



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



# The SERVICEMAN

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**ANZAC EDITION**

**APRIL 2024**



***For Every Drop Shed in Anguish - 2020-2023***

*By Alex Seton*

Dedicated on 22 February 2024 by the Hon Matt Keogh MP (See page 7)

# CONTENTS



Office Bearers 2021-22	Page 3
From the Editor's Desk	Page 4
The President's Message	Page 5-6
For Every Drop Shed in Anguish - <i>Alex Seton</i>	Page 7
The Eddisn Day Club's 20 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Party	Page 8-9
Coffee catch-up & Peter Sutton's Birthday	Page 10
The Red Poppy	Page 11
The Veterans Wellbeing Hub Update	Page 12
The Coo-ee March from Gilgandra to Sydney	Page 13
Notice of Annual General Meeting 2024	Page 14
Gambut - <i>Les Cook</i>	Page 15-16
I Spied on Sydney - <i>Susumu Ito</i>	Page 17
Grantley Perry & Sons & Fall in	Page 18
Lest We Forget & Fall In	Page 19
A Poem to Veterans - <i>Emily Flett</i>	Page 21
Notes for the Diary	Page 22
Address by Brigadier J.A. Gilchrist	Page 23-24
Darwin in Flames - <i>Douglas Lockwood</i>	Page 25-26
The Allies Conquer North Africa	Page 27
Soldiers True Blue - <i>George Mansford</i>	Page 28-29
Burma: Defeat into Victory	Page 30-31
Connecting Up	Page 32
Just a Common Soldier - <i>Lawrence Vaincourt</i>	Page 33
It's a Gas - <i>Les Cook</i>	Page 35

## ADVERTISERS

Grantley Perry & Sons Funeral Directors	Page 18
Canberra Southern Cross Club	Page 20
Sub-Branch Services	Page 34
ANZAC Commemorations 2024	Page 36

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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 2023-2024

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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 1<sup>st</sup> 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*



The first edition for 2024 and the start of another busy year. It has not been the start of the new year that I anticipated or expected with surprising and unwelcome medical issues having crept up on me but life goes on so we just have to be grateful that we are still here to talk about it. An unexpected experience, and I am extremely grateful to the manager and staff at the gym in Narrabundah, and the Ambulance crew who attended. They all did an amazing job.

Also, starting to feel a change in the temperature so I guess we should be preparing ourselves for some cooler weather as we prepare for winter, of course having already checked that the heater has been serviced and is working efficiently.

A message often delivered at meetings is that our greatest requirement is encouraging people to become members and assist in some way with the ongoing work conducted by the Sub-Branch. An ongoing problem in all volunteer organisations but unfortunately it is also a sign of the current times. Checking through previous issues of *The Serviceman*, I noticed that the Christmas edition way back in 2006 listed 25 new members compared with just three in this issue.

We will also be needing volunteers to help out in our collection for the upcoming Anzac Appeal leading up to ANZAC Day.

Make sure you look after yourselves. There are still some nasty bugs and viruses around so stay healthy and be kind to each other.



***ANZAC 2024 Edition***  
***RSL Woden Valley Sub-Branch***  
***The President's Message***

Welcome to the ANZAC Edition of *The Serviceman* that marks the end of the first quarter of our 2024 Financial Year and the lead up to ANZAC Day and then to the Sub-Branch Annual General Meeting. As the AGM marks the end of the eleventh year of my presidency, I am taking this opportunity to reflect on an extraordinary journey I have shared with some amazing people. While the present team has built on the legacy of our predecessors to achieve some excellent outcomes, there is much more to be done if we are to continue providing the type of support to the levels our members and others expect and deserve.



First, the past 11 years have brought some extraordinary changes to organisations with which we liaise and cooperate, the policies and processes through which veterans and their families (the Veteran Community) seek and receive the support they need and to which they are entitled, and to society in general. For example, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Repatriation Commission have had three Secretaries and Presidents, respectively, albeit they are the same person; there have been three Repatriation Commissioners, four National Presidents of the RSL, leadership changes in the Repatriation Medical Authority and the Veterans Review Board, four presidents of the ACT RSL Branch (albeit that the current President accounts for two of these), and many changes to senior staff in each of these and other related organisations.

There have been many reviews into veterans' support needs and how those needs can be and should be met, enquiries into various matters in the ADF and elements of the League; and a *Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide* and the reform of Veterans' Legislation, both of which are ongoing. We have also seen the increasing effects of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC). The ACNC has introduced and overseen governance and management changes to the Not-for-Profit sector, of which the RSL (i.e., the League) is a part. This has affected all levels of the League including the National Headquarters, State Branches and some sub-branches.

While DVA made significant changes to their policies and processes all of which being aimed at increasing their productivity, the demand for their services did not reduce. Nor did all the changes necessarily meet their intended outcomes.

Another major change that occurred in the overall veteran support area, was the increasing dependence on or leaning towards the use of paid staff to do much of the advocacy that has historically been done by volunteers. This is evidenced by the introduction of Veteran and Family Wellbeing Hubs to form a network of support facilities across key dependencies. While this approach might be inevitable, and it is recognised that paid staff must complement volunteers rather than replace them, *the system* must support the volunteer workforces that are provided by sub-branches and similar organisations.

>>>

This, however, is the subject of a broader debate that will hopefully find ways to equitably resource paid staff and volunteers.

The COVID-19 situation that arose in 2020 and the measures taken to mitigate and manage the threat this disease posed, also had a major impact on many areas of society, including our Sub-Branch, its members and the ways in which we operated during the pandemic and subsequently.

For example, we cancelled the last four ANZAC and Peace Ceremonies, we had limited opportunities to hold the Dinners that members and guests had supported and enjoyed, the Eddison Day Club was unable to meet for about three years, and we had limited opportunities to conduct other activities such as information and training sessions, and bus trips. We also learned different ways to conduct meetings and engage with our members and other organisations. Video and telephone conferencing, and *working from home* became normal work practices, as *face-to-face* meetings and working in the office were seen as risks that should be avoided. Hospital visiting was banned, and visits to retirement villages and nursing homes were rare.

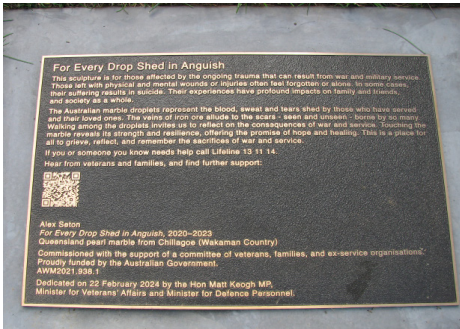
Sadly and, perhaps incidentally, many members seemed to age rapidly during this time, with some of them and their partners having previously been active in many key Sub-Branch activities. The overall situation also limited our options of introducing new members to the Sub-Branch and engaging them in tasks that would ease them into a succession plan for our volunteers.

Despite the previous comments, and the issues I raised, I believe we supported our members and others in the Veteran Community in the ACT and region as well as anyone could have expected. This outcome was due primarily to a relatively small group of volunteers and paid staff who stayed the course.

While this resilience helped us through some challenging times, we must now apply a succession plan to reinvigorate our Board, our compensation and welfare teams, and other key roles including the Editor of *The Serviceman*. We must also resource other key areas including the Day Club and the coordination of events we hold for our members and our engagement with the community.

A key element of the succession plan is accessing reliable and substantial funding support that will offset the costs of the accommodation and staff we need to engage with our members and to support the efforts of our volunteers. To that end, the Board will continue to seek Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status so we can attract suitable benefactors. However, while money is important, we cannot continue to meet our objects unless we rebuild a substantial volunteer workforce.

In closing, I offer my thanks to all of you who contribute to the work we do and the support we provide to each other and the wider Veteran Community. Without the effort from our volunteers and staff, we could not have achieved anything of substance. I now urge all of you to encourage others to join our Sub-Branch and offer whatever time and skills they might have to reinforce our various teams.



## **For Every Drop Shed in Anguish - 2020-2023**

*Alex Seton*

This sculpture is for those affected by the ongoing trauma that can result from war and military service. Those left with physical and mental wounds or injuries often feel forgotten or alone. In some cases, their suffering results in suicide. Their experiences have profound impacts on family and friends.

The Australian marble droplets represent the blood, sweat and tears shed by those who have served and their loved ones. The veins of iron ore allude to the scars - seen and unseen - borne by so many. Walking among the droplets invites us to reflect on the consequences of war and service. Touching the marble reveals its strength and resilience, offering the promise of hope and healing. This is a place for all to grieve, reflect, and remember the sacrifices of war and service.

If you or someone you know needs help call Lifeline 13 11 14.

Queensland pearl marble from Chillagoe (Wakaman Country)

Commissioned with the support of a committee of veterans, families, and ex-service organisations.

Proudly funded by the Australian Government.

Dedicated on 22 February 2024 by the Hon Matt Keogh MP,  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel.

*(This new sculpture is now installed on the western side lawn of the Australian War Memorial)*



## The Eddison Day Club's 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday

*Bob Cremer*



Along with the Patron Sue Sarantos, about 40 members and friends of the Day Club attended today's special event celebrating the Day Club's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. With speeches by past coordinator Ian Gollings, the current coordinator, Peter Sutton, the Sub-Branch President all spoke of the great work that the Day Club has done during the last 20 years.

Despite COVID and other distractions, the Day Club has been functioning, albeit on a much smaller scale, but still managing to get our older members and guests to events where they are able to enjoy the company of others.







This special event was held in the Canberra Irish Club in Weston.

Patron Sue Sarantos assisted by Judith Young cut the celebratory 20<sup>th</sup> birthday cake.

Also a regular lunch is held every Friday at the Irish Club, an event enjoyed by members of the Day Club and is something that the Sub-Branch and the Day Club organisers are trying to encourage people to attend on a regular basis.

## *Coffee Catch-up Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

A good roll-up of members and guests attended for a special birthday celebration for Peter Sutton with Mick O'Donnell standing in for President Jim Gilchrist. A very pleasant event.

Cake monitors Alex and Roberto delivered the cakes to those attending.



## The Red Poppy

*A reprint of an article from 'The Serviceman' Christmas Edition 2008 and considered worthy of reprinting for the information of current members - Ed.*

Around the 11<sup>th</sup> November each year, millions of red poppies are sold for Australians to pin on their lapels with proceeds going to the League for ongoing welfare work for our members. Why a red poppy?

The red poppy, the “Flander’s Poppy” was first described as the flower of remembrance by Colonel John McCrae, a Professor of Medicine at the McGill University in Canada prior to World War I. Colonel McCrae had previously served as a gunner in the Boer War, and went to France in World War I as a medical officer with the first Canadian contingent.

At the second battle of Ypres in 1915, when in charge of a small first-aid post, he wrote in pencil on a page torn from his despatch book the very moving poem: **“In Flander’s Fields”**

The verses were apparently sent anonymously to the English magazine, Punch, which published them under the title, “In Flander’s Fields”. Colonel McCrae was wounded in May 1918 and died after three days in a military hospital on the French coast. On the eve of his death, he allegedly said to his doctor, “Tell them this. If ye break faith with us who die we shall not sleep”.

An American Miss Moira Michael, read “In Flander’s Fields” and in November 1918 wrote a reply entitled; “We Shall Keep the Faith”.

### **“We Shall Keep the Faith”**

Oh! You who sleep in Flanders’ Fields,  
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!  
We caught the torch you threw  
And holding high, we kept the Faith  
With all who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led;  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies  
But lends a lustre to the red  
Of the flower that blooms above the dead  
In Flanders’ Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red  
We wear in honour of our dead  
Fear not that ye have died for naught  
We’ll teach the lesson that ye wrought  
In Flanders’ Fields.



## ***Veterans Wellbeing Hub Update***

On 23 January 2024, the Commonwealth Government announced that RSL LifeCare Veteran Services will develop a new Veterans' and Families Hub in Queanbeyan. The Hub will be available to people across both the Eden-Monaro region and the ACT, connected to 10 RSL Sub-Branches to provide outreach services across the Southern Tablelands region.

RSL LifeCare has experience operating the Nowra Veterans' and Families' Hub. Given the diversity of experiences and life stages of our veteran community, I will be particularly interested to see what has worked well in Nowra and how we can adapt it to best support the needs of Canberra's veteran community.

As the ACT Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, I am excited to see progress on this Hub so it can deliver a more integrated and holistic response to the way we support people to live well in their everyday lives.

If you would like to discuss this, please contact my office at: [Davidson@act.gov.au](mailto:Davidson@act.gov.au)

Emma Davidson, ACT Greens - Member for Murrumbidgee

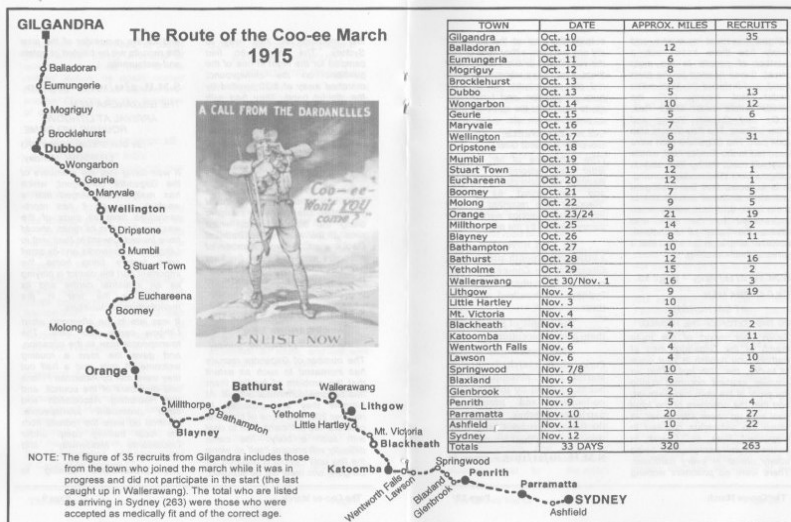
### **New Hub - A Win for Veterans and Families in the Queanbeyan Region**

*Quotes attributed to Member for Eden-Monaro, Kristy McBain*

For the thousands of personnel who leave the ADF each year, transition to civilian life requires major readjustments. It's a significant event for Defence members and their families, and can be both a challenging and traumatic time.

That's why this new Veterans' and Families' Hub is great news for our community, because it means over 2,000 current and former ADF personnel and their families will be able to access support where they live. This is a great way for RSL LifeCare Veteran services to expand their footprint and their ability to support veterans and their families in a friendly and welcoming environment - where their experiences and their military service is respected.

We want to see local veterans and veteran's groups involved in the development of this Hub to make sure it suits the changing needs of current and former ADF members and their families at all stages of service. Whether you need a coffee and a chat, access to wellbeing support, or you just want to meet like minded friends, you'll be welcome at the Veterans' and Families' Hub in Queanbeyan.



## “The Coo-ee March”

This account of the Coo-ee March is based on a talk given to the Historical Society some time in the early seventies. At that time very little was known about the March by the general public.

In the small town of Gilgandra, as everywhere else, there was intense pressure put on young men to join Australia’s volunteer army. Gilgandra had responded well. Young men of the district had been answering the call from the outbreak of War in 1914, and the town had been represented on the shores of Gallipoli, where Private Dalmain was killed.

Later in 1915, more and more recruits were needed, firstly, to make up for the heavy casualties being suffered in France, and secondly, to stave off what most patriots regarded as the disgrace of conscription.

It was against this very emotional background that the Hitchen brothers, Dick, a butcher and Bill, a plumber, thought out a plan which would put Gilgandra’s loyalty beyond doubt, and which, in addition, would encourage men from other towns to join the AIF. The Army pondered the plan and gave it a cool reception saying it would cost too much and doubted its success; they thought it most impractical and, as far as they were concerned, there was nothing more to be said.

With all preparations complete, and 25 men ready to set out, the Army reluctantly sent an officer to lead the march. The whole town turned out to farewell the men on Sunday Oct 10, 1915 after speeches, cheering crowds, school children waving flags and music from a brass band.

*(An extract from “The Coo-ee March” prepared by Gilgandra Museum & Historical Society)*

# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH

OF THE RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE WILL BE HELD ON

**TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MAY 2024**

**The Corey Room, Grant Cameron Community Centre**

**commencing at 2:00PM**



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

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
AGENDA**

1. Roll Call
2. Minutes of previous AGM [30<sup>th</sup> May 2023] – 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 2024
13. Closure
14. Ode

## Gambut

*Les Cook*

The Lybian towns of Bardia and Tobruk lie on the Mediterranean coast. The road between them in 1940 ran inland, about 50km as far as I can recall, and followed parallel to an escarpment or cliff which itself was roughly parallel to the coast. The flat ground above the escarpment is known as The Lybian Plateau.

When we were there the Italians had an airstrip at a place on the plateau called Gambut about half-way between Bardia and Tobruk. I don't know the origin of the name; whether the airstrip was given the name by the Italians or whether there had been a village of that name before the Italians went there. It was shown on military maps during the war, but I have not seen it on any Atlas.

We had stopped for a few days at the foot of the escarpment close to this airstrip. One morning we saw what appeared from his dress to be an Arab digging in the sand some distance away from us. He was preoccupied with what he was doing and was apparently unaware of our presence. The Arabs had a reputation for stealing or collecting abandoned weapons and storing them for future use, and we thought it probable that he was engaged on such a venture so went to investigate. There was very little cover so he saw us coming before we could get close to him and immediately left what he was doing and disappeared.

When we arrived at the place we found a hole in the ground with stone steps leading down from it. The entrance had been covered with a stone slab that the Arab had removed to gain access. As we stood there two pigeons flew out of the opening, so there must have been other entrances than the one in front of us.

The narrow steps led down between stone walls to a cavern or corridor, the extent of which we couldn't establish because of the poor light, and disappeared into clear fresh water. We were in an underground water storage system constructed hundreds, or perhaps thousands of years ago. There were hieroglyphs carved into the stone walls. In the sand on a step below the water I found a small silver coin or medallion which was subsequently identified by a numismatist as being Etruscan. It had a Caesar's head with Laurel wreath on one side and Grecian style writing on the other.

We were moving on that day so didn't have time to get torches and investigate further, much as we would have liked to have done. We left the stone slab off the opening on the offchance that the Arab had hidden in the underground cavern when he saw us coming.

On the top of the escarpment directly above were the remains of an ancient city. The outline of the city-wall and streets of buildings, presumaby houses, were clearly visible as rows of hand-cut stone blocks in the sand.

>>>>

The city-wall ran along the edge of the escarpment which would have been about 10 metres high at that point. The stones from which the wall had been made were much larger than those used for the other buildings, and the wall itself had been very thick.

The stones were level with the sand which possibly indicates that what we were looking at was the tops of the walls of the buildings rather than their foundations. Even the desert sand storms over centuries could not have eroded the walls down to ground level. It would seem more likely that the city had been abandoned or destroyed and the sand had gradually built up between the walls until the whole area became level. There was no sign of excavation anywhere which might have proved this theory, and we didn't have time to test it. Of course, it is possible that the stones had been the foundations only, and that the buildings and the wall above ground could have been made of mud bricks.

We were unable to determine the extent of the city, but the wall continued as far as we went each side of where we had climbed the escarpment so it must have been quite large. The surrounding area must have been more hospitable than it is now to support such a large population.

What was the name of this city? Who were the people who lived there, when and why was it built, and what happened to it? Perhaps there have been many such cities along North Africa, but although I went as far as the village of Agadabia, about 200km past Benghazi, I didn't see anything like it again.

There must have been thousands of people like us on both sides of the war who saw what we did unless, of course, some freak desert sand-storm had temporarily uncovered the stones just before we arrived. The whole place would have been clearly visible from the air, and it was almost alongside the Italian airstrip. There is no doubt in my mind that the location of this city is well-known, but what is its history?

I have always been interested in archaeology and the rise and fall of civilizations. My memory of this particular place is so clear that I believe that I could go back again and find where we climbed the escarpment - or it all in my imagination?

I would like to put it to the test, but it is unlikely now that I will ever get the chance.



**THE BIGGEST JOKE  
ON MANKIND IS  
THAT COMPUTERS  
HAVE STARTED  
ASKING HUMANS  
TO PROVE THAT  
THEY AREN'T A ROBOT.**



## I Spied on Sydney

*Susumu Ito*

*The day before the first attack on Sydney, Susumu Ito, a Japanese naval aviator, flew a reconnaissance mission over the city and its harbour. Ito, the owner-president of a business machine sales company in Iwakuni, Japan, recalls the flight, the first of many that he was to make over Australian and New Zealand cities.*

On the night of May 29, 1942, our submarine surfaced 35 miles north-east of the entrance to Sydney Harbour. The moon occasionally shone through the clouds. A team of mechanics helped me get the small float-plane out on the deck, then serviced it. At 2:30AM on May 30, the submarine, riding on a choppy sea, catapulted me into the air. The wind was rising. The cloud was thick above 2,000 feet. The plane had no identification marks and no guns. I just hoped we could fly low and long enough to escape Sydney's guns and planes.

We knew the harbour had a boom, so I flew over North Head at about 1500 feet and came down to 600 feet to allow my observer to sketch the boom's position and locate its opening. Some of the marks on the map we were using were very wrong, but the harbour detail was accurate. We flew at 600 feet towards Garden Island, where a big cruiser and four destroyers were lying. The cruiser was the *USS Chicago*.

Searchlights started looking for me. I climbed up into the clouds, then came down again so my observer could sketch the position of another big cruiser, *HMAS Canberra*.

We flew over her at about 600 feet and then at about 1500 feet to the Harbour Bridge. After passing over the bridge, we flew towards a dockyard (probably Cockatoo Island), where we saw flashes from welding plants on the ground. I could not find my way now, and tried to see Mascot aerodrome. The map was wrong, somehow. Suddenly, Mascot switched on its landing lights but I do not know whether they were expecting a friendly plane, or mistook me for one, but it was helpful. I flew back towards the harbour and climbed into the clouds to miss more searchlights which were looking for me.

A hospital ship, with many lights on, was on the north side of the harbour. We flew out over North Head, which showed up in the faint moonlight that came through the clouds. I went out to where we had left the submarine, but couldn't find it. I searched for a time then flew back to North Head for another approach. Turning again, I flashed my lights and the submarine switched on a light to show me where to land. It was not a good landing, the plane capsized and I almost drowned. My observer and I managed to scramble clear and swim to the submarine. Later, from a dinghy, we punctured the plane's floats and let it sink.

>>>>

By the end of the war, I had flown over Sydney, Brisbane, Auckland, Wellington and Noumea.

I flew over Sydney a second time, in Jan 1943. My assignment, to estimate the amount of shipping in the harbour and to calculate its possible effect on the fighting in the Solomons. Although anti-aircraft guns fired at me, I was not hit, but saw that Sydney's defences were not going to be easily surprised. The city had tasted war and things would never be the same again.

*An extract from Illustrated Stories of World War II.*

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**PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE VETERAN COMMUNITY**



## ***FALL IN***

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

Sandra McInerney, Deborah Wild, David Connery



## 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.”*



Alan Thurecht, Brian Lawler, Reginald Eugene Gillard,  
Gordon Masters, Donald Tidd, Philip Rayner,  
Angus McIntosh, Christopher Hudson, Norman Wheatley



## Some things in life are better together.

Nominate **Woden Valley RSL** as your Community Rewards group and **7.5% of your spend** on food and beverages will be donated to them when you dine at selected Canberra Southern Cross Club venues.

Find out more visit  
[csc.com.au/rewards](http://csc.com.au/rewards)



## **A Poem to Veterans**

*Emily Flett - Year 5*

*Canberra Girls Grammar School*

My name is Emily Flett and I attend Canberra Girls Grammar School. At the end of my primary years, I completed a large inquiry project on an issue of my choice. I chose to inquire into how government choices on war affect mental health and through my research discovered that Australian Veterans experience mental health issues due to their experiences. After my research and my findings, I felt passionate about wanting our veterans to know that we care and feel appreciative for all they have done for us.

To respond to this issue, I wrote a poem about some of their struggles with a call to action. Please see below a copy of the poem and the link to the presentation I put together that includes my poem.

Depression

Anxiety

PTSD - These are just some of the issues that can arise in our veteran's lives.

Their lives impacted so much: By one bullet, one bomb, one thing - War.

War has torn through countrysides and city lives

Just to gain land

To gain power or to fight against world leaders.

The've suffered so much to give us a better tomorrow.

So we must fight for them

Fight so they can live a life like ours

So they can live a life of happiness and joy instead of a life of depression and anxiety.

You may be thinking, well I can't do anything about that, but you can,

you can change someone's life

By just enrolling them in support programs

By signing them up for free healthcare initiatives

By listening and offering

Support

Gratitude

All the little things you do can have a massive influence on their everyday lives.

Thank you for all that you do.



Occupying pride of place in the Corey Room, Sylvie Carter’s painting **“Corporal Earnest Albert Corey on the Hindenburg Line 1918”**. Sylvie’s painting was a finalist in the 2023 Gallipoli Art Competition

## *2024 Notes for the Diary*



ANZAC Fundraising Appeal	21 <sup>st</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> April	Volunteers required
ANZAC Eve Dinner	Orion Room CSCC	Wed 24 Apr 2024
ANZAC Day Service	Thu 25 Apr - 8:00AM	Eddison Park
AGM/OGM	Tue 28 <sup>th</sup> May	Corey Room - 2PM

## Address by Brigadier J.A. Gilchrist in 2005

*Having previously been commissioned in the Militia, Brigadier (Retd) John Gilchrist ED, was a founding member of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Pioneer Battalion that was raised soon after the start of the Second World War. With the 2/1<sup>st</sup> he served in the Siege of Tobruk and on the Kokoda Track. Having transferred to the RAE prior to the end of the War, he served with what became the Citizen Military Forces until he retired in the rank of Brigadier in 1972. His last posting was as the Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Task Force that was based in Sydney. John died late in the evening of ANZAC Day 2012; he was 96 years old. He is the father of our Sub-Branch President, Jim Gilchrist.*

The President, Distinguished Guests and Fellow Members of the Rose Bay RSL. When I decided to give this talk I realised that I would have a lot in common with my fellow members.

Firstly, we all had the privilege of serving our country in war or peace and in many different locations and uniform.

Secondly, with the exception perhaps of some of our overseas members and our National Servicemen in Vietnam we had all been volunteers. This applies to all our various military operations over the years and to peacetime missions - something to be proud about.

Thirdly, we all have a sentimental streak which is illustrated by the number of remembrance ceremonies held each year at the many war memorials which are spread throughout the country and our cities.

The principal ceremony is, our course, Anzac but there are many others of special interest to different groups such as the Battle of Britain, V.E. Day, Alamein, the Coral Sea Battle, Kap Yong in Korea and Long Tan in Vietnam.

But our principal reference place of remembrance is the National War Memorial in Canberra.

Started in 1941 this has grown over the years with many new buildings and exhibitions and details the story of all Australian Military Missions overseas with a remarkable and comprehensive display of memorabilia relevant to each period of action. The whole atmosphere of the building is one of quiet reverence. These exhibits are now augmented by a computerised record of ex servicemen and women and details of many smaller but important incidents which occurred during operations which are readily available at the press of a button. Impressive as they are, these exhibits do not cover the principal aim of the complex - to become a National Memorial.

This was achieved at 11.00AM on 11 November 1993 - Remembrance Day - when the remains of an unknown Australian soldier killed in World War I and recovered from an unknown grave in a French war cemetery, was brought to Australia where it lay in state in the Kings Hall of the old Parliament House in Canberra and after proceeding along Anzac Parade past the many memorials to individual units, arrived at the War Memorial. After a very sombre and dignified ceremony was finally laid to rest in a tomb in The Hall of Remembrance.

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It is significant that over the years many visiting Heads of State and dignitaries have found time to pay their homage and respect at the Tomb in acknowledgement of Australian Servicemen's contribution to the peace of the World. The epitaph on the tomb simply reads:

***“An Unknown Australian Soldier Killed in the War of 1914-1918.  
He symbolises all Australians who have died in War”.***

There is a continuing contribution by Australia to World Peace as there are at present nearly 4,000 personnel from the Regular and Reserve Defence Forces deployed overseas in peace keeping as well as many civilian humanitarian missions - once again all volunteers.

Reserve Forces will play an increasing role in Australian defence activities because of the necessity for highly qualified experts in modern technology but will only be able to do so if the Government clearly defines their conditions of service and pay and guarantees their job security and that they have the full support of industry, the understanding and cooperation of their families, the best of equipment and their own dedication.

So at last we come to the reason for today's lunch - the remembrance and celebration of Victory In The Pacific and the end of World War II. We have all seen documentaries of the material damage caused in the war and heard of the unspeakable atrocities which occurred as well as the tragic loss of life on land, sea and in the air which includes so many Australians.

This makes us realise that Australia got out of it all very lightly with the closest action being the bombing of Darwin and North Coast of Western Australia and, something not very well known, the sinking of 23 ships off the NSW coast and closer to home, the sinking of HMAS Kuttabul with the loss of many lives.

We are now a nation of 20 million made up of many different nationalities, ethnic groups and religions and we have learned to live together with tolerance and understanding of each others ways of life but with the terrorist attacks on New York and subsequent attacks in Bali and more recently England, the world has changed.

The threat to Australia from terrorist activities is very real and we must all assist in lessening its effect by watching and reporting to the Terrorist Activity Hot Line all suspicious activities such as leaving unattended parcels and bags, unusual behaviour, subversive talk, but the principal deterrent must come from within the ethnic groups themselves who have a duty to weed out and eliminate the subversive elements who wish us harm.

So we are basically a nation of patriotic sentimental volunteers, and Yes, Australia is certainly a lucky country.

Let us all work together to keep it that way.



## Darwin in Flames

*Douglas Lockwood*

***At the beginning of 1942, Darwin was a major Naval and supply base for Allied forces, protected by 18 heavy anti-aircraft guns, six coastal defence guns, but no front-line aircraft. To impede Allied operations against the invasion of the East Indies, the Japanese High Command decided to bomb Darwin, and render the base unserviceable.***

Darwin has the mortifying distinction of being the only Australian city heavily and repeatedly attacked by Japanese bombers during WWII. It is a distinction that began in disaster on Feb 19, 1942, when there were 238 known deaths and more than 300 were wounded in two raids by 135 carrier-borne and land-based aircraft. There had never been greater loss of life in single day in Australia, nor, in some respects, a day of greater ignominy.

The first warnings that a raid was imminent were received from Bathurst Island on the morning of Feb 19. At 9:35AM Father John McGrath at the mission station radioed a message to the Amalgamated Wireless station in Darwin that a large number of aircraft were flying towards the city.

The message was acknowledged by the Officer-in-Charge, Lou Curnock and was transmitted to the RAAF operations room, where it was received at 9:37. Tragically, no general alarm was sounded until 9:58, almost at the precise moment that bombs began to fall. Why it was not sounded has never been satisfactorily explained. Confusion existed because ten American Kittyhawk fighters, in transit to Java has left Darwin earlier and had been turned back by bad weather. The Japanese were mistakenly identified as the returning squadron, although they were approaching by different routes and at different times. Five of the Americans had actually landed and gone to dispersal areas before the bombing began. That fact alone should have been enough to alert the operational controllers. The error was to be a costly one in life and equipment.

The first raid from a force of four carriers was led by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, under the overall direction of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo in the carrier *Akagi*. From a position 220 miles NW of Darwin, the carriers launched 81 fighters and bombers on a flight that would take them over Darwin in little more than one hour.

Forty-seven ships were in the harbour and 70 watersiders at work on the wharf when the first bombs landed. Within minutes the harbour area was alight, much of the town in ruins and the RAAF base destroyed. The Japanese bombed and machine-gunned, almost without opposition, in the first attack by a hostile power against the Australian mainland. Six big ships and two smaller ones were sunk with heavy loss of life.

The US transport *Meigs*, the tanker *British Motorist*, US transport *Mauna Loa*, and Australian passenger vessels *Neptuna* and *Zealandia*, all caught fire and sank. Tons of depth charges and other explosives in *Neptuna's* holds exploded with a force that broke the ship in halves and scattered lethal shrapnel and debris for hundreds of yards. The ship sank at the wharf with the loss of the master, Captain William Michie and 45 crew members.

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The destroyer *Peary* fought valiantly against overwhelming odds and shocking casualties. Eighty of her crew, including the captain, Lieutenant-Commander John Bermingham were killed, yet her machine-guns fired until the Japanese broke off the engagement. Finally her magazine exploded and the ship disintegrated in a burst of flame and smoke. The transport and tanker were easy targets for the Japanese airmen. The Australian hospital ship *Manunda* was bombed twice, with 12 killed and 59 wounded, with Sister Margaret de Mestre, the first Army nurse killed by enemy fire.

Two smaller ships sunk were the lugger *Mavie* and the coal hulk *Kelat*. Twelve other ships sustained serious damage and casualties, and two, the *Don Isidro* and *Florence D*, were sunk near Bathurst Island. On the ships alone 157 people were killed or died of wounds and 224 seriously injured. Oil pipelines along the wharf burst and in some places caught fire. Patches of oil blazed on the water creating additional hazards for men trying to swim ashore. Many were rescued by John Waldie, the 25-year-old coxswain of a launch, who was later awarded the BEM.

The Japanese caused havoc at the RAAF base which was attacked twice, first by carrier-based aircraft and again two hours later by 54 land-based heavy bombers from the Celebes and Ambon. The Japanese had mastery of the air throughout, opposed only by the American Kittyhawks, all of which were shot down or destroyed on the ground, the aerodrome machine-gunned and bombed at will with buildings, equipment and aircraft destroyed or damaged. Remarkably, only seven men were killed and included Wing-Commander Archibald Tindal, exposed while manning a machine gun. Communications had been destroyed and control ceased to exist. Hundred walked off and by nightfall the base was almost deserted.

Apart from the wharf, the heaviest civilian casualties were at the post office, where nine were killed instantly and one sustaining fatal wounds. All telegraph lines to Adelaide were cut and communications not restored until 3PM. Government House and the police barracks were damaged. Six bombs fell near the hospital, causing extensive damage but no casualties among the patients or staff. A group of doctors, led by Surgeon Commander Clive James, RANVR and Dr Bruce Kirkland worked in makeshift conditions until late at night when Primus stoves were used to boil water and when emergency battery lighting failed the surgeons continued by the light of torches.

Early on Feb 20, all patients and staff were evacuated to the hospital at Berrimah. Most of the wounded were able to leave the following day on the hospital ship *Manunda* which, despite heavy damage reached Fremantle. Fifteen patients died on the voyage and were buried at sea.

The bombings led to undignified flight from the town by the majority of its residents. After the first raid they had to face the question of what to do next. When a second raid ensued within two hours and seemed to most that these were “softening up” blows in preparation for the invasion that was to follow, a belief shared by military commanders. The only road led to Adelaide River, 72 miles south and within an hour it was crowded with disorganized convoys of civilians and deserting servicemen.

Government vehicles were used in what became known as The Adelaide River Stakes. Railway trains evacuated the remaining women and children, and the aged and infirm. At Adelaide River, men of military age were enlisted into the Army.

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In the rush to escape, domestic animals and hundreds of homes abandoned. The four banks were closed on the night of the bombing by order of the Administrator. Managers were given trucks and permission to leave with their records and securities. Between them they carried and guarded nearly a quarter of a million pounds in cash and negotiable paper to Alice Springs.

Patients in a leprosarium on Channel Island, mostly Aborigines, were left to fend for themselves. They had no food and at low tide crossed to the mainland and began walking back to their tribal country, in some cases hundreds of miles away. Six months later a group were found near Pine Creek, 160 miles from their starting point. They agreed to go back to Channel Island.

Darwin was placed under military control on Feb 21, the OIC, the Town Mayor, responsible to the military commander, Major-General D.V.J. Blake. Martial law was never proclaimed.

Darwin was bombed on 58 other occasions between Mar 4, 1942 and Nov 12, 1943. Some were nuisance raids, by two or three aircraft, but many were full-scale attacks by 27 or more bombers. Thereafter the Japanese lost interest. They had increasingly heavy commitments elsewhere and Darwin, then well defended by squadrons of Spitfires and Kittyhawks, was an unprofitable target.

## **The Allies Conquer North Africa**

On Nov 8, 1942, British and American forces, under the command of Lieutenant-General Dwight D. Eisenhower, landed at Casablanca.

Opposition by troops of Vichy France was overcome after four days of combat.

Meanwhile, Rommel's battered Afrika Korps, retreating before Montgomery's Eighth Army, managed to reach the Mareth Line, a French-built fortification stretching some 20 miles southwest from the Gulf of Gabés. Here Rommel joined a larger force of Nazi troops fresh from Germany. Together they formed an army of some 175,000 men.

Faced with a combined British-American force on the west and the Eighth Army on the east, Rommel, with characteristic boldness, launched a sudden offensive against his foes. Spearheaded by Tiger tanks, he struck through the Kasser Faid Pass. Defending American troops were hurled back 50 miles and more before British and American reinforcements were able to stop the breakout and force Rommel back to his original position.

A heavy assault by Montgomery on Mar 21 caused the Germans to retreat towards the Cape Bon Peninsula to escape encirclement. This was followed on Apr 6 by a joint attack by eastern and western Allied forces through the mountains towards Tunis and Bizerte. The Germans put up a stiff struggle, but in a lost cause. The Eighth Army took Tunis on May 7 and the Americans seized Bizerte on the same day. The mauled Axis army, desperately short of ammunition and fuel, now had no choice but to surrender, and on May 12 German and Italian commanders gave up, along with 250,000 men. The war in Africa was finally over.

*(Previous two articles are extracts from Illustrated Stories of World War II)*

## **Soldiers True Blue**

*George Mansford*

After five years of simmering tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the Korean War began on 25 June, 1950, when the Northern Korean People's Army invaded South Korea in a coordinated general attack at several strategic points along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the line dividing North Korea and South Korea. A desperate and bloody campaign began. Australia committed elements of all three military services as part of a United Nations Force to counter the North Korean aggression.

The war was fought in the bitter freezing cold of winters and then the extremes searing heat of summers. It was a conventional war charged with unpredictable fury, often at close quarters with tanks, artillery and fighter aircraft in close support (including both RAN and RAAF aircraft).

Neither side was the victor and three years later a cease fire was finally established, and thus began an uneasy truce which still exists to this very day. Historians recorded all of this, but often neglected, was the spirit and courage demonstrated by our troops.

They were all volunteers, and in the beginning, there were many World War II veterans who had re-enlisted to "Have a go". Their presence was of immense value to the younger soldiers facing their first campaign. They benefitted from the hidden precious legacies of generations from colonial days, and younger branches of the family tree who had served in two major wars as part of a young nation.

One could say they were true blue and fair dinkum values and characteristics embracing much of Australia's way of life which included toughness, resilience, initiative and mateship. The obvious questions are:

Was this why these volunteers, weary, hungry and freezing in harsh winter or with parched tongues in scorching summer heat kept soldiering on, night and day, at risk of death or terrible injuries.

Was this why when fear struck at their hearts or hunger cramped their stomachs or yet again a sudden change of orders meant more physical and mental demands, they still smiled. It may well have been forced smiles yet nevertheless it signalled their determination.

Was this why they stood fast so defiantly and at times held their ground against incredible odds and what seemed certain death by covering the withdrawal of neighbouring Allied units; or on other occasions when they attacked with such speed and daring to achieve the impossible.

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I have no doubt whatsoever that the Anzac traditions passed on to them from past generations were very much part of it and of immense value. However, the dominating key to their success was a strong faith and confidence in each other; a sense of purpose; unit pride and the powerful weapon of unity in brotherhood.

Above all was the very high standard of battle discipline generated by sound leadership at all levels. None of which came from trendy gimmicks and where in their time, politicians did not interfere with the ethos of soldiering which has a very strong pulse beat so essential for any unit, be it in peace or war.

If you read between the lines of the official history and search hard enough, you will see the ghosts of these warriors around their campfires in Korea as they wait for the billy to boil, and hear them singing with very strong voice, their own unofficial regimental anthem, "We're a pack of bastards". A song which, with typical Aussie wry humour, signalled their independence, unity, a mock defiance of authority, and love of country.

There is much our nation can learn from the past which can also be part of its future. Our military and its past deeds are very much part of that lesson.

### **A Forgotten War, Korea 1950-53**

You can hear the booming surf from where the memorial stands  
A sacred place honouring those who made history in a distant land  
Today, proud flags are raised and bugles play with soft, sad calls  
It's a time when old soldiers on parade stiffen and seek to stand tall  
Recalling outnumbered youth in slouch hats from a bloody past  
Shoulder to shoulder and who as one, defiant to the foe, stood fast

As the bugle sobs its final cry, there are reflections of days gone by  
So often fear, thirst, hunger and broken sleep wherever they did lie  
Or resting in the rear around a campfire and yarning as a billy boiled  
Laughing and reciting bush ballads before tomorrow's bloody toil  
Neath a lonely sky without the Southern Cross, thoughts of home did fly  
As they sang their Regiment's anthem which was their battle cry

As a busy Space Age clicks and whirrs, the last of this legion will fade  
Joining beloved comrades in a Valhalla which God has made  
Laughing, singing and all together once more  
Gone forever is their horror and agony of war  
Rest assured they will always be with us in our proud, beautiful land  
Their coo-ees heard mid playful surf reaching out to our golden sands.

## **Burma: Defeat into Victory**

*Field Marshal Viscount Slim of Yarralumla*

*The Japanese 15<sup>th</sup> Army invaded Burma from Thailand in Jan 1942. Commanded by Lt-Gen Shojira Iida, the enemy took advantage of airfields in Tenasserim, and advanced on Rangoon. The Burma theatre came under the A.B.D.A. (American, British, Dutch, Australian) Command with General Sir Archibald Wavell Supreme Commander, operating from Java. Wavell directed the British forces make their stand as far east as possible, hoping to gain enough time to allow reinforcements to be brought in. But the British and Indian troops could not cope with the Japanese mobility and proficiency in jungle terrain, and were forced back by the enemy. Rangoon evacuated on Mar 6. To defend the supply route to China, the Burma Road, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent the Chinese 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Armies into Burma under the command of his Chief of Staff, US Major-General Joseph Stilwell, and held the 66<sup>th</sup> Army in reserve on the Burma-China border.*

*Despite these reinforcements, the Allies were unable to withstand the weight of the Japanese assault - strengthened by the addition of two tank regiments at Rangoon - and the position became desperate. Mandalay was evacuated on Apr 30, and General Harold Alexander led the survivors of the British forces across the Indian border to Impal. Stilwell led his troops out to Impal via Homalin; the Chinese 66<sup>th</sup> Army retired into China. By mid May 1942, Burma was lost. In Sep 1942, Wavell directed a new campaign against the Japanese in Arakan, and the British attempted to recapture Akyab, but strong Japanese defence and counter-offence resulted in 2,500 British and Indian casualties. Early in 1943, Brigadier Orde Wingate, the eccentric leader of the Chindits blew up supply depots and railway bridges between Mandalay and Myitkyina. Harassed by the alerted Japanese, Wingate broke the Chindits into small units, each to make its way back to Allied lines independently. Wingate's erratic tactics resulted in the loss of a third of his force.*

*There followed a period of consolidation within the Allied forces, during which time Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Commander, SE Asia. Mountbatten ordered a new offensive against the Japanese in Jan 1944, and the newly-formed 14<sup>th</sup> Army, under General Sir William Slim, advanced into the Arakan. The British campaign was halted by a bold Japanese counter-attack, aimed at capturing Chittagong. In his book, *Defeat Into Victory*, Viscount Slim describes the battle which was to prove the turning point of the war in Burma.*

I had expected ample warning of the Japanese move, but they had passed right round 7<sup>th</sup> Division unobserved, and were within two or three miles of the Ngakyedauk Pass and the Administrative Box, which I knew was prepared for nothing more than raids. I was disappointed that all our precautions had failed to give warning of the enemy move. On Feb 8, I flew down to Lt-Gen A.F.P. Christison's headquarters, which had been subjected to several raids by parties of infiltrating Japanese. With my approval he pulled his HQ back a couple of miles where it was easier to protect. The situation was now clear. Thanks to the Japanese habit of carrying orders and marked maps into action, we had an almost complete picture of their general plan. It was tactically bold and based on their past experience of the effects of cutting our communications. They intended to destroy XV Corps and capture Chittagong as, it seemed, the first stage of an invasion of India. The basic idea was that the British division, when cut off, would behave as they did in the past, and, deprived of all supplies, turn to fight their way back to clear their communications. >>>

Seven Division would be destroyed as it tried to scramble to safety through the Ngakyedauk Pass. All the Japanese forces would then turn on the wretched 5<sup>th</sup> Division and annihilate it as it struggled to escape across the Naj River. Chittagong would be the next stop for the victorious Lt.Gen Seizo Sakurai. There the local population, rallied by the Indian National Army, would rise and Bengal would lie open to the invader. The "March on Delhi" had begun.

Meanwhile, Kubo Force pushed north towards Goppe Bazaar, and, dropping a detachment to close the road south, turned directly west to cross the Mayu range. There was no track; the ridge was almost precipitous for a thousand feet. The Japanese, ant-like, dragged their mortars and machine-guns up the cliff and lowered them the other side, until they burst out on the main Bawli Maungdaw road, much to the surprise of certain administrative units peacefully pursuing their daily tasks. Bridges were blown up, camps fired on, XV Corps Headquarters harried, and for 48 hours the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was, like the 7<sup>th</sup> cut off from all access by road. Well might Sakurai congratulate himself on the success of his blow, while Tokyo Rose crooned seductively on the wireless that it was all over in Burma. Actually it was just starting.

The Japanese knew they had to destroy the 7<sup>th</sup> Division in the next few days and they were going to spare nothing to do it. As their reinforcements arrived they flung them to the attack on the Administrative Box or against our entrenched brigades. The fighting was hand-to-hand and desperate. The Administrative Box our weak spot. Commanded from the surrounding hills on all sides at short range, crowded with dumps of petrol and ammunition, mules by the hundred and parked lorries by the dozen, with administrative troops and Indian labour, life in it under the rain of shells and mortar bombs was a nightmare. Yet the flimsy defence held, because no soldier, British, Indian or Gurkha would yield; they fought or they died where they stood. How some of them died will be forever a black blot on the so often stained honour of the Japanese Army. In the moonless dark, a few hundred yelling Japanese broke into the Box and overran the main dressing station, crowded with wounded, surgeons still operating. The helpless men on their stretchers were slaughtered in cold blood, the doctors lined up and shot.

Such an outrage only steeled the resolve of our men. Typical was the spirit of a battery of medium artillery pent up in the Box. A pilot reported he had seen their 5-inch guns firing at a range of 400 yards as the enemy pressed home an attack. He thought their situation desperate. A wireless signal was sent to the gunners asking how things were with them. "Fine", was the answer, "but drop us a hundred bayonets!" The bayonets were dropped - and used.

By the middle of Feb, the Japanese had shot their bolt - a week later. Hanaya accepted defeat and, too late, attempted to pull out his disorganised units. But our 7<sup>th</sup> Division had already passed to the offensive, the 5<sup>th</sup> was battering through the Ngakyedauk Pass, which was fully opened on Feb 24, and from the north swept down the 26<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Divisions. The hammer and the anvil met squarely, and the Japanese between them disintegrated. Kubo Force, among the cliffs and caves of the Mayu range, was destroyed to the last man in a snarling, tearing dogfight that lasted days, with no quarter given or expected. Of Sakurai's 7,000 men who had penetrated our lines, over 5,000 bodies were found and counted; many more lay undiscovered in the jungle; hundreds died of exhaustion before they reached safety. The March on Delhi via Arakan was definitely off!

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This Arakan battle, judged by the size of the forces engaged, was not of great magnitude, but it was, nevertheless, one of the historic successes of British arms. It was the turning point of the Burma campaign. For the first time a British force had met, held, and decisively defeated a major Japanese attack, and followed this up by driving the enemy out of the strongest possible natural positions that they had prepared for months and were determined to hold at all costs.

British and Indian soldiers had proved themselves, man for man, the masters of the best the Japanese could bring against them. The RAF had met and driven from the sky superior numbers of the Japanese Air Force equipped with their latest fighters. It was a victory, a victory about which there could be no argument, and its effect, not only on the troops engaged, but on the whole 14<sup>th</sup> Army, was immense.

*An extract from Illustrated Stories of World War II*

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## **‘Connecting Up’**

For the information of members, the Sub-Branch has revitalised its registration with a non-profit community support program called ‘Connecting Up’.

Through this program, members can access donated and/or significantly discounted computer software products. The products of most likely interest to members would include software from Microsoft and Adobe (both for Windows and Mac operating systems).

In some instances, they can be discounted by up to 80%.

The Connecting Up public website can be accessed by members at:

[User account/Connecting up](#) where general information about available products can be found.

Access to prices cannot always be found at this website, nor can direct orders be placed through it by individuals. This can be done only by our Sub-Branch contact officer who can sign into our account with Connecting Up.

If interested, please contact our member, Andre Bobets on 0412 266 047. He will be happy to provide detailed product pricing details and the associated purchasing protocols.



## Just a Common Soldier (A Soldier Died Today)

*A. Lawrence Vaincourt*

He was getting old and his hair was falling fast,  
And he sat around telling stories of the past.  
Of a war that he had fought in and the deeds that he had done,  
In his exploits with buddies; they were heroes, every one.  
And though sometimes to his neighbours, his tales became a joke,  
All his buddies listened, for they knew whereof he spoke.  
But we'll hear his tales no longer, for he has passed away,  
And the world's a little poorer, for a soldier died today.  
No he won't be mourned by many, just his friends, children and wife,  
For he lived a very quiet sort of ordinary life.  
He held a job, and raised a family, quietly going on his way,  
And the world won't note his passing, though a soldier died today.

When politicians' leave this earth, their bodies lie in state,  
While thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great.  
Papers tell of their life stories from the time that they were young,  
But the passing of a soldier goes unnoticed and unsung.  
Is the greatest contribution to the welfare of our land,  
Someone who breaks his promises and cons his fellow man?  
Or the ordinary fellow, who in times of war and strife,  
Goes off to serve his country and offer up his life?  
The politician's stipend and the style in which he lives,  
Are sometimes disproportionate to the service that he gives,  
While the ordinary soldier, who offered up his all,  
Is paid off with a medal and perhaps a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them, for it was so long ago,  
That the husbands, sons, and fathers went to battle, but we know.  
It was not the politicians, with their compromise and ploys,  
Who won for us the freedom that our country now enjoys.  
Should you find yourself in danger with your enemies at hand,  
Would you really want some cop-out politician with his waffling stand?  
Or would you want a soldier who has sworn to defend,  
His home, his kin, and country, and would fight until the end?  
He was just a common soldier and his ranks are growing thin,  
But his presence should remind us, we may need his like again.  
For when countries are in conflict, then we find the soldiers part,  
Is to clean up all the troubles that the politicians start.  
If we cannot do him honour while he's here to receive the praise,  
Then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days.  
Perhaps a simple headline in the paper that might say;  
**"Our country is in Mourning, for a Soldier Died Today".**

## 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.** Alex Solecka administers the Sub-Branch Office and is responsible to the Executive for the efficient day-to-day routine of the office. Alex 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.**

## **It's a Gas**

*Les Cook*

The respirator affords complete protection! How often in the early days of the war we had heard those comforting words at the end of the numerous lectures on poison gas. In our training we marched, ran, and fired on the rifle-range wearing our respirators. They were our constant companions.

We carried them everywhere we went in the Middle East. I can't remember whether or not we took them to New Guinea in 1942, but we certainly didn't take them with us into the mountains that year, nor did we ever carry them again.

Late in 1944 a miscellaneous collection of us from the southern states were straggling back to rejoin our units in Queensland. At that time, the transit camp at Liverpool near Sydney was the Army's "pearly gates" to the north. No-one could not get past there unless classified as Draft Priority One (DP1).

To achieve this exalted status one had to demonstrate a proficiency in all basic military skills, pass a medical exam, and have a complete kit. For some inexplicable reason, a course in poison gas was included as one of the basic military skills. We had not even seen our respirators for more than two years.

A new gas known as DMK had been developed since our earlier training. It was odourless and colourless and apparently difficult to detect. It may not even have been correctly described as a poison gas because, as far as I know, its major effect was to induce vomiting.

We were told that the strategy was to launch this gas a few minutes before sending over one of the deadly gases such as Chlorine or Phosgene, which were easily detectable. The people at the receiving end would not be aware of the DMK, but would instantly detect the deadly gas and don their respirators. The DMK would have its effect in due course, and those affected by it would remove their respirators as soon as they began to vomit. This, of course, would expose them to the deadly gas.

Again we were to hear the comforting words that the respirator affords complete protection. Not only would it filter out the gases (including DMK), but it had been especially designed so as to permit the wearer to vomit in it and still be able to breathe.

To ensure that we had complete confidence in this, we were exposed to DMK gas in a closed room with our respirators on without effect. We then removed them and inhaled the gas, after which we put on our respirators and were marched around for enough time for the gas to work.

It was true! The gas did make us sick, and it was possible to vomit in the respirator and still be able to breathe. While there is no doubt that this knowledge would be a life-saver in a real situation, I cannot recommend it as a form of entertainment. Cleaning the respirator afterwards wasn't much fun either.

*Note: DMK - Di Methyl Ketone*

# **ANZAC COMMEMORATIONS 2024**

## ***ANZAC APPEAL***

Volunteers are require for ANZAC Appeal Week  
This is a very important fund raising event from 21-24 April.  
Names to Sub-Branch Office 6285 1931

## ***ANZAC DAY SERVICES***

- **On Thursday 25 April 2024, the Australian War Memorial will mark the Gallipoli landings in 1915, as well as commemorating all Australians who have served and died in military operations.**
- *Dawn Service at 5:30AM*
- *Eddison Park Service:* A Service by Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch will be conducted at 8:00AM at the Obelisk in Eddison Park.
- *RSL ACT Branch Veterans' March at 9:30AM:* Those wishing to participate must read the guidelines and register to march.
- *ANZAC Day Last Post Ceremony - 4:30pm*
- *Learn more:* <https://www.actrsl.org.au/commemorations>