



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



The SERVICEMAN

First Published in January 1962

ANZAC EDITION

APRIL 2022



Painted Silos at Devenish, Victoria. Artwork unveiled on ANZAC Day 2018, depicts a stunning image of a WWI nurse and a female medic in the AMF. Unveiled on ANZAC Day 2019, is a tribute to the Australian Light Horse who served in the Second Boer War and in WWI. Fifty young men and women from the Devenish community enlisted in WWI. This memorial is to honour the seven Devenish diggers that never made it home. *Painted by Melbourne Street Artist, Cam Scale.*

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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
Holder ACT 2611



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OFFICE BEARERS 2021-2022

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New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia

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The Sub-Branch meets on the last Tuesday of each month except April and December at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Corinna 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.

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



Almost at the end of February 2022 and things are starting to improve with the lifting of restrictions on gatherings and we even have our coffee catch-ups underway again. A little bit slower with the dinners and Day Club meetings but we need to proceed cautiously to protect our members and others who are involved in Sub-Branch activities.

However, just when it is starting to get better along comes a new Covid variant, BA.2 to help confuse the current situation. We will just have to wait and see what the consequences of this will have on us. Hang in there folks, it will get better! - just take care of each other.

A quick trip down into country Victoria to see the painted Silos in various locations in small country villages was well worth the visit and something that everyone should see. The scale and amazing detail of the paintings on these mainly unused silos was undertaken by a variety of artists and subjects. Well worth the visit, especially the Devenish memorials to WWI and Sally (below). Although it was a quick trip to see the some of the silos, a revisit is planned to see more of the paintings included in the Australian Silo Art Trail.

We also visited the ‘Spanner Man’ where he has made many sculptures of people, birds, flowers etc, all from old spanners welded together to create the various objects. Very impressive.

It is a good feeling to be able to get out again and visit other locations although we are still reminded of the possible danger from Covid, so we still need to take care.



“SALLY”
Explosive Detection Dog No 475
Afghanistan M.T.F.2 Sept 2010-Jun 2011
 Sally was assigned to:
Sapper T.W. Trewin in March 2010.
I Question not your Commands
I Follow faithfully wherever you go
I Share the danger of your domain
I Pledge my loyalty no matter what.
And will readily lay down my life for yours
For in this moment we are one.
Dedicated to all Explosive Detection Dogs.

ANZAC 2022 Edition
RSL Woden Valley Sub-Branch
The President's Message



ANZAC Day is nearly upon us and not long after that, we are due for our AGM. How time flies. Hopefully and despite the building work at the AWM, the COVID restrictions will ease sufficiently for the National commemoration services to return to the level of dignity they deserve and for which we all strive. Details of these activities and the AGM will be advised separately, in this edition of *The Serviceman* and in newsletters that will follow.

After a successful and joyous Christmas party in early December, and a well-deserved break for our staff and volunteers, with renewed enthusiasm and plenty of energy, we reopened the office on the 5th of January. However, COVID struck again, and we reverted to a semi-lockdown mode for a few weeks until the ACT Government eased its restrictions. Nonetheless, work continued, and most of our operations kept on going. Unfortunately, however, we had to cancel an OGM, a dinner and some of the informal gatherings that are part of our fabric.

Sadly, two of our members lost their long battles with illness and passed away during the Christmas period. In providing Funeral Tributes that were live streamed for each of David Kibbey and Adrian Roberts, we were at least able to farewell them appropriately. Although it might seem odd to say so, I find the Funeral tributes to be one of the most satisfying aspects of my role with the Sub-Branch. As other members have expressed similar views about the provision of funeral tributes, I commend this task to any prospective volunteers.

As most of you know, last year the Government convened a Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Last October, I presented the views of our members and veterans whom we advise and assist, in an ACT Branch report that was part of RSLA's submission to the Royal Commission. Since then, the ACT Branch President and I have met regularly with a Working Group that oversees the RSL's engagement with a contribution to the Commission. In my view, this Working Group and its contribution to the Commission have demonstrated a unity of purpose in the two key objects of the League as the National President has drawn all branches together in a way and to a level I have not seen for many years. I look forward to the League continuing to demonstrate its leadership across the Veteran Community and across all ESOs through this process and with other initiatives that RSLA has introduced.

From informal feedback, I believe that members appreciate the newsletters that inform our members of key issues as they arise and help mitigate the adverse effects of the COVID situation. In thanking Alex Solecka and Joyce O'Brien for their efforts in producing these documents, I congratulate Alex for her editorial skills. Similarly, we are maintaining some of the initiatives we introduced last year, such as the call rosters and small gatherings. Please stay alert for more information about these gatherings as we return to a more, and perhaps, new normal in the coming months.

>>>

Although we were again unable to hold the ANZAC and Peace Ceremony this year, we look forward to the ANZAC Eve Dinner, at which we will welcome the National President, Greg Melick, as our guest speaker. We will also hold a brief commemoration service on ANZAC Day at Eddison Park.

I thank Bill Kelly and others for continuing to catalogue our book and memorabilia collection in *The Corey Room* as we develop this room as a library, a popular meeting place and a board room. We intend to apply for a small grant to continue this work.

As mentioned in previous reports and at meetings, various grants have provided breathing space as we continue to seek sustainable external financial and other material support to assure our sustainability and maintain our ability to meet the current and expected workloads. The Board is waiting for details for a new grant to be released soon as we hope this might provide an opportunity to obtain funds that would be available over 2-3 years.

Having recently held our first OGM for the year, I thank the more than 40 members who participated in the meeting either in person or by proxy. The meeting overwhelmingly accepted the Board's recommendation to remove the limit on the tenure for the president, secretary and treasurer. In acknowledging the merits of having a limited tenure for these positions, the Board requested more flexibility to retain key members in positions that provide a corporate memory and stability for our governance and management systems. This will assist the evolution of the Sub-Branch to meet the challenges of the future, while similar developments will continue to occur within DVA, the League as a whole, other ESOs and the broad Veteran Community.

I am pleased to report that the ACT Branch recently held its first Council meeting since July 2021. Although there was a limited agenda, the meeting was fruitful, it provided some new faces and was held in good spirit that augurs well for the future. Similarly, I note that I have been liaising productively with the Branch President in relation to the Royal Commission and some recent media releases, including those relating to the need and options for a veteran wellbeing centre to support the ACT and region. While this proposal raises many issues and potential benefits, I believe the system would be well served if it supported the two Veteran Support Centres that already provide most of the support required by veterans and their families in the ACT and region, and Legacy that continues to support its beneficiaries. Hopefully, we will be canvassed for our opinions on the actual issues we believe need to be addressed before someone reinvents an old shaped wheel.

In thanking all of the staff and volunteers who provide our services or support the day-to-day operations of the Sub-Branch, I offer special thanks to Bob Cremer who continues to produce and edit this magazine. As he has held this position for about 16 years, we need to find someone who might be available to ease into this important role with a view to assuming the position when Bob retires gracefully. In closing, I look forward to seeing many of you at our ANZAC Eve dinner and other activities that will arise in the coming months. I wish all of our members, their families and our friends good health and good cheer, especially those who are struggling with their health or that of their partner, other family members or their friends.



*The Hon Andrew Gee MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel
Federal Member for Calare*

***MEDIA RELEASE - 13 February 2022
PAYING TRIBUTE TO OUR 'NASHOS'***

Monday 14 February marks National Servicemen's Day, when we honour the hundreds of thousands of young Australian men who served our nation through compulsory military service after the Second World War.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said it was important to recognise those who stood up when called upon to defend our country.

"Australia's 'Nashos', as they are affectionately nicknamed, made a significant contribution to our nation's defence forces and rightfully wear the title with pride," Minister Gee said.

"I encourage all Australians to take time to reflect on the service and sacrifice of these men and ensure they continue to be appropriately remembered.

"The idea of compulsory military service would seem foreign to many Australians, particularly younger generations, but between 1951 and 1959, and again between 1964 and 1972, it was a reality for many young Aussie men," Minister Gee said.

"Around 227,000 men completed the compulsory six months' recruit training during 1951-1959, but it was in the second period from 1964 when 'Nashos' were deployed in significant numbers. More than 804,000 men registered between 1964 and 1972, with more than 63,000 called up to serve. Of these, nearly 19,500 served in Borneo and Vietnam and the remainder in support units in Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Australia. More than 15,000 served in the Vietnam War, where some 200 died and over 1,200 wounded."

"It is a little known fact that from 1966 Australian infantry battalions in Vietnam were typically comprised of an equal mix of regular soldiers and National Servicemen. At the time, most 20-year-old Australian men were required to register and were then selected for National Service through the infamous 'birthday ballot', in which they were randomly selected by their date of birth."

"My uncle Geoff was a Nasho, who served his country at Nui Dat in 1967. My family and I are incredibly proud of his service, as all Australians should be very proud of our 'Nashos' who answered the call to serve their nation. They personify our Australian value of service above self," Minister Gee said.

WHAT ANZAC MEANS

*By Senator G.F. Pearce
Minister for State for Defence*

The knowledge of what they have already achieved must prove a mighty factor in the future success of our Australian forces in the field. What we lacked in army traditions before this war, Australian soldiers have more than supplied in the meaning of the word ANZAC, the significance of which stirred the world on an April day in 1915, and has not lost, and is never likely to lose, its fervent grip on the minds of admirers of brave men. And it is to be the meaning of the Gallipoli Campaign in this connection that I would direct attention in this voluminous record of ANZAC achievement during the first phase of Australia's active participation in this colossal conflict.

Almost two years have passed since the historic landing, and I can but repeat that to the peoples of Europe the thought of war was ever present to the popular mind; but to the Australian, born and bred in an atmosphere untainted by war, living amid peaceful surroundings, and desirous of remaining on terms of friendship with the rest of mankind, the word itself had a jarring sound.

Yet the German challenge to the Mother Country finds 285,000 of her Australian sons who have voluntarily wrenched themselves from their parents, wives and friends, and from comfortable and cheerful homes, to answer the call of their country to fight the Empire's battles on distant shores.

Nor has the thunder of the cannon been necessary to inspire Australians with a conception of their duty, and the explanation of it all is that we have inherited to the full that spirit of our forebears, which enabled them, not so long ago, to tear themselves from homeland firesides to shape careers in this great island continent, and to overcome with indomitable pluck the awful hardships of a pioneering life.

For generations to come the story of the Australian troops to the battlefields of Europe and Asia will ring in the ears of English-speaking nations. The chronicler of the future will provide many thrilling pages of history - magnificent material for the moulding of the youthful Australian character.

A distinguished military officer told us before the war that Australians would require to be in a majority of two to one in meeting a foreign foe on our own shores; but the furious onslaught that accompanied the landing at Gallipoli, the bitter fighting and terrible trials of the occupation, and the wonderful skills that made possible the bloodless evacuation have shown us that the Australians carried out a feat of arms not excelled by the most highly trained regulars of any nation of the world.

*Speech by Senator G.F. Pearce
Federal Parliament House,
March, 1917*

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCH & THE END OF 2021

On Wednesday 15 December we celebrated the end of 2021 with a Christmas lunch in the Orion Room at the Canberra Southern Cross Club with 80+ members and invited guests attending. Good company, good food and a very pleasant afternoon.

MC Jack Aaron was in charge of proceedings and kept everyone under control and entertained with his usual true stories. Sadly, this was also a farewell to our Rania Kalimeris who after four years as Volunteer Coordinator is leaving to visit Greece and will be undertaking further studies on her return. We have all enjoyed her happy and helpful attitude in the office and she will be missed by all. However, with music provided, Rania finished with a dance with Les Cook.



This event was the first after a long break of lockdowns, having to wear a mask, QR codes and the like so we all hope that 2022 will be the start of things getting better, although it probably is a little early to be rushing our and partying, especially with Delta and the latest Omicron as well

to deal with.

I recall someone several years ago saying that life wasn't meant to be easy. Previous Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser was right about that!





A few photos from the day and of course the group photo of all those previously inducted into the OOWII with new member, Alex.



A local Memorial in Wangaratta

Recognition of Remembrance Day

Sub-Branch Secretary, Greg Kennett

Last year, a friend told my wife and I about one of her grandsons, Eamon, writing to his overseas school principal to ask if the school might recognise Remembrance Day 2021. While visiting Australia in January 2022, I invited Eamon, his brother and grandmother to visit the Sub-Branch office to have a chat and to look at our memorabilia in the Corey Room. While talking to Eamon, I was so impressed with his knowledge of, and interest in, not only Remembrance Day but the World Wars and other conflicts in which Australia has participated. That a boy of his age would feel so strongly about Remembrance Day and what it represents shows that the younger generations do care. The following is Eamon's approach to his school. Some details have been deleted for privacy reasons:

Remembrance Day is a very important day to me and to so many others. I have always thought that to prevent such horrible conflicts from happening again, my generation should be educated.

With my beliefs as such, one can imagine that I was shocked when I learned that my school (an international school with students from a multitude of nations) has never performed a Remembrance Day service and never mentions the significance of November 11. I have only been at the school for two Remembrance Days. The first, in 2020, shocked and confused me. However, I dismissed my 'discovery' as I thought that a service was not occurring because it would be irresponsible to gather in a big group. But, when it happened again in 2021, I thought that, and still think that the school has no excuse as we were remotely learning. I asked a friend (who had been at the school for five years) if the school had ever performed a Remembrance Day service. He replied; "What is Remembrance Day?" I immediately sent the following email to my Principal;

"Good afternoon (Principal's name)

Thank you for taking the time to open this email.

I am writing to discuss Remembrance Day. During my time at (School's name), there has been no mention of Remembrance Day. I do understand that (School's name) is a place for everyone, no matter who they are, but I think that is all the more reason that Remembrance Day should be discussed. Remembrance Day is about understanding how war is pointless and devastating for all those involved no matter where they are from. Remembrance Day is also both a warning and a celebration. A warning - for future generations. A celebration - the world prevailed and worked together to end one of the most devastating conflicts in human history.

For these reasons, I think that Remembrance Day should be discussed at (School's name).

Again, I would like to thank you for reading my email."

My Principal responded the next day, saying that Remembrance Day did align with the School's core values. She then explained that she was going to send a copy of my email to the Senior Leadership Team and that I should receive a second email from them.

To this date, I have not received any further response from the Principal or the Senior Leadership Team.

Eamon, age 12.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH

OF THE RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE WILL BE HELD ON

TUESDAY 31st MAY 2022

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 31st May 2022
AGENDA**

1. Roll Call
2. Minutes of previous AGM [25th Oct 2021] – 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 2022
13. Closure
14. Ode



THE EDDISON DAY CLUB REPORT AND 18TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Peter Sutton - Day Club Coordinator



The COVID pandemic has greatly affected the operation and continuance of the Eddison Day Club, as it has also affected all aspects of our lives. At the outbreak of the virus, we had to suspend our meeting in early March 2020.

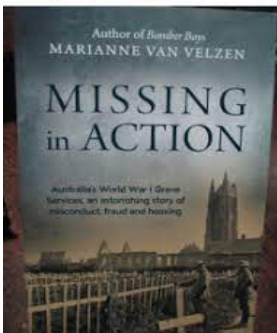
We began meetings again in late July, only meeting for lunch, with reduced numbers - no self service coffee and no guest speakers or entertainers. We had a Christmas lunch in December, before we ceased meetings until early 2021.

The year 2021 was a roller-coaster due to several lockdowns and dealing with new restrictions. This eroded the confidence of both members and volunteers. We persevered with the lunches and the opportunity for people to come out and interact with others that they know. We had a small Christmas lunch at the end of 2021, again with small numbers.

So far this year we have only had small numbers attending the lunches. We had a small number attending our 18th Birthday on 4 February with our patron, Mrs Sue Sarantos and several others.

We are determined to continue meeting for lunches to keep the Eddison Day Club viable as an outlet for our members and volunteers. We realise it is a challenge with the number of infections in the general community, but unless the option is there to socialise, the Day Club will cease to operate as has so many other Day Clubs and community groups in the past couple of years.

Those people who feel comfortable and safe are welcome to join others for our lunches at the Canberra Irish Club each Friday at 12 Noon.



Military History Book Review

Peter Sutton

I have just finished reading a book on the Australian Grave Commission (AGC) titled “Missing in Action” (2018) written by Marianne van Velzen who also wrote “Bomber Boys” (2017). Both books are published by Allen and Unwin. The author was born in the Netherlands and grew up in Australia. She then returned to Europe and later became a journalist.

>>>

The book opens with the story of Mr Fabian Ware, who was 45 when World War I began in 1914. He had studied in both Britain and France, obtaining a BSc degree. He attempted to enlist but was rejected as the enlistment ages were restricted to between 18 and 38. Ware had a friend named Lord Milner with whom he was discussing the war with one afternoon. He suggested that Ware join the British Red Cross that did not have an age limit.

Through Milner's influence, Ware was appointed Head of the British Red Cross Ambulance Service in France. Nothing had prepared him for the carnage that confronted him when arriving on the battlefields there, dead and dying everywhere. He quickly arranged cars and vans to collect and deliver the wounded to aid posts.

Once this was done he turned his attention to arranging burial of the dead. This was a mammoth task as in one case 35,000 deaths occurred at Mons. By the end of the war there were 587,000 graves that had been identified in France alone and 559,000 casualties listed as having no known grave. Ware envisioned a single nation, from all walks of life, from all parts of the world united in death, with every grave, no matter the rank, identical to the next. Three prominent architects were appointed to design the graveyards and headstones. The work continued until 1922-23.

The text of the book then details the personalities and various people who were involved. The AGC then morphed into the Australian Graves Services, linked with other nations and eventually became the Imperial War Graves Commission, established in May 1917.

Along the path there were scandals and bogus body identifications that instigated two inquiries, one in France, the other in England. The eventual outcome was the establishment of all the well maintained war cemeteries scattered throughout the battlefield areas in Europe.

It is an astonishing story of Australia's World War I Grave Services misconduct, fraud and hoaxing. The book is an intreaing read for anyone interested in military history.

Speech by Wendy Townley

At Eddison House, Canberra Grammar School held
in conjunction with the 60th Anniversary of Eddison House.
(Wendy is the daughter of Diana, the oldest Eddison daughter)

Good afternoon everyone. It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon at the unveiling of this wonderful mosaic depicting the Eddison sisters right beside their brothers. A great honour to the family.

Diana, Pam and Marion, all strong determined women, who came from a very close knit and hard working family. I think the devastating loss of their three brothers defined their lives in a way. They had to support their parents and each other in that terrible grief, which they did with courage and resilience and determination to keep going at all costs. They continued to live their lives with this positive attitude, which stood them in good stead over the years. >>>

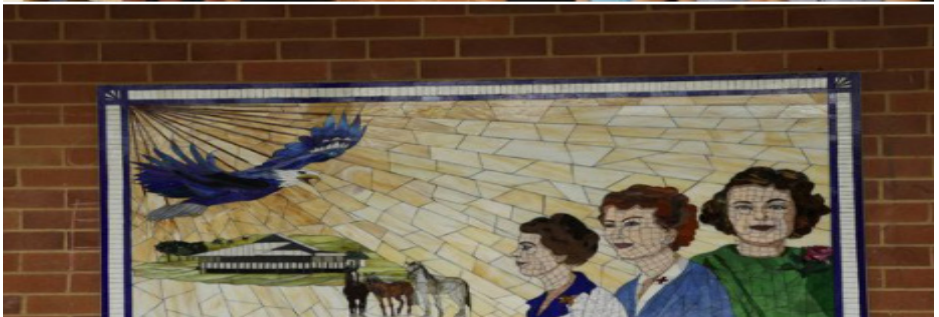
Our mothers were role models for all their children, Di to Anthony and myself, Pam to Sue and Geoff and Marion to Penny and Fionna. I think they instilled into all of us their strong commitment and loyalty to family and community. They loved us all unconditionally, however, were never backward in administering a whack to the backside if we got out of line, which in our younger years was a fairly regular event.

They all adored their grandchildren who had them wrapped around their little fingers and got away with far more than any of us did when we were young. All three were very community minded and were involved in many different organisations, primarily both the Grammar schools. They were all delighted when Eddison House was formed and continued to support it all their lives. They told many stories of their brothers over the years when they attended special Eddison House dinners and inductions of new house captains.

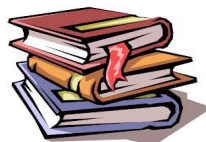
My cousin Sue has continued with this close association which she really enjoys. All three girls shared a love of the land, and although none of them lived on farms, this love was expressed in the wonderful gardens they all nurtured. Their gardens were always full of plants they had from friends and family, which always brought memories and stories of all those people.

I think you can see how these three incredible women lived their lives and they have passed down all those values of strength, courage, humour, loyalty, love of land and family to all of those following.

On behalf of all my family I would like to thank John, Bill and Max for their input to this project and to Tina, thank you for your hard work on this awesome mosaic to the memory of our mothers.



2022 *Notes for the Diary*



ANZAC Fundraising Appeal	19 th -22 nd April	Volunteers required
ANZAC Eve Dinner	Orion Room CSCC	Sat 24 Apr 2022
ANZAC Day Service	Sun 25 Apr - 8:00AM	Eddison Park
ANZAC Day Veterans' March	Assemble - 9:30AM	Limestone Avenue on the Western side of the AWM
AGM/OGM	Tue 31 st May	Corey Room - 2PM
Poppy Appeal	5 th -10 th November	Volunteers required

An article from one of the British National daily newspapers

Readers were asked: "What it means to be British?"

Responses varied but the winner was from a Swiss entrant.

"Being British is about driving a German car to an Irish pub for a Belgian beer, then travelling home, grabbing an Indian curry or a Turkish kebab on the way, sitting on Swedish furniture watching American television shows on a Japanese TV. He buys a holiday home in Spain, Skis in France and has a Romanian au-pair.

And the most British thing of all?
"Suspicious of anything Foreign"

Recent statistics provided information that women speak 30,000 words each day. In comparison however men only speak 15,000 words. Apparently the reason for this discrepancy is that women have to repeat everything they say!



FALL IN

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Ross White, Beverly Wright,
William Wilson, David Nolan



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”.*

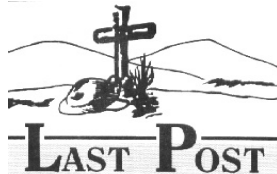
WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

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.”



Edward Fleming, David Kibbey, Francis Roberts, Ronald Tucker,
Neill Walker, Olive Sekoranja, Brian Cooper

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

Just A Land Girl

Sue Sarantos

Pamela Hamilton Eddison Yonge died on 23 May 2019, aged 97, the last member of the greatest generation of the Eddison family who once grazed sheep in the heart of Canberra. Beloved mother, adored grandmother, cherished aunt and great aunt, local historian, champion golfer and smart bridge player, Pammie grew up on the family farm, Yamba, in the Woden Valley.

Despite extraordinary family tragedies, including the death in World War II of three older brothers she worshipped, Pammie was a glass half full person. She was the keeper of the family history and the family jokes. She spent much of the last fifty years telling Yamba stories to the family, to the students of Canberra Boy's Grammar School where Eddison House commemorates the brothers, Tom, Jack and Keith, and to anyone with a passing sense of humour or an interest in history.

Yamba was a soldier settler block, won in a lottery by Pammie's parents, Captain and Mrs. W.H. Eddison (Mrs Eddy). Captain Eddison served at Gallipoli and in France in World War I. Despite disastrous droughts, fires, plunging wool prices and the lost young men, Yamba supported the family from the 1920s through the war years to 1955. The farm's best lucerne paddock is now Eddison Park.

Life on Yamba was hard work, but Pammie's memories were of laughter. Childhood was a parade of animals with big personalities. Poddy lambs rejected by their mothers, were raised inside the house, two got so fat and spoiled that they required a chauffeur to get to the Yarralumla shearing shed; sick piglets took over the kitchen in winter, and there were always horses. Horses to plough the fields, horses to pull the sulky that Mrs Eddy drove to Manuka for shopping, and ponies for the children to ride over Red Hill to the Grammar Schools. A family favourite pet was a currawong, Margaret, an excellent mimic who drove the sheepdogs crazy by whistling commands whenever she chose, and once remarked to a visiting reverend 'by Christ boy you had better hurry up'.

As she told it, Pammie was 'just a land girl'. To her disappointment, a bad thyroid kept her out of the Navy and as each of her brothers joined up, Pammie and her sisters, Diana and Marion, worked longer and longer hours on the farm. But Pammie chose to remember the dances and the tennis, the picnics and pictures, the neighbours who lent a hand and the handsome Duntroon cadets.

Life after the war was adventurous. Together with Robert Hancock, Pammie's first husband who joined the Department of Foreign Affairs after his war, she lived in New Zealand and New Caledonia; experimented with using her notoriously green thumb to cultivate fine daffodils in Victoria, and returned to globe-trotting with stints in both India and Bangladesh before returning home to the Canberra she loved. Together Bob and Pammie had two children, Sue and Geoff. After Bob's death, Pammie married Paul Yonge, one of those handsome Duntroon Cadets, (also predeceased), and together they created a happy life in Mawson, where Pammie tended roses and grew vegetables, fed galahs, welcomed family, played a little golf, and watched over the valley.

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Pammie loved golf, and she played the way she lived - drama free and always an optimist. She played with terrific energy and skill, it was always luck when she did well, her fault when things went wrong. The people playing with her mattered most. Throughout her life conversation with family and friends and a good joke mattered more than winning. She had nothing to prove, but woe betide anyone who underestimated her.

She never dwelled on sad times, she believed in getting on with it. She believed you make your own luck in this world, but a good laugh with family certainly helps.

Lest we forget.

Pammie's parents, Walter and Marion, her three brothers Tom, Jack and Keith, two sisters Diana and Marion, her husbands Bob and Paul, and brothers-in-law Frank Prance and Smoky Douglas predeceased her. She is survived by her daughter Sue, son-in-law Othon, her son Geoff and daughter-in-law Melissa, and grandchildren Isabella and Sasha, and three generations of loving nieces and nephews.



Note from the Editor:

Walter Herbert Eddison

Blocks 132 & 28A Woden District - *'Yamba'*

Walter Herbert Eddison was born in Norfolk, England in 1877. He came to Australia in 1914 looking to take up farming. When World War I broke out he enlisted in Sydney on 9 October 1914.

Initially, he served with the 6th Light Horse Regiment at Gallipoli. In 1915 he transferred to the 56th Battalion and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on 1 March 1916. In November 1917, he was stationed in France and promoted to the rank of Captain. He was wounded in France, spending a month in hospital after being gassed in June 1918. He returned to Australia in December 1919 on the 'Orvieto' and was officially discharged on 3 January 1920.

In 1920, he applied for a Soldier Settlement lease in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and was allocated Woden Block 132. The block was 764 acres (309 hectares) in area covering much of modern day Phillip and Swinger Hill as well as part of Lyons, Chifley, Hughes and Mawson.

Mesopotamian Half Flight: the very first Military Australians to fly.
Kathyn Spurling

On 30 December 1911 the Australian Government advertised for ‘two competent mechanics and aviators’ to be appointed to the Department of Defence. One of the requirements was for the applicants to advise if they were *married or single* perhaps an indication as to the precarious nature of future employment, as was the clearer giveaway: *The Commonwealth will accept no liability for accidents.* This was the first official foray Australia took into a future which would be dominated within decades by aviation and air warfare.

Unsurprisingly for the period, Australian bureaucracy chose an English gentleman, Henry Aloysius Petre, descended from the 11th Baron Petre, a solicitor by profession. Nonetheless Petre’s aviation accomplishments made him an easy choice. A hero of earliest aviation, Frenchman, Louis Charles Joseph Blériot, had captured Petre’s imagination. Blériot was an inventor and engineer who through profits from his car headlamp invention and manufacturing business was determined to build successful aircraft and founded Blériot Aéronautique. His combining a hand-operated joystick and foot-operated rudder control system revolutionised aviation, as did his monoplane. In 1909, Blériot became world famous for piloting the monoplane across the English Channel.

Impressed by Blériot’s pioneering cross-channel flight Petre gave up his legal practice, borrowed £250, and with design assistance from his architect brother, Edward, proceeded to build his own aeroplane. Although the aircraft crashed on its maiden flight Petre was not discouraged, took flying lessons and obtained his Royal Aero Club Aviator’s Certificate in 1911, before becoming an instructor. He was a man in a hurry and by the following year was a pilot and designer with Handley Page Limited. On Christmas Eve 1912, Edward Petre, was killed attempting a flight to Edinburgh. Rocked by the tragedy Henry applied for the position a world away and arrived in Australia in January 1913.

Petre rode his grief thousands of kilometres on a motorcycle through this new broad land seeking the perfect site for a Central Flying School (CFS). He convinced the Australian Government that 295 hectares (730 acres) at Point Cook, Victoria, rather than Canberra’s Duntroon was the ideal place for the base he was to command. Lieutenant Petre was joined by the second aviator choice, Australian Eric Harrison. Though born in Victoria Harrison had journeyed to Britain to become a pilot and then an instructor. He was delighted to be able to return to the land of his birth, be commissioned Lieutenant, and work with Petre to create the Australian Army’s Central Flying School at Australia’s first military airfield. The Australian Aviation Corps was established with just five flimsy aircraft: two Deperdussin monoplanes, two Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2 biplanes, and a Bristol Boxkite, at the beginning of March 1914, and Petre and Harrison began to train pupils in basic aviation. Flight was a fascination in Australia, something marvelled at but only experienced by a handful of citizens. Regardless there was no shortage of willing candidates eager to test themselves in this exciting adventure. The CFS commencement was not auspicious. On 9 March 1914, Petre registered Australia’s first military flying accident when, trying to avoid telephone wires on landing, he crashed a Deperdussin. The pilot escaped with bruising, but the aircraft was destroyed.

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Training was elementary conducted over three months in the confines of the aerodrome's boundaries with aircraft flying at heights of between 15 and 60 metres as long as there was no wind. The first four graduates were: Captain Thomas White, Lieutenant Richard Williams, Lieutenant David Manwell and Lieutenant George Merz.



*Back row: Richard Williams, Thomas White.
Front row: George Merz, Henry Petre, Eric Harrison,
David Manwell in front of a B.E.2a aircraft (AWM)*

Thomas White was born in Melbourne in 1888 and attended Moreland State School. Family circumstances prevented him from accepting a scholarship to Scotch College. He joined the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) as a bugler. Excelling at numerous sports indicated an ambitious, adventurous character and he lost no time in embracing opportunities. By 1911 he was commissioned into the 5th Australian Regiment, by 1914, he ensured he was selected as one of the first to fly. Richard Williams was born at Moonta Mines, South Australia in 1890 and educated at Moonta Public School. Employed as a telegraph messenger and the bank clerk messenger and

then bank clerk lacked the excitement he yearned, so at 19 he enlisted in the South Australian Infantry Regiment, AMF, was commissioned in 1911 and accepted for the first AFC course in 1914.

David Thomas William Manwell was born in Queenscliff, Victoria in 1890, and educated at Queen's College, Maryborough. His civilian occupation was Commission Agent, but his passion lay in being a Lieutenant in the 16th Light Horse from 1912 and convinced authorities he was the right stuff for the nascent AFC. George Pinnock Merz was born at Prahran in 1891. By any interpretation Merz was an overachiever. When studying at the University of Melbourne he was commissioned a second Lieutenant in the Melbourne University Rifles. He graduated in medicine in 1914 before becoming dux of the first AFC course. Merz was one of two pilots selected to accompany the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) to Papua New Guinea at the beginning of the war. On his return he was appointed instructor of the second flying course, while at the same time working as a doctor at Melbourne Hospital.

Following a request from the British Government of India on 8 February 1915, the Australian Government agreed to provide aircrew and ground staff to offer air support for the Indian Army which was attacking the Ottoman Empire in Mesopotamia (now Iraq). Petre quickly volunteered and departed for Bombay on 14 April to be in charge of the *Mesopotamian Half Flight*. White, Merz and Lieutenant William Treloar, along with 37 ground staff embarked on RMS *Morea* for India in late May.

Treloar, born in 1889 was the son of a grocer. Employed as a Stock, Station and Commission agent enabled him to indulge his interest in motor cars, both driving and the mechanics. >>>

Along the way he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the 70th Ballarat Infantry Regiment. In early 1914, he sailed for England to follow his aviation ambitions and by mid-year was a seasoned pilot. On hearing instruction had commenced at Point Cook he returned, completed a three week course in aerial observation at the CFS in February 1915 and then a three week pilot's course.

When Petre and his men arrived, they found appalling conditions. The airfield was in swampland and the breeding ground for mosquitos meant twice daily quinine tablets were necessary to stave off malaria. The sandstorms which tore canvas tents to pieces just something else to endure. The aircraft were obsolete. The two Maurice-Farman Shorthorn biplanes and single Longhorn aircraft were very unsuitable for desert conditions and capable of only 50 mph (80 kph). Given the desert wind (shamal) commonly reached 80 mph (129 kmh) the Australians were unimpressed to find themselves invariably flying backwards. Added to this hazard was another, the warm atmospheric conditions, 'about 110 to 120 degrees in the shade' and oppressive humidity, reduced the lift capability to enable the aircraft to even take off.

This world of military aviation would revolutionize warfare in the decades to come but at the commencement of World War I there were few tactics and much to prove. Senior British army officers had little faith in what they did not or wish not, understand. Members of the *Mesopotamian Half Flight Maurice-Farman Shorthorn* (pictured right) were at best seen as a slightly amusing sideshow.



There was comfort in numbers, and they were joined by New Zealander Lieutenant Willam Burn and two English pilots attached to the Indian Flying Corps, Captain Philip William Lilian Broke-Smith and Hugh Lambert Reilly, as well as nine more mechanics. Operations commenced on 31 May with reconnaissance flights. Enroute, they attempted to drop three 20-pound bombs on a Turkish paddle steamer. They missed but the bombs exploded forward and aft of the smaller craft. The Turkish crew was terrified and promptly surrendered to the first British ship that appeared.

Within months two Caudron G3 aircraft, though not modern and more suitable for training than action, improved operability and enabled the flight to conduct more reconnaissance flights and to carry despatches between the front and Basra. On 30 July 1915, Lt George Merz and New Zealand observer Lt William Burn, flew 160 kms from Basra to support army ground forces in the Battle of Nasiriyeh. On the return leg, mechanical failure forced them to land in enemy territory. With only pistols to defend themselves they engaged in a running battle with well-armed Aab tribesmen. Their bodies were never found. Metz, the Melbourne doctor, was 23, and accorded the unenviable title of being the first Australian pilot killed in action.

Four Martinsyde single-seat scouts reinforced the unit, now known as 30 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps (RFC). In August, Petre test flew the first and was disappointed that even at the maximum speed of 80kph it took 23 minutes to reach an altitude of 2,000 Metres, the barest improvement on the Maurice Farman and Caudron.

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Lieutenant George Merz climbing aboard a Bristol Boxkite aircraft (AWM) and below Captain William 'Harold' Treloar (AWM)



This first AFC unit to see active service was quickly caught up in an ill-conceived a campaign, as their Australian Imperial Force (AIF) brethren were elsewhere from April 1915. In both, British military hierarchy severely overestimated their own strategic aptitude and underestimated the enemy's strength. In this precarious early chapter of war aviation the Australian suffered high casualties, with worse to come.

On 16 September Captain William 'Harold' Treloar and his Indian Army observer Captain Basil Atkins were on a reconnaissance flight when the engine died. Treloar managed to guide the Cauldron to the ground. Unfortunately, they were close to Turkish lines and attempted to run but realized this was impossible. They were taken prisoner and incarcerated in numerous prisoner-of-war camps until Turkey surrendered on 30 October 1918. The remainder of Half Flight were struggling to stay alive both in the air and on the ground. Captain Thomas White had several close encounters with the enemy. On one photographic reconnaissance flight White and Indian Army observer Captain Francis Yeates-Brown were flying at 1500 metres trying to evade Turkish anti-aircraft fire, when the engine lost power. White opened the throttle and dived steeply. The engine coughed but not with sufficient revolutions to avoid gliding to the ground. Enemy troops were sufficiently surprised for White to continue to taxi the aircraft across the cracked earth while his observer stood with a rifle at the ready. White had dropped bombs on this very column of soldiers and had no wish to fall into their hands. He agreed later that it was pure luck that the two men in their flimsy aircraft bumped along a road for more than 25km before whatever the engine obstruction was, cleared and they became airborne. They returned to their airfield in time for breakfast.

White and Yeates-Brown's next operation was as exciting but there was no return. They volunteered on 13 November to attempt to destroy telephone lines west of Bagdad. It required them to fly a round trip of 200kms, over Turkish lines, landing 14kms from the city between telegraph poles close to a road which was the main enemy thoroughfare. A gust of wind pushed the wing of the landing aircraft against a pole while a column of Turkish horsemen galloped in their direction. With White firing a rifle at the approaching troops, Yeates-Brown successfully set charges and destroyed poles and wires. They were roughly overpowered and taken prisoner.

By December 1915, the Indian Army was defeated. Nine Australian Half Flight ground staff were taken prisoner with only Flight Sergeant J. McK. Sloss and Air Mechanic K.L. Hudson surviving captivity. Petre, the remaining Australian pilot, escaped in the only airworthy aircraft and flew to Egypt on 7 December.

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He and the eight Australians at Basra joined the newly formed Australian Flying Corps in Egypt early in 1916. Lieutenant Eric Harrison had taken charge at Point Cook and he and his staff strived to fulfill the demand for pilots for a war which engulfed the world. Like Harrison, several Australians had followed their ambitions to Britain to fly and were now part of British squadrons. As members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) bled and died in the rock and sand of a Turkish peninsula, flying overhead was Australian Royal Navy Air Service Captain Arthur Harold Keith Jopp, spotting and bombing Turkish positions.



Preparing a Half Flight Caudron

Dr Kathryn Spurling is a member of the RSL Sub-Branch. She is the author of ten books, her most recent, *From Fury to Hell: WWII Australian aircrew prisoners of Germany*, will be launched by *New Holland* in April 2022. This is an extract from the book she is writing about the AFC and Captain William Valentine Herbert. www.kathrynsurling.com

‘We volunteered and did what was expected of us’

Claire Hunter

Terry Colhoun was 14 years old when the Second World War broke out in September 1939. A teenager growing up in Melbourne, he knew life was about to change forever. “I was in bed at home in Surrey Hills reading a book and Mum and Dad were listening to the radio, or what we used to call the wireless in those days”. Mum came in about nine o’clock and said, ‘Mr Menzies has been on the air, and Australia is now at war with Germany’.

“I was just three months short of my 15th birthday, and I suddenly became a scared boy, who was near enough to being grown up, to see military service ahead of me. I was pretty upset, and I cried a bit that night, I must admit; not that I was a person who normally cried much. But I certainly did that night”.

The eldest of four brothers, Terry worried about the war and his place in it. He lost interest in school and left to help his parents make ends meet. “I was working at the Myer Emporium at the time, and the day after my 17th birthday, the bombing of Pearl Harbour happened. >>>

I was just one year away from being conscripted, and had to decide what I would do about that as I was a timid kid, certainly not aggressive, and I thought about it a lot". Without telling my parents, I walked up to Russell Street to the RAAF recruiting depot, and said, "I don't have much to offer, but I believe I'm going to be called up sooner or later, and I'd prefer to serve in the air force, so could we talk about what I could do?"

"After I made this rather adventurous move, I had to go and tell Mum and Dad, didn't I?" They had, of course, been even more worried than I was. They knew there was no way I would dodge military service, and they were very relieved, I think, when I told them I had made a decision. I had to wait until the following year, until I was 18, but the air force said they would call me up, and they did. I also got a call-up - a conscription notice - from the army, but I took it to the air force and they said, 'Take no notice of it son, you're ours'. When he turned 18, Terry reported to the recruiting centre again and was sworn in. "I think Mum was rather proud to walk down the street with her boy in an air force uniform", he said. This sweet young thing of 18, who had barely been kissed.

He was posted to Shepparton for training, where he marched around the showgrounds, carrying a pretend rifle - made from hardwood to resemble a .303 rifle over his shoulder. The only time Terry saw a real weapon was at the rifle range where he was taught how to pull it apart, clean it, and put it back together again. He went on to serve as a clerk in the orderly room at No.1 Signals Training School, Point Cook before being posted to No.1 Embarkation Depot, a make shift depot set up at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and then to 79 Wing Headquarters at Batchelor in the Northern Territory.

"At that stage, we didn't know where we were going", he said. "We were put on a troop train and we left in the dark - I awoke the next morning in a place called Terowie, which was a railway junction in northern South Australia. We were told we would be travelling north on the Ghan [a passenger train that travelled between Port Augusta and Alice Springs], but there were no luxuries in those days. It was just old wooden carriages, and the air-conditioning was open the window and get a face full of soot. It was all men, sitting in old second class seats and we did that for three or four days, the rails were buckled by the heat and we joked that the train ran on square wheels".

"Bully beef and hard Army biscuits featured, and God, they were hard, those biscuits. You could break your teeth trying to eat them. The best use I ever found for them was to pour boiling water over them and use them as porridge, for which they were very good".

"When we got to Alice Springs, we were put into army buses and taken to a place where we could get a shower and some cooked food, but there were no tents or anything, and I remember setting out my rubber ground sheet and sleeping on the ground, fully clothed with my two grey army blankets wrapped around me, using my air force kit bag as a pillow. It was the coldest night I've ever had. The next day we were piled into army trucks, just sitting on the floor, until we reached Larrimah, the southern terminal of what was the old Northern Australian Railway, to take us up to where we were going. In my case it was Batchelor, which was just a place hacked out of the bush, about 100 km south of Darwin.

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RAAF Station Darwin Airmen's mess

that were in flight. More than once, he had the painful duty of decoding messages from aircraft reporting the loss of a plane and its crew.

“There were aircraft coming and going at all times of the day and night,” he said. “You’d be working all through the day, and then all through the night, and you’d come off at seven o’clock in the morning and rush to have a shower. If it was the wet season, you probably had prickly heat from top to toe, and then you’d get to the airmen’s mess and the meal was appalling”.

“I can remember on more than one occasion fronting up to weevilly rice and half-cooked prunes, followed by what they called scrambled eggs, which was made from some powder concoction that smelt and tasted like brown paper”.

He had fond memories of sneaking over to No 18 Squadron to enjoy a smorgasbord of food.

“No 18 was a Dutch Squadron which had escaped from the Netherlands East Indies before the Japanese moved in, and re-formed to Canberra as part of the RAAF”, he said.

“It proudly retained an NEI identity, and one day I decided to get some relief from our RAAF diet by hitching a ride to their camp for a marvellous Reichsstaffel lunch. The curries were as hot as hell, but it was worth it”.

In February 1945, Terry was posted to Truscott to fill in for an operations clerk who had been sent to Darwin for surgery.

“It was an improvised landing strip on the Western Australian coast north of Broome near the Drysdale River. I flew over on an operational flight and was allowed to sit in the co-pilot’s seat, which was a great thrill for a kid of my age”. He returned to Darwin on board an old Avro Anson aircraft.

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“There was quite a big landing strip there, and I was told I was going to work in the Operations Room of 79 Wing Headquarters”.

At the time, 79 Wing controlled two-engined aircraft, flying from squadrons located at Batchelor, Coomalie, Hughes and Gove airfields.

As an acting corporal, Terry was responsible for typing up operational instructions, writing up records and reports and encoding and decoding messages between the control room and aircraft



The damaged Bank of NSW in Darwin

“There was another airman and myself and three padres”, he said, “but as we approached Darwin we ran into a tropical storm. The wings were flapping up and down, and I said to the corporal, “I hope the padres are saying a few prayers for us”.

“Then when we got to Darwin Harbour, the plane dropped down under the clouds. We were skimming over the water, coming in to land, and I still have this memory of seeing a rowing boat below us. It was probably some off duty soldiers fishing for barramundi, and I remember them ducking as we went over because they thought we were going to give them a haircut”.



A damaged building in Darwin

Terry flew to Brisbane on a Liberator bomber on 15 August, the day the war ended.

“As we left Darwin, about 8 o’clock that night, I looked down at Mindil Beach. The whole beach was covered with bonfires and things, where thankful servicemen and servicewomen were celebrating. There were no seats on the plane, and passengers sat on an uncomfortable non-slip floor as a cold wind blew across us, but to hell with that, I didn’t care. I was going home”.



Reunited with his parents on the platform at Spencer Street Station in Melbourne, Terry was later posted to the Airmen’s Records section, where he was responsible for returning airmen’s flying log books to their owners or next-of-kin.

“The flying logs were mostly of airmen who had died in action, and I had row after row of them”, he said.

“I read about amazing flights and deeds of heroism; much better than the Biggles stories I read as a boy, and much sadder, most of them having been written by men who were no longer alive”. “They were the real heroes - highly decorated - and to read about them going out over Germany and places like that was a real privilege and that was the last job I had”. “I was invited to stay on, but all I wanted was to get back to civilian life. When you join up as a boy at 18, even if you think you are all grown up - that’s a crucial time of your life. “To me, the thing was to get out and start a career, and hopefully find somebody you’d wish to marry and with whom you could have a family”.

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“At the end of the war, we were not wanting parades, we were not wanting big speeches, we just wanted to have a job, and to start a civilian life, the civilian life that we’d not had”.

After the war, Terry became a successful broadcaster, working in commercial radio, and for the ABC in Gippsland, Newcastle, Canberra and New York.

He joined the Citizen Air Force during the Cold War, and conducted oral history interviews for the Australian War Memorial as part of the Australia Japan Research Project. He was also the Anzac Day Parade commentator in Canberra from 1997 to 1999, and was Master of Ceremonies for the Memorial’s Anzac Day Dawn Service from 1997 to 2006.

He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for service to music and radio broadcasting and to the community and was awarded the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun with Gold Rays and Rosette for service to Australia-Japan understanding.

“I don’t regard myself as one of the heroes”, he said, “I was just one of the ordinary people who did ordinary jobs to enable certain people to be heroes.

“I’m proud of what I did, and I’m proud of the fact I made my choice, and that I’ve survived, right up until the present time, but when I go into the Memorial, I become quite emotional, because war is a terrible thing. It produces the best in certain people, but it produces the worst in others”.

“Having lived through the Second World War, from a teenager into young adulthood, and having lost a brother as a result of terrible suffering from his service in Japan after the war - It’s personal. My story is that of an ordinary young Australian who, like thousands of others, volunteered his life in defence of his country, and served without distinction”.

“People did what they thought they should do ... and we’ve got to remember these people, whether we knew them or not. I am thankful that I survived the war and can tell younger Australians that not every serviceman and servicewoman was a hero, but we volunteered and did what was expected of us”.

Note from the editor:

Printed with the kind permission of the author, Claire Hunter and as published in the Australian War Memorial.

Photos provided by Terry Colhoun



Servicemen relaxing on Mindil Beach

The Coast Watchers' Lonely War

Richard McBride

In every war there are men and women whose contribution to victory is out of all proportion to their numbers, their status or their fame. Intelligence staff and medical teams, stretcher-bearers and command units, scientists and weather men - no one can say they were responsible for victory, but it is certain that without their help, victory for the Allies would have come much later, and at much greater cost. The coast watchers were the unknown heroes of Guadalcanal. They were Australia's invisible army in the long Pacific war - a loose, scattered, secret army. And if secrecy helped to bring them success, it certainly brought them no fame.

Throughout WWII, few Australians knew of the coast watchers' existence, and to many they are unknown even today. In military terms, the coast watchers were not strictly a unit, a company, a division - though they were responsible to the Director of Naval Intelligence. It was not clear just how many coast watchers there were, or where they were, or whether they were alive or dead, but their contribution to victory was incalculable. Admiral W.F. Halsey, Commander-In-Chief of the South Pacific, in his autobiography said of the Australian coast watchers, "The coast watchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the Pacific."

The coast watchers did not suddenly emerge in WWII. As far back as 1919, the Royal Australian Navy had considered the need for an intelligence system in the islands to Australia's north. Their mission was literally "coast watching" observing the vast, unguarded stretches of Australia's northern coastline and reporting any strange movements at sea. Postmasters, harbour masters, school teachers, policemen - anyone with access to communications was called in. It was in 1939 that Commander R.B.M. Long, RAN, Director of Naval Intelligence, and pioneer of the organisation, put Eric Feldt in charge at Port Moresby with instructions to expand the service in the islands. "The islands", wrote Commander Feldt, "form a chain screening Australia from the north and east. It was, in fact, a fence but with several gates - the straits between the islands."

Just how effective can be seen from the Japanese efforts to detect the coast watchers and destroy them. Admiral Halsey records that the Japanese tried every means of capture, from bribing and torturing natives to hunting with dogs. In plain terms the coast watchers were spies working in Japanese occupied territory in conditions of extreme hardship and danger. They risked and suffered, betrayal, capture, torture and death. They lived for months in tropical forests and swamps, survived monsoonal rains and temperatures that rarely fell below 80 degs at night, their only contact with the outside world was portable radio, their food and supplies dropped from aircraft, an operation that prolonged their survival and threatened their lives by revealing their position to the enemy. Their task was simple: To observe all they could of enemy movements and report with coded radio signals to Allied commanders.

Before the war, most of them had been inter-island traders or managers of coconut plantations and they knew the islands intimately. Each developed his own spy system of reporting what they saw and pass reports by radio of airfield construction, movement of enemy barges, and the number and direction of enemy planes passing overhead on their way to strike Allied targets. >>>

It was a lonely and desperately dangerous life, and only real men could endure it. Real men! How many remember Leigh Vial, awarded the American Distinguished Service Cross, who perched in the hills over Salamaua airfield for six months, warning of enemy aircraft flying from Lae in Port Moresby. How many have heard of Cornelius Lyons Page - Con Page they called him - a boy from the Sydney suburbs who left with his parents for New Guinea to run a plantation? Page became a coast watcher in 1941. Stationed on the Solomon Island of Tabar, he warned the Allies of approaching Japanese raids on Rabaul. Old coast watchers tell the story of Page's radio contact with two missionaries in Papua, who suddenly cut across this frequency for a personal chat. "I will pray for you, brother!" one said. "Get off the ruddy air or I will pray for both of you", Page exploded, "I have an urgent signal".

Despite warnings from Page, the antiquated Wirraways at Rabaul were no match for the Japanese Zeros, and when Rabaul and Kavieng fell, Page's world fell about him. The Japs picked up his signals and a party from a warship raided his plantation. Feldt radioed from Port Moresby, "You are to bury your radio and join either party on New Ireland or take other measures for your safety. Good luck". But Page ignored the warnings. He moved to a jungle hut and held out against the enemy. When his radio developed a fault, he managed to signal in Morse code by crossing two wires in his set. As the Allies planned his evacuation, he was captured, and executed. Coast watcher Reginald Evans, who rescued a young American naval officer named John Fitzgerald Kennedy when his torpedo boat, PT109, was sunk by a Japanese warship. There were unknown heroes like Tom Ebery and Frank Roche, tortured and killed after refusing to reveal where other coast watchers were hiding. They were resourceful and determined men.

There were no more brilliant and successful exploits among the Australian coast watchers than Paul Mason and W.J. Read. Mason was a planter from New Guinea, a shy, fair, bespectacled man, slow of speech with one passion in life - radios. Read was a dark, blunt wiry planter who had spent 12 years in New Guinea. Both were based on the island of Bougainville from where they could observe Japanese aircraft movements from Rabaul and Kavieng on their way to attach U.S. naval forces at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. With two hours warning from Mason and Read, Allied fighters could climb to 30,000 feet, ready to dive on the Zeros as they approached.

The Allies made doubly sure that the coast watchers' signals were picked up. Mason and Read not only broadcast direct to U.S. forces, who knew the frequency on which the reports were sent, but their messages were also relayed through Townsville, Port Moresby and Canberra, back to the base at Pearl Harbour. To avoid delays in coding and decoding, Mason and Read sent their messages in plain language, the only codes used were in identification - Read used his daughter's initials, JER, and Mased STO, the first three letters of his sister's surname. And so, on the morning of August 7, U.S. forces at Tulagi and Guadalcanal received this message: "From STO. Twenty-four torpedo bombers headed yours." When the Japanese attacked, the U.S. ships had dispersed, and fighters and guns were waiting. In the days that followed more Japanese attacks were smashed. By now, U.S. marines had secured their vital foothold on Guadalcanal, and held it despite Japanese counter-offensives, until the enemy withdrew in February 1943. Perhaps Admiral Halsey had those first warnings from Bougainville in mind when he remarked that the coast watchers had saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal had saved the Pacific. >>>

Many, of course, did not survive. During WWII the coast watchers lost 42 men killed and 58 captured. But casualties inflicted by coast watchers and guerrilla forces more than redressed the balance. Their contribution to the ultimate victory can never be gauged.

Of their record of service, the most fitting description is on the Coast Watchers' Memorial Light in Madang Harbour, New Guinea. It reads,

"They watched and warned and died that we might live".

The Danger of Ignorance

Les Cook

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

We had arrived at Gona on 19 November 1942 to find the Japanese well-prepared. Their main defensive positions consisted of strongly-constructed bunkers, very well camouflaged and impervious to any weapon we had. Even the 25 pounder field-guns when they came into action a few days later, could not make any noticeable impression on them. The air-force medium bombers also had been unsuccessful, and it was decided to try the big four-engined B17 bombers using 1000 pound (440kg) bombs with the hope that the heavier bombs might be effective.

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

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

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

>>>

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

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

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

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

Prayer of a Soldier in France

Joyce Kilmer

My shoulders ache beneath my pack
Lie easier, Cross, upon His back
I march with feet that burn and smart
Tread, Holy Feet, upon my heart.
Men shout at me who may not speak
They scourged Thy back and smote Thy cheek.
I may not lift a hand to clear
My eyes of salty drops that seat.
Then shall my fickle soul forget
Thy agony of Bloody Sweat.
My rifle hand is stiff and numb
From Thy pierced palm red river come.
Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea.
So let me render back again
This millionth of Thy gift. Amen.



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. 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.

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.



Deer, a garden seat, a mermaid, bucking horses and lots more - all made entirely with old spanners welded together at the “Spanner Man Sculpture Gardens” at Barraport.



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ANZAC COMMEMORATIONS 2022

ANZAC APPEAL

Volunteers are require for ANZAC Appeal Week
This is a very important fund raising event from 19-24 April.
Names to Sub-Branch Office 6285 1931

ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Dawn Service: The Dawn Service commences at 05:30AM at the Western forecourt 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 8:00AM at the Obelisk in Eddison Park.

Relocation of the RSL Veterans' March: Due to the ongoing construction work at the Australian War Memorial the march is a Non-ticketed event with attendees assembling on the Western side of the AWM in Limestone Avenue with overflow in Reid Oval.

ANZAC Day Last Post Ceremony - 4.45pm
<https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day>