broke it was decided unsuitable. The next day was spent zigzagging through the islands in the area searching for an alternative hideout. That evening a great deal of enemy activity of searchlights, floatplanes and transport aircraft made it evident that this 'was not a healthy area for *Krait*'. Eventually, at 02:00 on 18 Sep, she anchored off Pulau Panjang and began disembarking the operatives. Three hours later, *Krait* was making her way back to Borneo with orders to rendezvous with the operatives on the night of 1-2 Oct at Pompong.

Krait spent the next eleven days avoiding enemy contact off the south coast of Borneo, contending with heavy seas and listening to the radio every night for news of the operation. The six operatives spent the first two days after landing on Panjang observing Japanese movements in the approaches to Singapore and preparing for the attack. At dusk on 20 Sep, they boarded their canoes, loaded with enough food and water for a week, and proceeded to the extreme north of the Rhio Archipelago. For the next three nights the canoes 'island hopped' their way through the archipelago and, at midnight on 22 Sep, reached Pulau Dongas some eight miles south south-east of Singapore Harbour.

On the afternoon of 24 Sep, a concentration of ships of around 65,000 tons had gathered in the Roads near Dongas. The tides in the Roads made an attack in the canoes difficult, but the size of the targets proved too tempting to resist. The party set out at 10:00 but as they approached their respective targets, the tidal currents proved too strong and the attack was abandoned. In light of this unsuccessful attempt, the party shifted from Dongas to a better placed observation post on Pulau Subar, overlooking the Examination Anchorage.

At around 19:20 on 26 Sep, the operatives set out from Subar in their canoes for a second attempt. Canoe 1, carrying Major Lyon and AB Huston, made for the examination Anchorage. Canoe 2, with Lt Davidson and AB Falls, headed for the eastern end of Keppel Harbour and the Roads, while Canoe 3, with Lt Page and AB Jones, made for Pulau Bukum and the western end of Keppel Harbour. Canoes 1 and 3 proceeded in company before parting in the vicinity of Pulau Jong. Canoe 1 arrived in the target area to find the currents working against them and all shipping blacked out making it almost impossible to see the ships against the background of the hills. After searching for a suitable target, Lyon and Huston made their attack on a tanker, attaching limpet mines to the engine room and propeller shaft. Lyon later recorded 'Half way through the work, Huston drew my attention to a man watching us intently from a porthole. He continued to gaze until just before we left the ship, when he withdrew his head and lighted his bedside lamp. He took no apparent action and we set off for Dongas 12 miles away'. The adverse currents prevented Lyon and Huston from making any other attacks.

Canoe 3 made for its first target area at Pulau Bukum and found the currents to be favourable and was able to attach mines to a freighter at the Bukum wharves before drifting with the current towards Keppel Harbour. They attached mines to two more freighters before beginning the journey back to Dongas.

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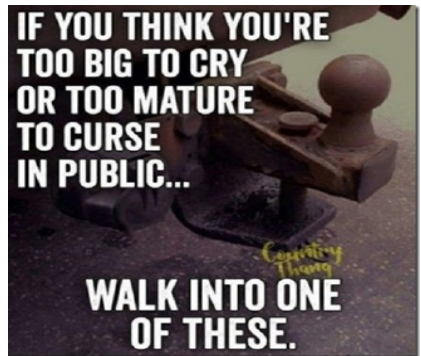
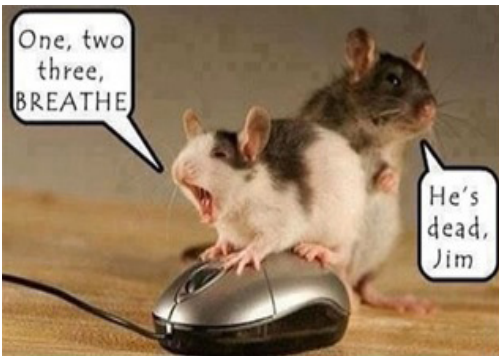
Canoe 2, meanwhile, proceeded independently to its target areas to the east of Keppel Harbour and the Roads. Davidson and Falls arrived at the harbour and, with no boom vessel in attendance, set about finding a way through and into the harbour itself. While doing so they were nearly run down by a tug which had apparently failed to see them. The tug passed approximately 20 paces from us and we could see a few people moving about the deck.

Having passed through the open boom gate, Davidson and Falls found only small ships within the harbour. They turned back through the boom and into the Roads where they attacked three cargo vessels of around 5,000 tons each. With their limpet mines set, they set out independently for the rendezvous with *Krait* on Pulau Pompong.

Between 05:15 and 05:50, seven explosions were heard indicating that all the attacks had been successful. Seven Japanese ships had been sunk or severely damaged amounting to between 37,000 and 39,000 tons. *Krait*, meanwhile, made her way back to the rendezvous point on Pompong, arriving just after midnight on the morning of 2 Oct. Shortly afterwards, the crew recovered Davidson and Falls in Canoe 2. The other two canoes were in the area but could not locate the sampan in the dark. *Krait* retired to the south of the Temiang Strait and returned to pick up the other canoes at around 21:00 on 3 Oct.

Krait made a quiet journey across the Java Sea and approached the Lombok strait on the afternoon of 11 Oct. With the crew once again in disguise, she entered the strait later that evening. Shortly before midnight a Japanese destroyer was sighted approaching rapidly on *Krait's* port beam. She approached to within 100 yards; however, *Krait's* disguise was apparently sufficient to allay any suspicions and the ship turned away without even shining a searchlight on the sampan.

Krait cleared the strait early the next morning and entered comparatively safe waters. She arrived at Exmouth on 19 Oct 1943, having covered some 4,000 miles during her 48-day absence. There were no casualties and all involved in the operation were either decorated or mentioned in despatches. *Krait* was not commissioned at the time of the operation but was later commissioned in 1944 and was based at Darwin for the remainder of hostilities. She is still afloat today and is maintained by the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.



A Grave Situation

Les Cook

In the early days of the war, most first-line fighter aircraft carried eight machine guns. These guns were mounted four in each wing, and fired outside the propellor arc, the bullets converging at the point of greatest impact a set distance forward of the aircraft. Obviously, when the bullets went past this point they spread increasingly the further they travelled. I don't know the rate of fire of the guns, but, as they were of a similar calibre to the guns we used on the ground, I assume that it would have been about 600 rounds per gun per minute. In addition to these guns, the German ME109 fighter had a 20mm cannon firing explosive shells through the propellor boss. This was the first aircraft in my experience to have the cannon, although it was universally adopted thereafter. We saw this aircraft with its cannon for the first time in Greece.

I have gone into some detail on this subject because, being soldiers, we were always on the receiving end of these guns, and to give some idea of the volume of fire from even one aircraft. To be attacked in the open by several aircraft at once is an experience one does not want to repeat. We were on our way to the evacuation beaches in the south of Greece when we were attacked by a flight of dive-bombers accompanied by ME109 fighters. The fighters came in straffing after the bombers had finished. We were alongside a cemetery at the time, and had sought what cover we could find among the grave stones. It wasn't much, but it was better than staying on the open road.

We had suffered this sort of treatment from air-attack for almost a month. We had been attacked by day and had retreated to new positions by night, and were feeling the effects of lack of sleep, among other things. Not to put too fine a point on it, we were starting to become a little edgy. I don't know if it was a common practice in Greece, but in that particular cemetery many of the graves consisted of stone coffins about 30cm high and above-ground. These appeared to have been cut from solid blocks of stone and hollowed out, with stone slabs about 40mm thick resting on the top and slightly overhanging the edges of the coffin.

As we started to walk back to the road after the attack we heard a muffled voice. The sound seemed to be coming from the earth, but there was no-one in sight and the ground between graves was so bare that even an ant walking on it would have been clearly visible. This experience in a cemetery at any time would be eerie; it was probably made even more so to us by the state of our nerves. The voice stopped after a few seconds. Our first instinct was to put as much distance between us and the cemetery as quickly as possible.

When reason had reasserted itself over fear and superstition, however, we noticed that the slab on top of one of the coffins was slightly askew. Sliding it aside, we found one of our truck drivers lying among the bones of a skeleton. He was in a bad way by this time and was scarcely able to speak. After he had recovered somewhat, he explained what had happened. When the cannon shells started to explode around us, he had slid the cover aside and got into the coffin lying down on his back. He felt reasonably secure until, looking up, he saw an aircraft that appeared to be coming straight at him with all guns firing. Given superhuman strength, he had managed to move the slab back over the top of the coffin to protect himself.

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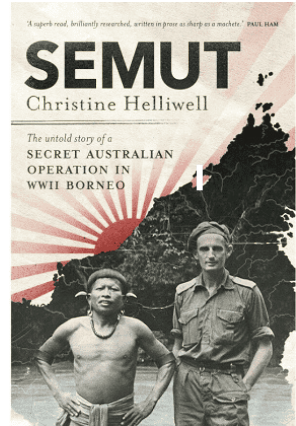
Because of the shallowness of the coffin, he had been unable to get sufficient leverage with his arms to move it away again.

If we hadn't calmed down enough to go back and look, and if the stone slab had not been slightly askew, he would probably be still there. He was a stranger to us and we were not aware that he was there, so his absence would not have been noted. Nobody would ever have known what had happened to him.

SEMUT
Bob Cremer

I have recently read a new book 'SEMUT', the untold story of a SECRET AUSTRALIAN OPERATION IN WWII BORNEO by author Christine Helliwell.

In March 1945 a handful of young Allied operatives parachuted into the remote jungles of Japanese occupied Borneo with the mission to recruit the indigenous Dayak people to help fight the Japanese. These operatives speak no Borneo languages and know little about Dayaks other than they have been - and may still be - headhunters. They also fear that on arrival the Dayaks will kill them or hand them over to the Japanese. For their part, some Dayaks have never before seen a white face.



An amazing story of incredible hardship, told in great detail by the author who tracks the movements of SEMUT I, II and III as they harass Japanese positions attempting to give the impression they are part of major Australian forces that have landed in Borneo. Each group is only comprised of several soldiers backed up by a group of Dayaks, the only means of transport by canoe along the raging Baram and Rejang rivers, or being led by the Dayaks through the impenetrable jungle without a visible track to follow and coping with an environment as dangerous as the Japanese they are fighting.

These entirely secret operations launched by the Services Reconnaissance Department - popularly known as Z Special Unit. This story is also a special tribute to the Dayak people for their long overlooked role in these operations in which many local indigenous people died. The story was also restricted by the 30-year embargo placed on secret operations conducted by Z Special Unit. Replenishment ammunition and food supplies were dropped by aircraft, but with limited communications with their headquarters, a lot of the supplies sometimes disappeared completely in the jungle and were never recovered.

It would have been a very worrying with the thought that at any time along the river systems they may confront heavily armed Japanese troops who regularly patrolled up and down the rivers. The support given to these few soldiers by the Dayaks came at a great cost to them as they lost many of their tribesmen for supporting the Australians.

An excellent story told in great detail.

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PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE VETERAN COMMUNITY

Eating in the 1950s

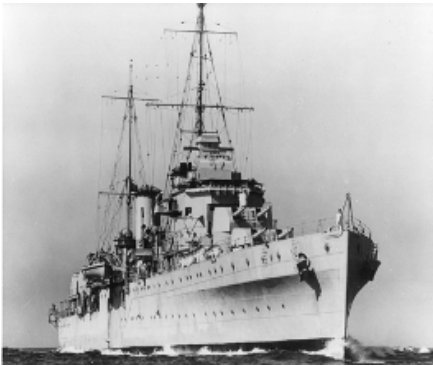
Pasta had not been invented. It was macaroni or spaghetti
Curry was a surname
A take-away was a mathematical problem
Pizza? Sounds like a leaning tower somewhere
Bananas and oranges only appeared at Christmas time
All chips were plain
Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking
Tea was made in a teapot using black tea leaves, and never green
Cubed sugar was regarded as posh
Fish didn't have fingers
None of us had ever heard of yogurt
Healthy food consisted of anything edible
Cooking outside was called camping
Seaweed was not a recognised food
'Kebab' was not even a word, never mind a food
Sugar was healthy and regarded as being white gold
Prunes were medicinal
Surprisingly muesli was readily available - It was called cattle feed
Pineapples came in chunks in a tin
Water came out of the tap.
(If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than for
petrol they would have been a laughing stock)
Things we never had on/at our table was elbows and hats

Two Amazing Franks and HMAS Perth

Kathryn Spurling

When I climbed into the bus it was nearly full. Onboard were the most amazing survivors - crew of the first *HMAS Perth*. I knew these men well by now after many interviews for my book *Cruel Conflict: the triumphs and tragedies of HMAS Perth 1*. I had delighted in their company and been inspired by their stories. I looked around for a seat and there were a few shouts: 'Here Kath', with a glint in their eye as they indicated their knee. Old sailors: well they just get older, but rarely lose that mischievous glint.

I sat in an empty seat beside one of the Franks. There were many Franks, but this blog is about just two; Frank Chattaway and Frank McGovern, remarkable men with fascinating stories. Both were survivors of not only their ship's sinking but dreadful years slaving on the Burma Thailand railway as prisoners (POWs) of the Japanese in World War II.



In Feb 1942, the Australian cruiser *Perth* was sent to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) as Japanese forces threatened. Australian authorities realized by then that the Japanese advance had been so swift that South East Asia was lost, but still they despatched one of Australia's major warships to appease Dutch authorities in the East Indies. On 27 Feb *Perth* was part of the Dutch, British and American warships trying to stop a massive Japanese armada in *The Battle of Java Sea*. The fleet, poorly led by a Dutch Admiral with no war experience, was overwhelmed and the only ships to escape were *Perth* and USS *Houston*.

Captain Hector Waller (RAN) was assured that Sunda Strait was clear by Dutch Intelligence, so he intended to take *Perth* and *Houston* through the Strait to Australia. The *Perth* crew were mostly war volunteers, young men in their late teens and early twenties, totally unprepared for what they were exposed to. The intelligence report was totally false and at 0100 on 1 Mar 1942, after a heroic battle, both Allied cruisers were sunk by an enormous Japanese fleet. One Australian sailor recalled; 'The din was terrifying and every now and again the ship lurched when hit by shell fire or torpedo'. Of the *Perth* crew of 681, 361 perished in the battle or went down with their ship. The remaining 320 struggled to escape the currents, wreckage and oil only to be captured by Japanese soldiers.

Able Seaman Frank McGovern lost his brother Able Seaman Vincent McGovern when the ship went down and the ensuing years he remembered as, 'hell on earth'. The approximately 22,000 Australian servicemen captured by the Japanese suffered terrible deprivation as they slaved on the railway and in Japanese factories and coalmines. Through malnutrition, disease, and ill treatment, 13,872, one third of the Australian POWs died. Of the 320 *Perth* crew, 106 died as POWs, 45 who survived the dreadful railway, perished when the transport taking them to Japan to labour in the coalmines, was mistakenly torpedoed by a USN submarine. >>>

Able Seaman Frank Chattaway, was born in Junee, NSW. He was a teacher at the Grong Grong School when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in Aug 1941 as a 20-year-old. His soldier brother, Jim, had already been killed near Tobruk. Frank couldn't swim so hoped whatever ship he was on didn't sink. Frank Chattaway was the only member of his *Perth* six-inch gun crew to survive the battle in Sunda Strait. 'After a short but fervent prayer, I jumped over the side', having ensured his lifejacket was fastened tightly first. As he thrashed in the water another sailor grabbed him and pulled him onto a raft. As the sun rose an island was sighted, and those on the raft decided they would swim for it. Frank was the only one to decline - he couldn't swim. In their attempt the sailors were caught by the strong current and swept out to sea. Frank Chattaway survived because he couldn't swim! The ensuing years as a POW working on the Burma-Thai railway tested Frank to the limit. Realizing he needed to keep his mind busy, and having been a mathematics teacher, he conjured up mathematical puzzles with which he pestered fellow POWs.



Frank with his wife Nell



On returning to Australia Frank married Nell and had two daughters and a son. Sadly, Nell died of cancer and Frank married Jan. He retired from teaching in Mar 1982 when Headmaster of Goulburn High School. In Feb 2010 Frank Chattaway turned 90 and artist Margaret Hatfield presented him with a portrait - the then and now of his life.

The story of Frank McGovern, was truly unbelievable. Each time I asked him details, I had to ask him to pause - too much incredible information and, I had run out of fingers for how many times Frank 'Mac' could/should have died. Saddened by the realization that his brother Vincent had died with *Perth*, Frank was all the more determined to stay alive - his mother

could not lose two sons. He found himself a POW of the Japanese and sent to the Thai/Burma railway. So many POWs could not endure those years. It made little sense, it was not the religious ones, the fit ones, the short ones, who survived - they all suffered the same appalling treatment, and death seemed indiscriminate. Frank 'Mac' figures he should have died too. He was then a 'chosen one' the Japanese terminology for the chosen fittest POWs selected to then travel to Japan to slave in coalmines and factories.

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Frank and other *Perth* sailors were part of a contingent of 1,318 Australian and British POWs forced into the fetid hold of the *Rakuyo Maru*. On the morning of Sep 12, 1944, the convoy was attacked by American submarines in the South China Sea. Prisoners were able to evacuate the ship. Japanese warships collected their own survivors but initially left the POWs in the water. Frank 'Mac' took charge of a lifeboat. Another sailor, a good mate, called to Frank to join him on his lifeboat. Frank began to do just that, but soldiers beat him to it and the boat was full. Frank returned to his own. The boats took different directions and his mate's lifeboat and all within were machine gunned by a Japanese destroyer. Later a more benevolent Japanese captain collected Frank and others from the water. He was again very fortunate, because many who were left in the oily ocean died. Some 150 POWs were rescued days later by the very submarines which had sunk them and around 500 were collected by Japanese warships. An estimated 1,159 POWs in the *Rakuyo Maru* died.

Frank McGovern continued his 'hell on earth' years in Japan, more of his *Perth* mates died of disease, beatings and malnutrition. The Allied bombing of Japanese cities killed more. POW camps were unmarked. Frank and a *Perth* sailor stood talking after a hard day's labour. Bombs fell, his mate was killed. Frank regained consciousness to find himself in water, unable to move his legs. He was pulled from the wreckage and left with other injured POWs. 'That was a long night'. as dawn came the other POWs were dead and he Frank was dragged to a hospital - a hospital by name only. There was no treatment given to Frank for his broken back and barely any water or food for him and the other two injured POWs with him. On the eighth day one POW was taken to the operating theatre and died. The next day the same thing happened. There was a shortage of blood in Japan and it had been decided POWs could be drained of theirs. Frank decided he was next and struggled to his feet assuring his captors he could work - with a broken back. He was spared and returned to a POW enclosure.

Surrender finally came and the US Air Force began to drop food parcels to the POWs. These came in massive drums. On hearing the aircraft, the POWs ran outside and waved. The drums were released and fell to earth. One dropped onto the POW beside Frank. Frank decided he would take shelter. 'You know Kath, I had been through a lot and I wasn't going to be taken out of this world by a bloody food parcel!' Frank returned, married, had a family and as of 2021 was 101 years young.



Two amazing Franks, with Frank McGovern and Frank Chattaway, and left an equally amazing Gavin Campbell.

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. The provision of welfare to Sub-Branch members and their families can be arranged through Community Support. Advice is available on a case by case basis to access services through DVA, My Aged Care, Centrelink and the ACT Government. For details contact the Sub-Branch office on 6285 1931.

Hospital Visiting: We no longer visit the three Southside hospitals automatically but, working with the Veteran Liaison Officers (VLOs) in these hospitals, volunteers visit hospital patients on a case-by-case basis.

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 each 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.