



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



The SERVICEMAN

First Published in January 1962

ANZAC EDITION

APRIL 2021



World War II veteran, 98-year-old Les Cook meeting Rhondda Vanzella OAM with Deputy President, Peter Eveille AM and your editor at the OGM Dinner on 23 Feb 2021

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Note: Front Cover special guest at the OGM Dinner Rhondda Vanzella OAM is the National President of the Australian War Widows Guild.

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The SERVICEMAN

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE WODEN VALLEY RSL SUB-BRANCH (INC)
RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

Editor:
Bob Cremer
14/27 Mulley St
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OFFICE BEARERS 2020-2021

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New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia

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Jim Gilchrist

Deputy President

Peter Eveille AM

Vice President

Vacant

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The Sub-Branch meets on the last Tuesday of each month except April and December at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Corinna St, Woden at 7.00PM. Membership subscription is due on 1st January annually and should be posted to the Grant Cameron Centre, 14/27 Mulley Street, Holder ACT 2611. Telephone Number for the Sub-Branch and "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 09:00-15:00



***FROM THE
EDITOR'S DESK***
Bob Cremer



After 30+ years, work undertaken by Past Presidents, the late Alex Reynolds and Bill Smith and the creation of the small group, 'The Corey Room Team', we have finally been able to print a comprehensive dedication to long-ago founding Sub-Branch member and WWI local Hero, Ernest Albert Corey MM and 3-Bars.

Alex and Bill spent many hours putting Ernie's story together and we were able to have it printed along with the dedication and naming of our meeting room as 'The Corey Room', and because of Covid restrictions, with a virtual video presentation filmed and produced by David Jenkins from Ghekkio Media.

Hopefully restrictions that have prevented us from doing all the things that we would like to do will gradually be lifted. We have a Queensland trip planned for the end of March, having to keep changing the date since July 2020 because of border closures and Covid concerns but with luck we should be able to travel this time. At least the restrictions have been good for local business and local tourism, as we have not been able to travel overseas - not yet anyway.

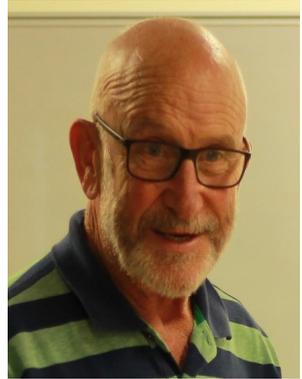
On Friday 22 Jan, along with Rania Kalimeris and Mick O'Donnell, I attended the funeral of Betty Cole, the wife of Sub-Branch member Jerry Cole. I initially met Betty while researching a story that Jerry wrote about the interment, in Westminster Abbey of "The Unknown British Soldier" in 1918, and a story written by Mick O'Donnell of Jerry's first meeting Betty, and time he spent in the Royal Marines, stories published in earlier editions of this magazine. The time spend with Jerry and Betty was very rewarding and I discovered during those meetings that Betty was a lovely lady and it was a pleasure to have known her.

The LEST WE FORGET wall sign was from an earlier edition when I visited what previous had been the Hall Village Public School where they had created a memorial to local area residents who had gone off to war. All the poppies were hand knitted and created a very distinctive and memorable display.



The President's Message

Jim Gilchrist



Welcome to the new year that I hope will be more normal than the previous 15 months or so. That said, we finished last year on a high when about a 100 members and guests enjoyed a good meal, in good company with just a little banter between friends, and a few true stories. I thank everyone who was involved in the planning and conduct of this event, the cost of which was offset considerably by a grant. It was an excellent way to finish 2020 and anticipate the good times to follow.

In the last edition of *The Serviceman*, I outlined many of the issues we had faced together last year and highlighted some of our achievements. Having applied a *business-as-usual* approach to manage our Sub-Branch and support our members and other members of the Veteran Community, we produced some excellent outcomes. In thanking all who contributed to these efforts for their contributions and patience, I remain grateful to everyone who coped so well with some interesting challenges.

I add that we have not missed a beat in the first few months of 2021. Our staff and volunteers continue to demonstrate resilience, perseverance and empathy with our members and clients. The Board is also applying some new practices aimed at improving our service delivery and management practices that will contribute to our overall sustainability. Of note, the Eddison Day Club celebrated its 17th Birthday in February and is now gathering each Friday, much as they did previously. The Club continues its relationship with the Canberra Irish Club and their future in using that venue is assured. As a complement to the work of the Welfare Team, Day Club volunteers continued to engage with their members who were at risk of social isolation as they remained housebound.

In consultation with the ACT Government, the Board recently cancelled the ANZAC and Peace Ceremony but will hold the Essay Competition that will honour the Centenary of the RAAF. Having held a wonderful OGM Dinner a few weeks ago, we are now planning the ANZAC Eve Dinner. While the nature and extent of the ANZAC Day Services at the Australian War Memorial is not yet clear, the Sub-Branch will hold a small ANZAC Day Service at Eddison Park that we expect will be supported by our members and the community. We are also helping some community organisations as they plan Driveway and other commemorative Services.

Since its formal opening in May 2020, *The Corey Room* continues to be a popular venue to host informal gatherings including the weekly coffee catch-ups each Friday and some events that provide for small groups to gather in a welcoming environment. During the COVID period, the Board and Executive met there, and we have hosted several small video meetings over the past few months. *The Corey Room* is an excellent asset that will improve steadily as we continue to develop it appropriately. I thank the small team that has planned and managed the establishment and growth of this facility so far.

>>>

Similarly, we have used our new training room (Room 36) for several training sessions. This is another excellent venue that we will use more frequently for our own purposes and as we host other organisations such as Open Arms. For example, the Welfare Team will be holding its information sessions there rather than in the shared space they have used previously. Although we are still unable to conduct face-to-face training for the GEARS Program, we have completed four sessions of the 12-week GEARS Program that has been facilitated remotely from their Adelaide HQ. We look forward to further sessions later in the year.

Subject to the availability of further grants, we expect to continue with the BeConnected and Social Arts programs that proved popular last year. We are also developing a small network of older members who are using enhanced telephone facilities through the Konnekt Program that helps people with hearing issues communicate by a mix of telephone and video technology. We are working closely with ACT Legacy to share our common interest in helping this group of people. I note that most of these initiatives were possible because of Federal and ACT Government grants. While some of these grants related to the COVID situation, we earned others through the support we have provided and continue to offer to our members and others.

While the grants and other offsets significantly reduced the need to drawdown on the AMF to support our operations, the Board is cognisant of the fact that we must still seek substantial and sustainable financial support if we are to maintain the level of services we have provided and that our members, clients and others expect of us. Having held several OGMs in the corridors of the Grant Cameron Community Centre (GCCC) in 2020 and January 2021, these meetings will return to the Canberra Southern Cross Club (CSCC) from the March meeting. Similarly, the Board has held its last two meetings at the CSCC. Concurrently, the Board continues to work on its organisational and management systems and is presently enhancing our computer and communications systems.

As noted elsewhere in this edition of *The Serviceman* and in our newsletters, the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Matthew Anderson, addressed the OGM dinner in February. This event built on the success of the Christmas lunch to entertain and inform some 80 members and guests. Other guests included the recently appointed CEO of the National Office, Brigadier Phil Winter (Retd), and the National President of the War Widows Guild, Rhondda Vanzella, who was also recently appointed to the War Memorial Council.

In the past few months, we attracted some new volunteers that will enhance our capabilities in both the compensation (claims and appeals) and welfare areas. We are also making room at the GCCC for staff and members of the War Widows Guild as they build their presence in the ACT. Similarly, we are liaising with some smaller membership based ESOs. With the generous help of the DFWA (ACT), we are opening an office for one of our compensation advocates in the LDK Retirement Complex at Tuggeranong. This will enhance the reach of our VSC without encroaching on the activities of other sub-branches.

In relation to Branch matters, the first Branch Council is due to meet in late March, with the Branch Congress and AGM due in mid-May. We look forward to hearing the outcomes of the Extraordinary Branch Congress (EBC) that was held on 11 December. >>>

We also look forward to learning more of the recent changes to the National Office, including the re-activation of the National committees.

We continue to receive referrals from a wide range of sources that, together reflect the quality of assistance we provide and the way we continue to meet the objects of our Constitution and of the League as a whole. In thanking our staff and volunteers who provide these services and support the day-to-day operations of the Sub-Branch, I also thank those who assist and collaborate with us in various endeavours. Specifically, I thank Legacy (ACT), DFWA (ACT), senior members and staff at DVA and those medical and other providers without whom we could not achieve the results we do.

OGM Dinner Tue 23 Feb 2021

Another successful event was held at the Canberra Southern Cross Club with a large group of members and invited guests attending. Regular MC Jack Aaron officiated and provided his usual selection of 'true stories' to keep everyone entertained.

After a short speech from the Sub-Branch President, Jim Gilchrist we then heard a talk from Guest Speaker, Matt Anderson PSM, Director of the Australian War Memorial on his first year at the helm after taking over from Dr Brendan Nelson.



Matt has had a chequered career, initially a Graduate from RMC Duntroon and then with the Department of Foreign Affairs as High Commissioner to the UK, Afghanistan and Solomon Islands as well as Samoa. He also had postings to South Africa, Papua New Guinea and with the Peace Monitoring Group on Bougainville. He was awarded the Public Service Medal for his role in leading the humanitarian and consular response to the 2009 Pacific tsunami.



Guest Speaker, Matt Anderson PSM and special presentation by Sub-Branch member Ross Smith to President Jim Gilchrist of a framed photo of the Long Tan Cross.



A selection of photos from the evening with members and guests able to enjoy themselves with the COVID restrictions beginning to ease a little and hopefully making 2021 a little better.

The Australia Day Medallions - 2021

Australia Day Medallions are presented to nominated recipients in the lead up to Australia Day each year. The Returned & Services League of Australia and its agencies have been the solely authorised private entity to host an Australia Day event within our NGOs.

This year an award ceremony and morning tea was held on Thursday 21 January at RSL Headquarters in Campbell. The President of ACT Branch, Mr John King made the presentations to three of the five recipients who attended.

Those awarded Australia Day Medallions in 2021:

Mr Max Brennan for services to the Woden Valley Sub-Branch sponsored Day Club
Mrs Julie Cronin for services to the Woden Valley Sub-Branch sponsored Day Club
Mr James Gilchrist, President, Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch for services to the RSL
Mr Andrew Properjohn for services to the Sub-Branch VSC Entitlements & Advocacy but who was unable to attend on the day. His award was accepted by the Sub-Branch President.





The President, Jim Gilchrist presented Andrew Properjohn with his belated Australia Day Certificate and Medallion in the Sub Branch Office on Thursday 28 Jan

AUSTRALIA DAY MEDALLIONS AWARDED IN 2021

Recognition of our Sub-Branch staff and volunteers are celebrated in this year's Honour's List.

Recipients this year were our President, ***Jim Gilchrist*** who has provided front-line leadership, commitment and dedication to the Woden Valley Sub-Branch for seven years. Jim has been the catalyst in improving governance procedures, setting policy and strategic direction, and negotiating and liaising with government departments regarding the advocacy and welfare of veterans and their families. His performance has been a primary reason the Sub-Branch is held in high esteem within the veteran, medical and government spheres.

Andrew Properjohn has been the first point of contact for veterans enquiring about the claims process for six years, from first enquiry through the whole claims and appeals process. He is also responsible for the general oversight and coordination of the advocacy team, its administration and many of its processes. Andrew's diligence, dedication and professionalism greatly assist the success of this critical element of our Sub-Branch.

>>>

A great double act in the service of the Eddison Day Club for a decade, **Julie Cronin** and husband **Max Brennan** were individually awarded Australia Day Medallions. Julie applies her knowledge and love of music, her personal contacts and her ability to engage people to become one of the key volunteers in this wonderful organisation. In particular, Julie sources the guests and speakers who entertain and inform our Day Club members at each of the 48 meetings held each year. Julie's contribution to these meetings is a major factor in making the Eddison Day Club one of the most successful Day Clubs in NSW and the ACT.

A Sub-Branch members since 1997, Max Brennan initially trained and worked as a volunteer pension officer who helped veterans obtain their entitlements. In February 2004, Max became one fo the founding members of the Eddison Day Club and has remained a member and volunteer for the ensuing 17 years of the Club's existence.

Max gradually took on senior roles as a coordinator and then the Chair of the Day Club Committee, a position he held for three years. In the past few years, Max has worked with other senior volunteers to encourage younger volunteers to assume the key leadership roles. With others, Max mentored the new leaders while continuing to assist with the general tasks required to support this vibrant organisation.

Member in the Order of Australia

At the coffee catch-up on Friday 5 Feb 2021 the President Jim Gilchrist presented newly appointed Member in the Order of Australia, William (Bill) James Kelly AM with a letter of congratulations from the President and Members of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch.

A congratulatory letter was also sent to Sub-Branch member Roger Wainwright OAM for the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia, also honoured in the Australia Day Honours List.



Christmas Lunch

After a very quiet year, the Canberra Southern Cross Club finally opened to allow larger groups to attend gatherings, so as a result we were able to celebrate Christmas 2020 with a lunch on Wednesday 9 Dec attended by almost 100 members and invited guests. Regular MC Jack Aaron kept the crowd amused with several, as you would expect 'True Stories' and a short speech was given by Sub-Branch President, Jim Gilchrist.

Due to the ongoing COVID restrictions and the uncertainty of being able to hold any event this year there were no new appointees to the Order-Of-Whatever-It-Is this year. However, we did arrange to take a group photo of those already appointed to the order.



President Jim Gilchrist with Sub-Branch patron, Dame Annette King with Kay Gilchrist and MC Jack Aaron and other guests enjoying a very pleasant event. Hopefully 2021 will be better so that we will be able to hold more events and functions without any restrictions, but I guess that depends on what path the Virus takes and how good we all are at keeping it under control.



A collection of photos from the day including a special photo (bottom left) of our Patron Dame Annette King in conversation with Terry Colhoun AM.



AIR FORCE 100

Centenary of Air Force



On 31 March 2021, the Royal Australian Air Force will mark 100 years of service to Australia. 2021 will be an important time to reflect on our enduring contribution to the security of Australia.

From our modest beginnings in 1921, The Air Force has grown into a potent, world class Air Force which Australia relies upon in both conflict and peace. When Australia needs us, we are ready to respond.

Air Force Centenary events will highlight the spectrum of air and space power capabilities in today's Air Force and Air Force's contributions to the Australian Defence Force's Joint Force effects more broadly as part of One Team, One Defence.

Air Force 2021 is planning a national series of events and initiatives that will honour the sacrifice and service of the last 100 years, demonstrate today's highly capable force, and foreshadow our continued evolution into the future.

Visit our Centenary website to learn more and stay up to date: www.airforce.gov.au/100

New Team Member in the Veterans' Support Centre

Rania Kalimeris

At the beginning of February this year, we welcomed Andrew Wyman, an intern from the University of Canberra who is currently doing his Masters Degree in Counselling.

Following in the footsteps of Scott Powers, Andrew has joined the Veterans' Support Centre to gain experience in the daily issues facing our community as well as supporting the Woden Valley RSL by adding to its resources base. In the short time he has been here, he has been exposed to a vast number of situations; from welfare support, to helping run, with colleague Jill Kelly, the Carer's Friendship Group on Tuesday 2 February.

Andrew is a great asset to have on our team. He has over 37 years of service in the Army (regular and reserve) and is currently employed in the ACT Government as a senior director in the Vocational education and Training Branch (Skills Canberra). He also has over 35 years of volunteer service and paid employment in youth development organisations, including Army Cadets and Scouts, where he is currently the Group Leader of 1st Murrumbateman Scout Group.

His wide experience will be of great benefit to us and our members. They will gain from his knowledge and experience in the counselling role he now aspires to undertake professionally.

Andrew will be working with us for 10 weeks, and during this time will give him exposure to our members and their issues and hope to use his skills and professional knowledge to better our support our members and their families.



The Carers' Friendship Group, Fay Neil, Val Brown, Jill Kelly, Andrew Wyman and Ailsa Brooke, and right with Peter Eveille, President Jim Gilchrist, Andrew Wyman and Rania Kalimeris.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH

OF THE RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE WILL BE HELD ON

TUESDAY 25th MAY 2021

The Rainbow Room, Canberra Southern Cross Club

commencing at 7:00PM



**The Returned and Services League of Australia
Woden Valley Sub-Branch Inc.**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 25th May 2021

AGENDA

1. Roll Call
2. Minutes of previous AGM [29th Oct 2020] – Read and Confirmed
3. Annual Report – President
4. Financial Statements – Treasurer
5. Welfare Report
6. Finance Committee
7. Motions on Notice
8. Declare all office positions vacant
9. Election of Board of Management in accordance with Section 3 of the Sub-Branch Constitution
10. Installation of Sub-Branch President and Executive
11. Closure of Annual General Meeting
12. Ordinary General Meeting for May 2021
13. Closure
14. Ode



**THE EDDISON DAY CLUB
REPORT AND 17TH
BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

Peter Sutton - Day Club Coordinator



Along with most of the social activities at the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch and elsewhere, the Day Club had to cease meeting on Friday 13 March 2020.

As mentioned in previous editions of *The Serviceman*, we established a 'telephone-tree' to maintain contact with our member and volunteers. Several members and volunteers were allocated up to eight other members to call on a regular basis to ascertain how they were coping, and if they needed further support. This system has been working well to keep people updated.

After discussions with the management of the Canberra Irish Club, we started having 'informal' lunches each Friday from the middle of July last year. These lunches were attended by between 15 and 20 people and allowed members and volunteers to re-connect after some months of isolation. Many of our members and volunteers went on one, two or all of the three bus excursions in November to Goulburn, Yass and Cooma. These were sponsored by a grant from the ACT Government and provided the opportunity for people to catch up with those they had not seen for some time and to get out of the house and town for a break.

On 18 December, a Christmas lunch attended by 34 persons, including one of our regulars, Ms Liz Lumb played Christmas carols and songs. Unfortunately, we were not permitted to sing along due to COVID-19 restrictions, which also prevented the monster raffle we normally had at Christmas functions to be held.

We started meeting again as a Day Club on 15 January 2021, but as a much changed Club. We do not as yet have guest speakers or entertainers. We have strict protocols in place to self-isolate and have a sign-in procedure with contact details provided. A choice of two meals is provided and served by staff from the Irish Club. They also serve coffee and tea to the tables.

We celebrated our 17th Birthday on 5 February. Mrs Mary Collier, made and iced a delicious birthday cake in traditional Irish colours of Green, White and Orange. Our patron, Mrs Sue Sarantos and Sub-Branch President, Mr Jim Gilchrist also attended. The cake was ceremoniously cut by Mary and Sue.

These meetings, though not being the same as had occurred in previous years, are still an opportunity for people to gather, have a few laughs and enjoy themselves. We have light exercises once again, co-ordinated by Mrs Shirley Gollings. We also sing our Club song written by the late Mr Bill Benson, and quizzes to solve, and a few jokes told by the co-ordinator for that day.

>>>

We hope that current restrictions may soon ease and, once the vaccinations have been provided to all of our members and volunteers, we may be able to return to some semblance of 'normal'.

The last twelve months have seen many changes to the way we enjoy our lives.

Please stay safe and keep well.



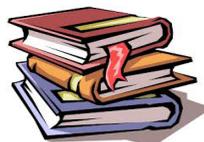
Top left, Mary Collier, President of the Canberra Irish Club, and Sue Sarantos, our Day Club Patron, in the process of cutting the very impressive Birthday Cake, and members who attended on the day. The photos were provided by Shirley Gollings.

Coffee Catch-up - Friday 8 Jan 2021

At our usual Friday coffee catch-up we had special reason to celebrate with cake and mince pies as we celebrated two special Birthday's as both were octogenarians; one already there with a couple of years added and another just entering the order. Firstly Bill Smith turned 88 on Sunday 10 Jan and Cora O'Donnell (better half of our Chaplain) becomes a octogenarian today, Friday 8 Jan. Happy Birthday to both and anyone else who is celebrating a birthday. Enjoy the occasion. Peter Sutton arranged for the OBE Certificate and Medal to be arranged for the special presentation.



2021 *Notes for the Diary*



RAAF Centenary	31 st March	Australian War Memorial
ANZAC Fundraising Appeal	19 th -22 nd April	Woden & Weston Volunteers required
ANZAC Eve Dinner	CSCC Top of the Cross	Sat 24 Apr 2021
ANZAC Day Service	Sun 25 Apr - 8:30AM	Eddison Park
ANZAC DAY March	Sun 25 th Apr	Australian War Memorial
Annual General Meeting	Tue 25 th May	CSCC Rainbow Room
Poppy Appeal	5 th -10 th November	Woden & Weston

ANZAC Day 2021 Ceremonies

The latest information received is that **ANZAC Day ceremonies** are hosted by the Australian War Memorial, with involvement of the ACT Branch of the RSL in the Dawn Service and the National ANZAC Day ceremony. Detailed information is available on the Memorial's website:
www.awm.gov.au and www.actrsl.org.au

Further details regarding the Dawn Service will be published once necessary arrangements have been concluded.

National Ceremony: The National Ceremony commences at 10:30AM with the Banner Parade, which steps off at 10:50AM.

ANZAC Veterans' Banner Parade: Contingent leaders need to complete the [online form](#) to ensure that their contingent is included in the Order of March. To help with overall arrangements, contingent leaders are requested as a matter of urgency to complete the form before **Friday 2 Apr 2021**. Information collected by the form will advise the March Coordinator of the number of marchers expected and to ensure your contingent is appropriately acknowledged.



FALL IN

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Leslie Boag, Brian Curren, Robyn Page, Bernard Richards,
Malcolm Grieve, Maurice O'Loughlin, Michael Andrews,
Neville Jones, Jason Bond, Robyn Cooper



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”.*

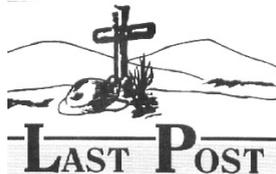
WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

The following was written by Pericles well over two thousand years ago, long before the first ANZAC Day, but only a stone’s throw from Gallipoli:

Each has won a glorious grave - not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes. Monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on far-off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven not on stone or brass, but on the living hearts of humanity. Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity can be only for the free, that freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.

Engraved forever at ANZAC Cove are these words from Kemal Ataturk, the Commander of the Turkish 19th Division during the Gallipoli Campaign and the first President of the Turkish Republic from 1924-1938:

“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives. You are now living in the soil of a friendly country therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmetts to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.”



David Adams, Peter MacFetters (nee Collas), Sidney Penhaligon

Canberra Southern Cross Club



WODEN

92-96 Corinna St
Phillip ACT 2606
6283 7200



TUGGERANONG

Cnr Howell & Pitman Sts
Tuggeranong ACT 2900
6293 7200



YAMBA SPORTS CLUB

Irving St
Phillip ACT 2606
6283 7300

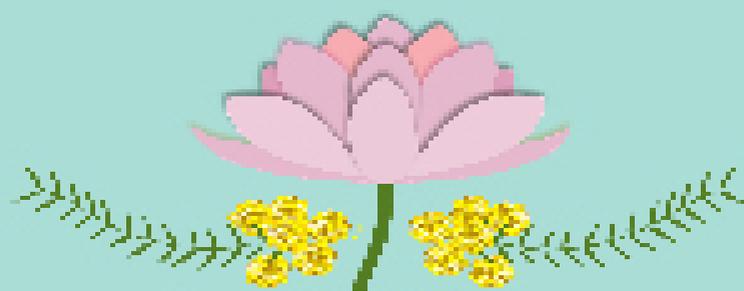


YACHT CLUB & CRUISES

Mariner Place
Yarralumla ACT 2600
6273 1784

www.csc.com.au

For the information of members and guests



Vietnam Requiem

OUR WAR ABROAD AND AT HOME

SAVE THE DATE

for the premiere of the

Vietnam Requiem

**Music to create a deeper understanding
of the Vietnam War**

Saturday 5 or Sunday 6 June 2021

1.30pm to 4.15pm

Llewellyn Hall, ANU, Canberra

Tickets on sale in early 2021

**For more information please visit
theflowersofwar.org**



Darwin Welfare
Terry Colhoun AM

When I turned 18 in December 1942, (pictured right) I volunteered for war service in the RAAF and was accepted to work as a clerk for the duration, and up to a year afterwards, wherever I was needed.



After a period in the Orderly Room at No.1 Signal School, Point Cook, I was posted to the Northern Territory for operational service, initially to work in the Operations Control Room at 79 Wing Headquarters. By Feb 1945, the tide in the Pacific War was flowing in our favour and 79 Wing began preparing to move to Morotai, an island in the Pacific, north-east of Timor. My hopes of moving with Wing headquarters were blocked, much to my disappointment, by the unit medical officer who said he didn't want me to move offshore, particularly as my eyes were suffering from tropical conditions, and from all-night work in low-level light.

So I was posted to RAAF Station Darwin, to work in the station orderly room. I arrived there in Feb 1945. It was a big change from living in a tent and trying to sleep during the day under a mosquito net with aircraft taking off close by, although I can't say that the meals improved.

A couple of months after I had settled into a new routine the orderly room sergeant told me the adjutant wanted me to attend the annual general meeting of the Airmen's Welfare Committee, apparently because he wanted to make sure of a quorum. I couldn't understand why he had picked me because I had never heard of this committee, and at the immature age of 19 had never attended any sort of committee meeting. However, a leading aircraftsman doesn't argue with his superiors so I went to the meeting.

There were about 20 NCOs and LACs there and in due course the adjutant arrived, took the chair and opened the meeting. From his annual report I learned that the Welfare Committee received one halfpenny per day for every airman on the base and this money was to be spent on airmen's welfare at the discretion of our committee. Apart from this, a new recreation hut was being built and the committee would be responsible for its use.

That was the good news - all of it news to me - but then the adjutant announced that the Station Commander had decided the next chairman of the welfare committee was to be an airman, rather than an officer. This person would chair meetings of the committee over the next year, would supervise the construction and furnishing of the new welfare hut and would host suppers for visiting entertainment groups.

There was silence on the floor when he asked for nominations. If anyone else knew this was coming, I certainly didn't and I had no intention of nominating myself or anyone else. I thought I was just there to help ensure there was a quorum.

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Then it all fell into place; the adjutant looked at me and said, “Terry, in the absence of any other name I am nominating you”. No one dared to challenge him so I was elected unopposed. I was stunned and awfully embarrassed when he called me to the stage. As I was in no fit state to chair the final part of the meeting I asked the adjutant to do so.

After the meeting the secretary (who had been re-elected) gave me the committee’s records with a useful briefing. We agreed that the welfare hut was our first responsibility so I asked the committee to meet on site to see what we needed to do. As it was almost ready for our ideas on furnishing we reviewed the plans, made some suggestions and before long had it ready for use. Then we came to the time to discuss the fund which, given the number of airmen on the base, had reached a respectable size. I can’t remember how many pounds there were in our account but I remember being surprised when the treasurer told me how much we had to spend. I asked the secretary to arrange a meeting, and took his advice that the Warrant Officer Catering should be present because he was hoping we would follow past practice and provide money for supplementary food for the Airmens’ Mess. The committee funded the purchasing of a number of suggested items, of which I can only remember tins of jam in flavours we didn’t normally get, and some fresh salad items. We also provided money to enhance our Christmas Dinner, although that was about six months away.

Early in August, with the welfare hut in use and the war coming to an end, I was summoned to the office of the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Ryan. He told me my operational service was finished and I could return overland to Melbourne (my home town) whenever I liked. But, because of my service as chairman of the airmens’ welfare committee he was offering me the chance to fly as a passenger on a plane that would be going to Brisbane. As this would take time to arrange I would be on leave on the base until a place was available. As I didn’t fancy doing the long trip by train I opted for the plane trip. I flew out of Darwin on the evening of 15 Aug 1945 sitting on the floor of a disarmed Flying Fortress.



But I never did enjoy the supplementary goodies the welfare committee had paid for, and I don’t know what was provided for Christmas 1945 in the Airmens’ Mess. But I don’t mind that as I had dinner on that Christmas Day with my parents and brothers in Melbourne, and that was much better whichever way I looked at it.

I don’t know what happened after the war to the beautiful welfare hut I helped to build and furnish. Perhaps someone who had served at RAAF Base Darwin since 1945 can tell me.

Terry, at RAAF Station, Darwin in 1945 aged 20.

The Canberra Museum and Gallery seeks your support!

William Dargie is an Australian artist who painted depictions of the Australian War Memorial. One of Dargie's paintings, pictured below, has become available for purchase and the Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) is looking for donations in order to purchase the piece.

The Australian War Memorial is a site of significance in the ACT and CMAG purchasing this piece of art would bring it home to its home city. This piece is also significant as this ceremony depicted in 1970 would have taken place while Australian troops were serving in Vietnam. This adds an additional layer of historical significance to the work and a further point for engagement with the local Veteran community.

CMAG is calling for donations of any value from community members and organisations to secure this piece in its archives for Veterans and the wider local community to enjoy.

Donations are tax deductible and donors can be recorded as contributing to the purchase of the artwork.

To donate, send an email with the subject heading William Dargie Donations to:

Sarah.Schmidt@act.gov.au with your address details and contact email and phone as well as how much you wish to donate.

Thank you for your assistance.



Australia Post New Stamps

Australia Post has released its new stamps commemorating the Centenary of The Air Force. The series depicts our first fighter, the S.E.5A, and our latest fighter, the F-35A at Point Cook, the birthplace of the RAAF.

Keep an eye out for the new stamps at AusPost shops or on an envelope near you!



Too Young to Die - Finding Michael Skerratt, RAAF 460 Squadron

Kathryn Spurling (Dr)

Adjunct Research Fellow - Flinders University

It was a journey which took me from the Sydney harbourside to a quiet and distant Dutch church ground. I stood and listened to John Skerrett. His front yard was small but what a magnificent view. A cruise ship, something which became rare in 2020, reversed carefully from its moorings, the decks full of happy voices, in marked contrast to the earnest tone of my storyteller.

John was one of three sons from Sydney's north shore. Brother Michael, had an unsettled urgency about him. Michael's first career choice did not go well, accountancy was found to be too boring. He spent time in the outback working as a Jackeroo. It seemed Michael could charm himself out of repercussions. John recalled the mischief and the charm.



When I had to collect him after a night of solid drinking, I was annoyed, but when I arrived and found him on a park bench looking decidedly dishevelled, he fixed me with that grin of his and my anger disappeared.

The Skerratt boys had been raised on *Biggles* books and movies showing heroes in leather flying helmets, white scarves streaming, fighting the enemy in flimsy World War I aircraft - glamourous and pure Hollywood. World War II promised a new direction and what Michael believed would be a great adventure. He badly wanted to become an aviator and was delighted when the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) agreed. The nineteen-year-old enlisted in November 1941, applied himself enthusiastically and became a pilot. John remembered how excited and determined Michael was when he returned for his brief 'pre-embarkation' leave before sailing out of Australian waters in January 1943, to qualify in the United Kingdom to fly Lancasters with Bomber Command.

Of all the Australian WWII military units, those in Bomber Command suffered the highest fatality rate. A crew needed to complete 30 operations before being rested. The chance of completing 30 operations, was extremely slim, but like so many of his peers, Michael felt invincible. It became time for Michael to choose a crew. The charm, grin and presence made that task easy and he chose Australians.

Victorian, Flight Sergeant (F/Sgt) Robert Dickie, 20, was approached to become the crew navigator. F/Sgt Graham Day also 20 from Canberra, became the rear gunner. F/Sgt Russell Stewart, 21, from Victoria, was asked to be his Wireless Operator. Flying Officer John Ward (437237) another 21-year-old, and former law clerk in Adelaide, quickly joined as Bomb Aimer. From Sydney, F/Sgt Cyril Deed, mid-upper air gunner, at 25, was the old man of the crew. The crew was delighted to join the Australian 460 Squadron on 3 Nov 1944 and welcomed the last crew member, Royal Air Force Flight Engineer, Sgt Thomas Newman. >>>



Michael Skarratt

They were a bunch of young Australians, good mates, and they should have been standing around in someone's backyard on this Christmas Eve 1944, drinking a cold beer and burning sausages on the barbecue. Their ages were 22, 20, 25, 21, 21, and their conversation should have been about cricket and the Boxing Day test - it would be great to beat the 'Poms' and retain the ashes. The only Englishman in the crew being outnumbered would not have dared disagree. Instead, this group of six, with bright futures, were in the land of snow and ice, being briefed on an operation to bomb railyards at the German city of Cologne.

The Lancaster Michael Skarratt was piloting was struck by anti-aircraft fire on the outward flight and exploded. With a full bomb load, death came instantly and there was very little left of the crew who had such pre-war bright futures. I assured John Skarratt that I would find Michael's grave and those of his crew in the Netherlands.

The search was not easy as the remains were not buried in one of the broad Commonwealth cemeteries which scar the European landscape.

As the Dutch population grew and church attendances fell, churches had been knocked down. This meant searching for a tall steeple was useless in the village of Oostelbeers. My companion, who will remain nameless, assured me she could understand and speak a little Dutch, so left the hire car to approach some road workers. There was much waving of arms and grinning and my companion returned to direct me, the driver, towards the cemetery. Except, she had the wrong translation and instead of a cemetery the workers thought she meant we were tired and, we were sent to a camping ground - over the ground rather than under the ground.

We did find the church and the graves of the one lone crew, but this was no usual gravesite. The tombstones were starkly white, but there was plenty of colour, flowers, greenery and small trinkets adorned the freshly raked soil. Across the front a sign fashioned from wood and foil spelt, 'Bedankt' (in gratitude). Further investigation revealed that Joke van Ham, the sixth form teacher at the local St Joseph School, ensured each year that her students learnt 'everything that happened' to these young Australians and Englishman, 'during their last flight'. Her students honoured these airmen, on each of the birthdays engraved in stone. On the anniversary of the crash 'the children read self-made poems in which you can hear much thankfulness for our liberty and a call for peace all over the world ... (they) make flowers for the graves ... we keep two minutes silence and also visit the crash site in the woods'.

As we stood and honoured these Australians in graves so far away, I remembered John Skarratt's parting words to me in Sydney. "You know our mother never recovered from losing Michael, Michael was the very best of us".

Part extract from: Kathryn Spurling, *A Grave Too Far Away: A Tribute to Australians in Bomber Command*, New Holland, 2012.

>>>



'Bedankt'

A painting by Margaret Hatfield

Pandemics in Perspective.

Bob Cremer - Classical Corner - All care but no responsibility for historical accuracy)

Many adjectives can describe our current historical reality, which materialized when it became clear that the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) would reach pandemic proportions: Surreal, scary, revelatory and humbling are all real and appropriate descriptions. Another term that appears frequently in news reports is 'unprecedented'. It is certainly understandable that the current crises may feel unprecedented. After all, it has been more than three generations since the last pandemic of comparable magnitude.

However, history assures us that our current global condition is most definitely not unprecedented. Humanity has confronted pandemic events many times before. An examination of our current state through a historical lens can perhaps offer an another adjective: ***hopeful.***

The Plague of Athens - 5th Century BCE.

Our earliest eyewitness account of a devastating disease event in classical antiquity comes to us from the Greek historian Thucydides, who describes in horrific detail his own experience during the 'Plague of Athens', an outbreak that occurred during a series of wars with Sparta at the end of the 5th Century BCE. Holed up in their walled city in an attempt to ward off a besieging Spartan army, the Athenians found themselves fighting a war against their human enemies without, while simultaneously confronting an unknown disease within. Some estimates suggest that the Athenian epidemic killed up to 25 per cent of the total population.

Historical demography is a tricky science, particularly when it come to ancient sources. We will probably never know the true mortality rate when it comes to the Plague of Athens, but Thucydides's chilling narrative brings home the impact with blunt imagery. According to his account, the sight of the constantly burning funeral pyres prompted the besieging Spartans to pack up and retreat, lest they, too, succumb to the contagion.

Canberra Services Club

Bob Cremer

In the early hours of the morning of Apr 11, 2011, the Canberra Services Club, adjacent to the Manuka Oval was destroyed by a devastating fire. The then 65-year-old structure was completely destroyed in the blaze and apart from the site being cleared, nothing further has happened on the site.

A sad consequence of this disaster is that the Kokoda Memorial, dedicated to the Papuans in New Guinea who assisted getting wounded Australian troops back to aid stations for treatment has been left amongst the ruins and surrounding weeds.

The 10th Anniversary of the fire is fast approaching and it is probably time that the Memorial of such historical significance to events in World War II be relocated to a more suitable site.



Over the years since the fire there have been several articles written about proposed land swaps with the ACT Government so that the Services Club can be rebuilt in a different location but this seems to have been abandoned with no replacement site as yet allocated. Whilst these negotiations will, no doubt continue until a suitable site is agreed upon, I think that the memorial, a significant memorial commemorating Australian soldiers and their Papuan helpers during WWII should be relocated - maybe even to a suitable space on or near ANZAC Parade.



As well as the memorial and the plaque, the site also contains an old Leopard Tank on display.



Discretion is the better part.

Les Cook

The So-called “Cold-War” between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies began heating up in the late 1940s, and it appeared more than possible that the world could soon be at war again. I had received my discharge from the AIF in Feb 1947, married in 1948, and was settling down to a normal life. I was happy with my personal life as it was, but in the circumstances did feel that I had an obligation to maintain some military connection in case the worst happened.

With the world at peace (albeit an uneasy peace) I wasn't prepared to return to full-time military service. The alternative was the Citizen Military Forces (CMF), a voluntary part-time military organisation that didn't intrude in any way on one's full-time civil employment, and didn't greatly affect one's personal life. CMF army service involved attending a parade one night a week, an occasional weekend, and two weeks full-time in a military camp each year. In the early days of WWII, many of our officers and senior NCOs had served in the AIF in WWI, and had continued to serve in the CMF in the intervening years. I enlisted in the CMF.

For obvious reasons our two weeks in camp were the only opportunity for us to use live ammunition and explosives. When we were in camp we spent one full day on the rifle range, with each soldier firing the rifle and light machine-gun (Bren) at targets. This day went without incident except that one of the Brens had seen better days and did cause some trouble. It didn't present any risk to the operator.

Another day was spent learning about and throwing the No 36 hand grenades (still called Mills bombs). Again each soldier was required to throw one live grenade. Surprisingly, for me anyway, some of the grenades failed to explode, and had to be destroyed later where they lay. It wasn't safe to move them.

The next and last introduction to explosive devices was the 2-inch mortar. During the war each platoon of the rifle companies had one of these weapons. They were fairly heavy, ungainly things with a cast-iron base and a barrel about 50cm long. Unlike the larger mortars they didn't have a fixed firing pin, were specifically designed to be operated from the prone position. A small brass knurled wheel activated the firing mechanism.

One of our officers delivered the lecture and pointed to a 44-gallon drum that had been set up as a target for a firing demonstration. An operator was required. Knowing a bit about me he said “You must have fired a mortar?” I said that I had done so, but probably only once. It certainly wasn't my specialty. He ordered me to take up a position behind the mortar which had three bombs lying beside it on the ground. I adjusted the angle of the barrel to suit the range to the target drum then lay down behind the mortar. The following exchange ensued:

Officer. “Number one gun, load!”

At this time, I removed the detonator protection cover from the bomb, dropped the bomb into the barrel, and aligned the sights.

>>>>

Me. "Number one gun on, Sir"

Officer. "Fire number one"

Mortar. "Click"

Officer. "Carry out misfire drill"

I shook the mortar to ensure that the bomb was seated on the base plate where the firing pin could contact it, and aligned the sights.

Me. "Number one gun on Sir"

Officer. "Fire number one"

Mortar. "Click"

I lay the mortar on its side, tilted it, and slid out the bomb catching it in my hand as it left the barrel. Of course the detonator was exposed, which makes this a slightly hazardous procedure. I examined the percussion cap in the charge fitted between the tail fins and saw that the firing pin had struck it.

Me. "The cap has been struck, Sir"

Officer. "Make that bomb safe and we'll try another bomb"

We did try the other two bombs with the same result, so the mortar lesson was over.

I can only assume that the trouble with the grenades and mortar bombs was that they were from old wartime stocks and had outlived their reliability. I don't recall having these troubles during the war. Nevertheless, I didn't feel that the risks were excessive, and I wasn't unduly perturbed at the time. There is always a risk in handling explosives, but there is an added risk if the devices are outdated or faulty. On reflection, I realized that I now had a responsibility to take into account, the thoughts and welfare of somebody else. My wife was pregnant with our first child. I could clearly see that it would be unfair to her if I were to continue to take unforeseen and unnecessary risks, so I resigned from the CMF.

Delayed Action.

Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham was aboard his flagship in a Mediterranean port when a cruiser made a very sloppy job of tying up to her berth. The cruiser's Captain, dreading the message he knew would come from his commander-in-chief, was very relieved, if puzzled, when it was delivered. It consisted of the one word, "Good."

Fifteen minutes later the Captain was interrupted with a supplement reading, "To the previous message please add the word 'God'."

Extract from Humour in Uniform. Jokes and Anecdotes from the War Years.

**Shoutout to everyone who can still
remember their childhood phone
number but can't remember the
password they created yesterday.**

© I Might Be Funny

You are my people.

SUB-BRANCH SERVICES

Sub-Branch Office Opening 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.

Entitlements 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 with regards to 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. Contact the Sub-Branch office on 6285 1931 for details.

Hospital Visiting. We no longer visit the three Southside hospitals automatically but, working with the Veteran Liaison Officers (VLOs) in these hospitals, visit 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. The arrangements between the Southern Cross Health Club (SCHC) and the Sub-Branch relating to gym use have changed. For details call the office on 6285 1931.

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

Burrangiri Veterans Get Together. Held at Burrangiri Day Centre, Rivett every third Thursday of the month - 10:30AM to 1:30PM. Contact Welfare Office for further details.

Carers Friendship Group. The Carers Friendship Group meets on the first Tuesday of each month for a coffee catch-up in The Corey Room. Details on 6285 1931.

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

Health Care Professionals in Canberra Hospitals

Your DVA Liaison Officers, all Registered Nurses, work with health professionals to provide assistance to DVA widows and veterans during time spent in hospital. They are available to discuss post-discharge care and support, and will liaise with DVA to provide any necessary equipment or aids.

Canberra Hospital: Deanne Mitchell and Rhondha Capamagian at Canberra Hospital and can be contacted on: (02) 5124 3696 or VeteransLiaison-TCH@act.gov.au

Calvary Public & Private Hospital, Bruce ACT. Suzanne McGuinness on 0448 895 600 or suzanne.mcguinnessbutler@calvarycare.org.au

Calvary John James Hospital: Dimity Commens on (02) 6229 2148 or Dimity.Commens@calvarycare.org.au

National Capital Private Hospital: Louise Criddle on (02) 6222 6753 or Louise.Criddle@healthscope.com.au

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ANZAC COMMEMORATIONS 2021

ANZAC APPEAL

Volunteers are required to sell ANZAC Pins at Woden Plaza and Cooleman Court during the week prior to ANZAC Day. This is a very important fund raising event and volunteers are required to assist.

Names to Sub-Branch Office 6285 1931

HOSPITALISATION

Members without DVA entitlements are asked to let our Sub-Branch Office know of impending hospitalisation for themselves or their partner so that they can be included on our visiting lists.

ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Dawn Service: The Dawn Service commences at 05:30AM in front of the Australian War Memorial. It is suggested that visitors should arrive from 4:30AM onwards.

Eddison Park Service: A Service by Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch will be conducted at 8:30AM at the Memorial Obelisk.

ANZAC Veterans' Banner Parade: See details on Page 20 for Banner Parade March.