



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



The SERVICEMAN

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AUGUST 2020



“No Surrender” Roses planted at Eddison Park on Thursday 2 July with descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association (DOTROTA) with Andrew Forster, Greg Kennett, Sue Windross, Les Cook, Rania Kalimeris, Derek Holyoake (Seated), Frank Munday, Vicki Munday, Jim Gilchrist and Alice Blackshaw on completion of plantings.



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The SERVICEMAN

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Bob Cremer



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OFFICE BEARERS 2020-2021

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The Sub-Branch meets on the last Tuesday of each month except April and December at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Corinna Street, Phillip at 7.00PM. Membership Subscription is due on January 1st annually and should be posted to the above Sub-Branch address.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Bob Cremer



The year continues and while we aren't supposed to wish our lives away it would be good to have some good news for a change instead of this ongoing drama that has been 2020.

What started the year with drought, then with incredible devastation caused by the bushfires and the loss of life and property it has been a very bad first half of the year. Next disaster was the severe hail storm that destroyed hundreds of vehicles around the city and also did extensive damage to buildings. Now we have the COVID-19 virus to overcome with all states and territories attempting to control the numbers.

When it looked like we may have turned the corner and getting things back to normal, a sudden outburst in suburbs of Melbourne has caused the whole of Victoria to be put back in lockdown for at least the next six weeks. This does not bode well for the state or the country and of course the devastation to the economy could still continue for some time.

Initially, a small working group comprising Alex Reynolds, Bill Smith and your editor, all under the control of Chaplain Mick O'Donnell, was set the task of establishing 'THE COREY ROOM', a place where meetings could take place, members and friends could catch up for a coffee, do a bit of research or just check out the books in the Sub-Branch library. The plan was also to produce a video to be officially presented to our members at a general meeting when conditions allow. The professional video was produced by David Jenkins [Ghetto Media] with a virtual opening of 'THE COREY ROOM' filmed on Friday 15 May. Sadly, Alex Reynolds passed away two weeks before seeing a completion to a project undertaken by him and Bill Smith many years ago. Alex was also in the process of writing a book about Ernie Corey which was completed by his son-in-law, Bob Cox.

Further to The Serviceman Index series, Bill Smith and I have now completed a full set of bound copies from 1962 to 2019. These copies are located in the library and available for members who wish to research stories from our past. They are Green bound for years 1962-1986, Red for years 1987-2019 and Blue for all copies of the Schools Special editions. All copies are worthy of checking and a check through the Index can guide the reader to the story or edition needed.

It was also nice for the opportunity to be able to have a short trip after being confined inside for such a long time - we had a couple of days at Huskisson in Jervis Bay and enjoyed the change. Hopefully, in the not too distant future we will be able to get back to some sort of normal although I don't think it will be the same as in the past.

Anyway, stay healthy and happy and be kind to each other.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jim Gilchrist



Following a dreadful start to the year, the COVID-19 situation has continued to adversely affect many of us in ways that few of us could have possibly imagined. While noting the resilience and determination that our members, volunteers and staff have demonstrated during these difficult and uncertain times, these issues have been offset by good news. Having referred to the strength and compassion members showed after the bushfires in January, I repeat my thanks and congratulations to all of our team at the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch for continuing to get on with life while ensuring we leave no one behind!

As many would have read in our newsletters, the Board implemented a Business Continuity Plan to mitigate the known and likely effects of the lockdown measures that have been applied for the past several months. Having advised DVA of this plan and identified some issues we believed would impact our members and clients in the ACT and region, we established direct liaison channels with the Commission that should enable us to optimise the services for which we are jointly responsible. I thank the Repatriation Commissioner, Don Spinks, and Deputy Commissioner (NSW/ACT), Victoria Benz for their advice and support under these difficult circumstances.

Since March, the Board held weekly teleconferences to manage our operations in a challenging and changing environment. Concurrently, we are formalising a Strategic Plan that will confirm our long-term goals and provide a base from which to develop an ongoing business plan.

Despite cancelling the ANZAC and Peace Ceremony, we did conduct an Essay Competition, details of which will be reported separately. We plan to hold a dinner to replace the ANZAC Eve dinner. This dinner has a special place in our calendar as we remember those who passed away during the previous year and rededicate ourselves to the objects of our Sub-Branch and the League as a whole.

The COVID-19 situation attracted some unexpected support from individuals and organisations that have already benefited our members and other clients, and that will provide options to establish and maintain long-term relationships. A veteran herself, Sarah Felstead (*The Lazy Grazer*) organised some tasty treats for our members to enjoy as they commemorated ANZAC Day at home. Woolworths and the Canberra Southern Cross Club provided hampers in a scheme that should continue until Christmas. The Commando Association (ACT) offered to help us distribute these hampers and to provide some general help to some of the vulnerable veterans across the ACT.

Some of you will already have benefitted from the gardening that Disaster Relief Australia (ACT) provided to our members. Having evolved from Team Rubicon Australia, DRA is establishing a network of volunteers in the ACT. While their primary tasks relate to disaster relief, they plan to support our members and clients, as they develop their teams and systems, and hone their individual skills. This is a great initiative and we look forward to developing a long-term relationship with them.

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We received several grants from the Federal and ACT Governments aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of social isolation. These substantial funds will contribute to several projects we will detail as they evolve in the coming months. We also received nearly \$83,000 for a BEST grant. Apart from the injection of much needed funds, the BEST Grant reflects the work our teams did during the past year as the allocation is based on workloads and results. Thanks to everyone who did the work and for your continued support; please keep it up as we continue to revitalise our teams to meet the growing demands from our members and clients.

The Federal Minister allocated us \$25,000 to introduce a mental health program targeting younger veterans in the ACT and region. This is a great opportunity that will present welcome challenges as we work with Defence and others in the Veteran Community to provide training panels, resource a training venue and ensure we develop a sustainable model that will benefit veterans of all ages in due course. I look forward to providing more information at the OGM on 28 July.

We have used two other grants to complete our Social Arts Program and start what we expect will be a series of computer-based sessions under the Be Connected Program. These activities benefit our members and should attract some new members while developing relationships within the community.

As reported elsewhere in this edition, we officially named and dedicated *The Corey Room* in May. We look forward to holding an event at which we can premiere the video recording of this occasion. This celebrates the achievements that this activity represents, and the people who contributed to this excellent initiative. In a small ceremony, we assisted the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association plant some roses in Eddison Park and expect to assist them next April as they mark the 80th Anniversary of the start of the siege in April 2021.

In noting that the Eddison Day Club is taking a break until the end of the year, I thank them for the effort they have made to stay in touch by telephone and email, and with selected visits. We intend to use a grant to provide a fully funded bus trip for their members and others later in the year.

I also report that our E&A and Welfare teams have continued to support our members and clients throughout the lockdown period. As the number of requests for assistance, and the complexity of some of the cases continues to increase our volunteers and staff have continued to do an excellent job, just keeping up with the demand. The Board is presently reviewing how we can best sustain these levels of activity and will continue to work with the Commission and the ACT Government to seek grants to support these essential services.

On a disappointing note, the ACT Branch had to postpone the 2020 Branch Congress and AGM. However, they held an Extraordinary Branch Congress (EBC) by teleconference on 24 April. The EBC aimed at amending the Branch Constitution so that the Executive could complete its application for Public Benevolent and Deductible Gift Recipient status. While our Board supports these endeavours, we were concerned about some of the process Branch applied to achieve these goals. Having raised these matters with the Branch Executive on several occasions, we sought advice from the ACT Regulator to ensure due process had been applied. We will keep members informed as the situation evolves.

In offering my sincere thanks to all our volunteers and staff, I commend them all for their work; even small contributions combine to enhance the whole.

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Please accept my best wishes for a happy, healthy and safe rest of the year. And, I look forward to inviting you to our next social gathering as we survive the present pandemic and to communicating with you all by email, telephone and home visits while we wait for clearance to do otherwise. For those of you who are able to visit the office, *The Corey Room* is available for small groups, as are our respective teams.

However, all visitors are asked to report their arrival to the Welfare Office as part of the current directions on social distancing.

Peter James Eveille AM

Award: *Member of the Order of Australia*
Date Granted: *7 June 2020*
Citation: *For significant service to the care and welfare of veterans and their families*



Celebration of Award

A small gathering of Sub-Branch staff and members gathered in *THE COREY ROOM* to celebrate the 2020 Australia Day awards where deserving member Peter James Eveille was awarded an AM (Member in the General Division)

Congratulations Peter on a well deserved award, from all staff and members of the Sub-Branch.



FALL IN

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members.

Brian Cooper, Donna Sunderland,
Ailsa Brooke, Edward Page,
Anthony Fox

'No Surrender' Roses Planted in Eddison Park

Bob Cremer

To commemorate The Descendants of The Rats of Tobruk Association (DOTROTA) three 'No Surrender' roses were planted in the rose garden beside the obelisk in Eddison Park. This event was arranged with Vicki Munday, a representative member of the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association and the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch. The three roses were planted, one each by Rat of Tobruk Derek Holyoake, WWII Veteran Les Cook and Sub-Branch President Jim Gilchrist with plantings arranged by Andrew Forster and Alice Blackshaw from ACT Transport Canberra and City Services.

Proceedings commenced with a Welcome by Vicki Munday:

Good Morning; I am one of several local representative members of the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association. The Association was started at the request of our living Rat Veterans, who wanted to create an association to ensure the heritage and honour of the Rats of Tobruk lived on. As veteran numbers decline, it is up to us, as descendants and relatives to do what we can to ensure future generations don't forget about those 'Mighty Rats'. During the COVID-19 virus, this ceremony was changed from Tobruk Sunday, 10 April, when we were due to plant these beautiful roses all around the country at the same time. This special planting was planned in advance so that next year in 2021, as we commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk, these roses will bloom in the colours of blood red and golden sand - a tribute to our brave heroes - as developed in conjunction with Treloar Roses in Victoria and aptly named '***No Surrender***'.

Over 2,000 roses have already sold from this year's supply, although there may be some still in nurseries, with \$2 from each sale donated toward the Anniversary Commemorations by Treloar Roses. The planting is part of the broader commemorations planned for 10 April 2021, with our 80th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk World Reunion, Remembrance Dinner and Commemorative Service to be held in Brisbane. In addition, the Association is committed to researching over 14,000 names, and creating tributes for all Rats of Tobruk, to be gifted to the Nation as a lasting Memorial. Your presence here today is a great tribute to all those that served in Tobruk and served their Nation in all wars. As we watch our roses bloom from year to year, it is one way of showing "***We will Remember them***".

Below Rose plantings by Derek Holyoake with Vicki and Frank Munday, Les Cook and Rania Kalimeris and Jim Gilchrist and Vicki Munday.

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On completion of the rose planting, a reading by Frank Munday (ex RAN):

Today we wanted to share with you one of the many poems written by the Patron of the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association, living Rat of Tobruk, Gordon Wallace. Gordon was an original member of the 2nd/15th and stayed with the battalion throughout the war. He took part in the withdrawal of British forces to Tobruk, served in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and again in El Alamein, then later in New Guinea at Milne Bay. He discharged as a Sergeant in 1945 and has been active in the Veteran community in Queensland, including as President of the Rats of Tobruk in Brisbane.

Red Poppies

Is it because of the blood that's shed,
That battlefield poppies are so red?
I picked, and held one in my hand,
That grew in that infertile sand,
And pressed it in my pocket-book.
Over fifty years since I took
That poppy from the desert near Tobruk,
Yet the leaves are green and the petals red,
To remind me of our honoured dead
Who gave their lives in that far land,
And bled upon the desert sand,
Not only in Flanders do they grow,
Between the crosses, but, as well,
On every field where soldiers fell.

Closing comments by Vicki Munday:

On behalf of our Patron, Committee and Members, the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk would like to sincerely thank the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch for their assistance, the Queanbeyan Sub-Branch for their plaque installation and Andrew Forster from ACT Parks (who also happens to be the Floriade Horticultural Manager, so our roses couldn't be in better hands!) Special thanks to Rat of Tobruk, Derek Holyoake, WWII veteran Les Cook and Sub-Branch President Jim Gilchrist for assisting with the plantings.

It is intended that a permanent plaque be placed in this location on the 80th Anniversary in April next year.

Thank you for your attendance today and good morning.

Note: A surprise visitor to the ceremony was Sue Windross, daughter of Rat of Tobruk, Bill Edgar, who served in the 2/13th Battalion. Sue noticed the event details on the DO-TROTA Facebook page and came looking for Eddison Park.

Vicki Munday, Les Cook and Jim Gilchrist laying a wreath in the rose garden.





Vicki Munday's speech to those attending and right veterans Les Cook and Derek Holyoake.



Andrew Forster, Greg Kennett, Bob Cremer, Sue Windross, Les Cook, Derek Holyoake with Frank Munday behind, Vicki Munday, Jim Gilchrist and Alice Blackshaw, a First Year Apprentice at ACT Transport Canberra and City Services. A wreath was also placed in the garden.

Andrew Forster is also the Floriade Horticultural Manager. At the end of the planting ceremony Andrew and Alice also planted a number of Tulips throughout the garden.

Report from The Day Club

Peter Sutton - Coordinator



Along with most of the activities at the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch, and elsewhere, the Day Club had to cease meeting on Friday 13 March. One of our long term members, Mrs Jean Anderson died four days later on 17 March. She had a private funeral due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Jean really enjoyed coming to the Day Club for many years until her ill-health prevented her from attending.

Ms Julie Cronin, our Committee member who coordinates our guest speakers and entertainers, has had to cancel and/or postpone these people. All persons attending the Day Club enjoy the variety of entertainment that we have, some of whom regularly return to amuse, inform and educate. The entertainers also enjoy our enthusiastic members and volunteers.

Within a few days of our closure we established a 'telephone tree' whereby several volunteers were given the contact details for several other members and volunteers. This enabled contact to be maintained and hopefully reduce social isolation and loneliness. This contact has been happening at least once a week by email or phone calls. So far it has been very effective. Several of our members and volunteers have had medical set-backs since we have closed the meetings, and this also reinforces the need to maintain contact by the easiest possible means.

I have been sending birthday cards to members/volunteers before their day. I then ring the person involved on the day. We always acknowledge a person's birthday on the Friday closest to the day and present them with a generic 'Day Club' card. If a significant birthday is involved we purchase a special card and have others sign it. Mrs Deidre Moon celebrated her 70th birthday on 14 June. She told me it was a 'very quiet day' for her.

One of our long-term members, Mrs Merle Moore is to celebrate her 100th birthday on 19 July. Merle came to the Day Club for many years, but ceased coming last year. She still lives alone in her own house. She has family that live here in Canberra and is looking forward to her big party to be held at the Hotel Kurrajong next month. The family has requested the congratulatory cards from the Queen, Governor-General and her local member.

Please stay safe and well.

DID YOU KNOW?

Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch members can earn up to \$20,000 per year for the Sub-Branch through the Community Contributions Program at the Southern Cross Club. We thank you for your contributions last year and urge those who have not already done so, to link membership cards to the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch as your nominated charity. This can be done at the CSCC Reception Desk.



2134 ERNEST ALBERT COREY

1891-1972

Ernest (Ernie) Corey was born at Numeralla in the Southern Highlands of NSW on 20 December 1891, the eighth child of Thomas Corey and his wife Ellen, nee Burke.

After he finished school he gained employment as a blacksmith's striker in nearby Cooma.

In 1916 at Nimmitabel, just south of Cooma, he joined the "Men from Snowy River March", and after an historic march enlisted in the AIF in Goulburn on 13 January 1916. He departed Sydney on 4 September 1916 as a member of the 55th Australian Infantry Battalion and arrived in France on 8 February 1917.

On 15 May 1917, after an enemy attack, volunteers were called to supplement the overstretched battalion stretcher bearers. Ernie joined them and performed so well that he was awarded a Military Medal just one year after it was established. He became one of the unit stretcher bearers and on three subsequent occasions up to 30 September 1918 was awarded further Military Medals - an achievement not ever matched in the armies of the British Commonwealth in any conflict.

This would be enough cause to produce a book about Ernie, but Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch has a particular reason not only to produce a reference volume in acknowledgment of Ernie's work but also to acknowledge that he was a founding member of Yarralumla RSL Sub-Branch that morphed into the present day Woden Valley Sub-Branch. Thus, he is part of our history.

So, this document will find its place in The Corey Room, established by his former Sub-Branch.

By way of commentary, it is worth noting that six Australians were awarded Victoria Crosses in the Boer War for saving lives under fire. We can't know how many lives Ernie saved, but he did it over a period of 15 May 1917 to 30 September 1918 when he was seriously wounded. Different time have different measures.

"During the enemy attack on the front line facing QUEANT on 15 May 1917, Private Corey, whilst acting as a stretcher bearer, showed great courage and devotion to duty. Although under direct enemy observation, he carried out his duties continuously for 17 hours without rest, and in a manner worthy of the highest commendation. Although an untrained stretcher bearer, he, together with the rest of the bearer party, saved by first aid, the lives of seriously wounded men. The Commander of the 54th Battalion wrote an appreciative letter for the help given, and specially mentioned the stretcher bearer party for their good work.

Note: This is the 'Preface' from a book, "2134 Corporal Ernest Albert Corey, Military Medal and 3 Bars" that was being put together by Alex Reynolds just prior to his untimely death. It was completed by his son-in-law, Bob Cox.



THE COREY ROOM

At the virtual opening and dedication of THE COREY ROOM on Friday 15 May 2020, filmed and recorded by David Jenkins, (Ghettomedia), Sub-Branch President Jim Gilchrist commenced proceedings with the following message:

Welcome to the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch library and meeting room, for what, I believe, is a special event, being conducted under quite extraordinary circumstances.

The formal opening of this room, and its naming and dedication to the memory and service of Corporal Ernest (Ernie) Corey is the realisation of a dream that at least two of our members have held for many years. While we should be celebrating this occasion with suitable aplomb, the impact of the CoronaVirus Pandemic means that we must do so as a virtual ceremony.

You'll soon hear from former President Bill Smith, one of the people who will be realising one of his many dreams today. He will demonstrate his commitment to one of our Sub-Branch's main objects: ***That of commemorating the service of individuals and events that reflect the values that we believe are important to our society and that are often best demonstrated in adversity, including that involving military service.***

Our guest speaker is the former Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson. Brendan's ability to reflect on military service and note the importance that such service has on the lives of all Australians is well known. He has an innate ability to identify the people who have fought and often sacrificed their lives for our country, before he draws some lesson from that service. The other person who would be realising one of his dreams through this event is another former Sub-Branch President, Alex Reynolds. Unfortunately, Alex died two weeks ago today, before he could see this outcome and before he could finish a mission that he and Bill have pursued for about 30 years. We'll hear more about this shared quest from Bill in a moment.

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, we decided to launch this event today, partly because this is the 103rd anniversary of the battle for which Ernie Corey was awarded the first of four Military Medals. Secondly, a small group of Alex Reynold's family and friends farewelled him at a funeral service at the Royal Military College Chapel. As the current Sub-Branch President, I represented our members at this service and provided Alex with an RSL Funeral Tribute. I can think of no better way to honour another extraordinary man, than to help him realise this dream that will provide closure to this part of what will be a continuous project.

So, what is this special event and why is it special?

Today, we're going to open this room and name it after one of our inaugural members, Corporal Ernest (Ernie) Corey. Bill and Brendan will explain why we believe we should honour Ernie Corey in this way. We will also hear some of our plans for this room, and why it will be such an asset to our Sub-Branch. Thus, and without further ado, it is my pleasure to introduce Bill Smith. Bill is a former Sub-Branch President who has contributed to many aspects of our success and, at one stage, to our very existence. Having been appointed to the Order Of Australia for services to veterans and their families, Bill was awarded Life Membership of the RSL in 2001, and in 2019, was awarded the League's highest honour, the Meritorious Service Medal.

Now I pass to Bill Smith for his contribution to this dedication:

>>>

Why have we Assembled here today?

Bill Smith

Some thirty years ago, Alex Reynolds and I started to work independently, yet in unison, on a project to remind Australians of the valiant war record of one of our inaugural members, Ernest Corey. Sadly, Alex passed away suddenly two weeks ago just as his work was coming to fruition. I am therefore moved to respectfully prefix this presentation with a tribute to Alex's vision and application in getting us to this point. Although reporting on the events that brought us here today to honour Ernest Corey, I and other presenters want you to understand that we are beholden to Alex for the progress made to date - and we thank him for it.

Today we acknowledge the attainment of two long-held goals of the Woden Valley Sub-Branch. The first was to provide an appropriate facility in our headquarters building where we could meet, relax, research and remember former members and friends. The second goal was to give effect to the remembrance of an extraordinary soldier and inaugural Sub-Branch member, Ernie Corey. We are combining both goals in the naming of this facility today.

Now let us reflect on why we singled out Ernie Corey for this honour - and why it took so long. I was fortunate to have one of the original SB members, Bob Berriman as my Deputy while I was President in the 1990s. Bob had been President on three previous occasions, and in quiet times, liked to reminisce about the "good old days" and the energy and vision of our forebears. He told me about Ernie Corey and the Cooma connection, advising me to check it out, which I did. Bob repeated the same advice to Alex a few years later when Alex was President. Alex also travelled to Cooma to do research and gather more background data on Ernie. We compared notes and decided that while the Sub-Branch was fully committed on other core business - we would maintain the story of Corey by publishing various articles and photos through *The Serviceman*. In this we had the enthusiastic support of the editor and the keen interest of successive Presidents as we improved the visibility of Ernie Corey within the Sub-Branch. To the outside world he remained very much an unknown despite appropriate displays at the Australian War Memorial and his Cooma home base.

In 2007, *The Canberra Times* featured "Our Hero" in a special ANZAC edition. I tried to ride that publicity with an attempt to generate a matching interest through the ACT Place Names Committee by submitting an application to have the emerging suburb in Woden Valley named in honour of Canberra's local hero Corey. The main thrust was he had a unique war record - and his gravesite in the ex-servicemen's portion of Woden Cemetery was located a mere 50 metres away from the area in question. I pointed out that the current names being used were Woden East and Woden Green (mainly by developers) were unimaginative and more suited to junior football teams. The ACT Naming Committee declined to agree and advanced a number of reasons why Corey's name would not be used. The reasons were thin and included the fact that a street in Gowrie already bore his name (the relatively short name of Corey Place in Gowrie is too long to fit properly on some maps even when abbreviated, and has to be printed beside the actual street). The name *Corey* was also judged much too similar to the district name of *Coree* to be used as a suburban name (perhaps only if one is looking for a job with the ACT Place Names Committee).

Meanwhile, Alex initiated a request for a commemorative plaque in the prominent ACT citizen's walk in the centre of Canberra. This was supported by the ACT who went to great lengths to locate and invite some of the Corey family (from northern NSW) to attend the unveiling. >>>

Although the plaque was a start to improving public awareness, we needed something better than an object designed to be trampled underfoot. I requested Chief Minister Jon Stanhope to review the means of developing public awareness of ACT's local hero. His reply was positive and he sought the independent ACT Place Names Committee to advise him "on other suitably significant infrastructure or places that may be named in memory of Corey, such as a major bridge, road or park". Time, and the Chief Minister then moved on as the "Yes Minister" squad re-established the status-quo.

Our organising committee turned to repainting a steel helmet that formed part of the Sub-Branch memorial flag display. The helmet had been donated by my brother, Sgt Fred Smith following his return from service in Sabah, Borneo during 1966. These helmets were withdrawn by the Australian Army because of their unsuitability for warfare in tropical theatres. The Sub-Branch incorporated the helmet, mounted on a .303 rifle, as a central feature in our flag memorial in the early 1990s. The long search to discover an artist to repaint Fred's helmet to match the colourful Corey helmet on display in the Australian War Memorial (with prior permission of the AWM) ended when my son-in-law, Dr Mark Lonsdale, expertly completed the task. It is now proudly on display in this facility.

Last year, following the relocation of our headquarters and the establishment of our Veterans Support Centre, the time was considered ripe to give prominence to Cpl Ernest Corey in an effort to further secure his place in Australian history. The Board of Management appointed a small committee, comprising Alex, editor Bob Cremer and myself under the guiding hand of The Reverend Mick O'Donnell, to set up a program to propose a naming ceremony in conjunction with an opening ceremony for this multi-purpose facility. There was much to do. You will be introduced to the many elements of this project today. But first President Jim will welcome former Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson, who kindly agreed to put the phenomena of Ernest Corey into perspective for all of us.

Prayer to dedicate ***The COREY ROOM***
The Reverend Mick O'Donnell.

Almighty and loving God, from whom we cannot be parted, by death or by life, hear our prayers and thanksgiving for the memory of Ernest Corey and his family to whom we dedicate this room. To all those who have served our Sub-Branch faithfully over the years and who were instrumental in ensuring that we indeed remember our living and deceased membership, particularly our dear friend Alex Reynolds and his contributions.

As we remember them Lord, we are grateful for the peace and freedom that we enjoy in our country, that we may learn from this pandemic isolation, how to build a just society for the generations to come. We pray that the memory of our Veterans will inspire in us the resolve to seek your kingdom. That we may listen to your promptings to respond to your will in our world, for peace and love as brothers and sisters in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bless, we pray this place, THE COREY ROOM. May it be a place of camaraderie, a place of friendship, a place of hospitality, a place of learning and a place of peace and love. May all who visit this place find peace and love in each other's company.
AMEN



Our small group recently discovered that local author, Nichole Overall, a Queanbeyan-based journalist, author and social historian, has for some time been researching Ernie Corey's story and is currently in the process of writing a book. We invited Nicole to an early presentation of the video produced by David Jenkins and viewed in The Corey Room on Friday 10 July. Attending on the day, at rear, Nichole Overall, Bill Smith (Past President), President Jim Gilchrist, David Jenkins (Ghetto Media), and in front members Greg Newlyn, Peter Sutton, Alan Frieslan and Sub-Branch Chaplain Mick O'Donnell.

In God We Trust

May your troubles be less
May your blessings be more
May nothing but happiness come through your door

And if it does, make sure it's wearing a mask

Military History

Bill Smith

One has to delve back many centuries to unearth the truth about the emergence of air power as a weapon of war. The RAAF traces its history back to the Imperial Conference held in London in 1911 where it was decided that aviation should be developed within the Armed Forces of the British Empire. Australia implemented that decision, the only country to do so, by approving the establishment of a Central Flying School (CFS) in 1912. The location of the proposed school was changed in July 1913 from Duntroon ACT to Point Cook in Victoria. The first flights by CFS aircraft took place there in March 1914.

The Australian Flying Corps (AFC) was formed as a Militia unit, with staff and students to be selected from the Citizen Forces. It earned a most creditable reputation as a part of the AIF in both Palestine and France during WWI. The AFC remained part of the Army until 1919 at which time it was disbanded along with the AIF. Although the CFS continued to operate at Point Cook, military flying virtually ceased until 1920, when the Australian Air Corps was formed. The Australian Air Force emerged soon after on 31 March 1921 with staff and pilots predominately drawn from veteran Duntroon graduates. King George V approved the prefix “Royal” in June 1921 and it became effective on 31 August 1921. The RAAF then became the second Royal air arm to be formed in the British Commonwealth, following the British RAF.

Evidence now suggests these Air Forces should trace their collective histories further back through the Army to when the Army first got the notion to prosecute an attack from the air. During the current COVID-19 enforced spare time, these conscience-pricking questions were researched by your editor.

His findings could easily rival those of archeologist Howard Carter’s discovery of King Tut’s tomb full of treasures in 1922.



“Say, fellas, how would you like to join the Air Force?”

All thinking, nimble-brained readers of this world-beating Newsletter, utterly convinced by the veracity of claims made in these columns, will agree from the hieroglyphic (shown above) captured among the files actually proves that not only did the concept of air power rest with the Army, there was always a need to identify special people to make it work.

The evidence also tends to explain why the RAAF and other Commonwealth Air Forces chose the Latin phrase *Per ardua ad astra* (meaning “through adversity to the stars” or “through struggle to the stars”) as their official motto.

Poor timing of this heart-quickenning announcement prevented many fighter pilots from including it in autobiographies. The information would have helped fill the gap by explaining just why pilots simply have to fly. And it also illustrates the fundamental reason why the Army was keen to re-assert its former control of air assets over the battlefield to now fly huge Chinook helicopters.

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

A letter from one of our members
Jerry Cole

The following letter was addressed to our President from member Jerry Cole, and, with his kind permission was considered worthy of publication for the interest of our members.

Dear President, Mr Jim Gilchrist,

Through the office of our Padre, Mick O'Donnell, I have become aware of the assistance that is being offered to us who are isolated with this awful global Virus.

I would just like to extend my family's appreciation of this wonderful gesture. Now being isolated for three whole weeks I have taken to more reading than usual and, while looking through a poetry book sent to me by a daughter living in Queensland, there is one poem which I thought you and other members may like.

It is by an ex-British soldier, Leo Marks, [1921-2001] who wrote it for Ruth, a girl he loved who unfortunately was killed in Canada in 1943.

Later during the war years he gave it to Violette Szabo, a Secret Agent in France. Leo Marks was a crucial part of these Operations.

The Life That I Have

The life that I have
Is all that I have
And the life that I have is yours.

The love that I have
Of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours

A sleep I shall have
A rest I shall have
Yet death will be but a pause

For the peace of my years
In the long green grass
Will be yours and yours and yours.

*[Written on Christmas Eve 1943 for Ruth, a girl with whom Leo Marks was in love, and who had been killed in a plane crash in Canada.
The following year he gave it to the agent Violette Szabo who used it as the cipher for encoding her messages from France]*

WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH PRESIDENTS 1954-2020

Year	President	Year	President
1954	H.C. (Horrie) Macarthur	1986/89	W.P. (Bill) Smith
1955	J.H. (Joe) Riddle	1989/90	P.G. (Peter) Richards
1956	R.M. (Bob) Berriman	1991/92	A.R. (Alex) Rundle
1957	G.R. (Dick) Stone	1993	A.W. (Alex) Reynolds
1958	J.P. (Jack) Barr	1994/95	R.G. (Bob) Sharp
1958	K.W. (Keith) Nunn	1996/97	A.W. (Alex) Reynolds
1959	R.M. (Bob) Berriman	1998/01	D. (David) Millar
1960	B.J. (Brian) Bourke	2002	B. (Berry) Nyman
1969	R.M. (Bob) Berriman	2003/05	P. (Peter) Dinham
1970/72	B. (Brair) Taylor	2006/08	N. (Neil) Horn
1973/76	L.E. (Eric) Beaumont	2009/13	P. (Peter) MacFetters
1977/83	J.H. (John) Lewis	2013-	J. (Jim) Gilchrist
1986	C. (Clive) Ellis		

A Bit of Wartime Trivia

Blackout curtains, V-mail letters, pin-up girls. These are some of the remembered symbols of the war years, at least for those of us who fought the battle of under-supply and over-demand on the home front. Our own vision of warfare was shaped by dispatches from Chester Wilmot and George Johnston, and those Hollywood movies that turned tortured battlefields into realms of heroism and romance.

The war years were not all hurrah and glory; those were times of deep anxiety, tragic sacrifice and heartbreak. But our countries at war were united perhaps as never before. The “war effort” was everyone pulling together; Dad was an air-raid warden, Mum worked for the Comforts Fund, the children collected scrap aluminium from the neighbours and wrapped bandages for the Red Cross.

You couldn’t buy silk stockings; you couldn’t drive anywhere without wondering, “Is this trip really necessary?” And most people yearned for a nice juicy steak. But while tea and butter went to war along with much of our manpower, we never lost our optimism - or our sense of humour.

We laughed a lot in the war years; at our politicians, at our Axis enemies, of course, but mostly at ourselves. There were jokes about sailors on leave, sweethearts left behind, Dorothy Lamour and her indispensable sarong, varicoloured ration coupons, raw recruits and burly sar’majors. On the following pages are many of the jokes that provided chuckles and mirth during the long, tense days of the war; stories and anecdotes gathered from pages of the Reader’s Digest. Now, though a quarter of a century has passed, it should delight us to recognize - and recall - some of the silly things we loved to laugh at then.

The forward from Humour in Uniform, Jests, Jokes and Anecdotes from the War Years.

ANZAC & Peace Ceremony Essay Competition
Joint Winning Essay — 2020
Brigid Norgrove - St Benedict's Primary School
Narrabundah - Year 6

Rest on arms reversed is a military drill used at funerals, liturgies and times of sadness and mourning such as Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day. The service person's weapon is faced down so as to not intend fire. When forces march in reverse arms, the service person's weapon is held pointing behind them and is held behind their back. It is a symbolic form of respect, especially used in Commonwealth countries.

To me, rest on arms reversed means respect and thankfulness towards the men and women who have fallen while serving their countries. My family and I have deep respect for those who have fallen to protect us.

My father is a Wing Commander medical officer in the RAAF and he cares for many service personnel affected by their personal experiences of armed conflict. He recalls the deep sense of respect felt by all present during the ANZAC Day dawn service whilst he was deployed on operations.

The tragedy and impact of armed conflict is felt during the fighting and for years afterwards. Rest on arms reversed provides an opportunity for us to reflect on the impact of armed conflict upon those who serve, their families and the communities affected by the conflict. My great grandfather served as a bomber pilot in the RAF during World War II. The war remained with him when he returned home. This affected his family, his relationships and his community.

Weapons faced down symbolise the cessation of hostility and the opportunity to rebuild. Relationships with our enemies can be restored, and can even flourish. It is so important to rebuild and make peace with the countries that we've fought with so we can make sure to have as little conflict as possible. The sacrifice of those fallen has contributed to peace and security in the world. The incredible losses nations have suffered help to ensure such conflicts never happen again.

Although I am a child and have never served in the Defence Force, and although I don't have a weapon to rest on, I can show my own respect in my own way. I can attend ANZAC Day services and liturgies, read and educate myself about these wars and conflicts, and most importantly, show respect to those individuals who put the needs of their country before their own and lay down their lives for the benefit of others.

ANZAC & Peace Ceremony Essay Competition
Joint Winning Essay — 2020
Skye Wilder - St John Vianney Primary School
Waramanga - Year 5

“Rest On Arms Reversed” is a funny saying I thought at first, but then I took some time, studied the photographs of soldiers doing the drill and realised it was a very personal way of showing respect to the fallen soldiers. The imagery of the soldiers slowly reversing their rifle, placing the muzzle on their boot, and solemnly bowing their head, is their way of saying, “Why do we do this?”

We do it for our families. We do it for our country. We do it for their freedom.

Technically, “Rest On Arms Reversed” is an army drill, performed at a funeral of a service person or on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies. The catafalque party are selected to solemnly show great respect and sadness for the fallen person and stand guard around the coffin.

Another way I look at the saying “Rest On Arms Reversed” is a reminder of the soldier that fought for us and lost their lives. Now as they rest in peace, they are no longer fighting, and we will never forget them and what they have done for us. Everyone is now giving them the respect they deserve.

ROAR is an acronym for “Rest On Arms Reversed”. I see this as a reminder to attack life as it is. Try not to forget that your life is going to be full of obstacles and adventures. It’s true when people say “Life is like a rollercoaster”. At times you may think your life is horrible and the worst of all, but you need to think about those who make your life special, many people have it much worse than you.

My Great Grandfather, Gunga Bob, fought in World War II and was on a Royal Australian Navy warship that was torpedoed by a German submarine. My Grandpa May, was also involved in World War II as a gunner. My Great, Great Grandpa Harry Ernest Nelson wrote a diary when he was at war and remembered the ROAR acronym. In one of my Great, Great Grandpa’s diaries, he drew a lion right after he wrote an ode to his mates.

This shows us that war isn’t just about fighting, it’s also about mateship. Grandpa Nelson wrote in the beginning of his diary about how proud he was marching off to war: “It was a great sight. The SG naval band played patriotic tunes and a great gathering lined the march to the station”.

It seems to me that “Rest On Arms Reversed” is what you feel at the other end of “March forward with pride and honour”.

Grandpa Nelson is a special man to me. He was registered as an Able Seaman Driver #393 with the Royal Australian Navy Bridging train. In 1916, he was sadly pronounced missing in action, so “Rest On Arms Reversed” personally symbolises the great sacrifice and hardship my family members made. It is a way to stop and show respect for all those soldiers who have fallen while being thankful as well for their dedication and service to Australia. >>>>

My Great, Great, Grandpa's Ode to his mates.

Ode to No 6 Company

“All suffering sods of No 6,
Who came away to fight,
Who left your home and came like bucks
And gave your soldiers hats
Paid good attention to your boots
And fitted you with spats
They gave you soldiers marching gear
A sort of mongrel rig
And now with scarcely bill of fair
They'll shortly “Cook your pig”.
You've tramped through bush among dirt and dust
Where armed Kanakas hide
And then your luck after curse
You never turned aside
And now you guard your conquered lands
On half enough stew
Australia sent you out to bring these islands neath they sway
But does she know to life you cling on biscuits twice a day
The very kaboes on her planes are better fed than you
Who paid the price for what she gains on half enough of stew
So when you see souls like us once more take my lifeless words
and stay at home let others go when...
On the battlefields to come and if you're tempted to assist
the dead of daring do Komenalier “Six biscuits and everlasting stew”.

Orderly Retreat

The mass movement of more than 16,000 sick and wounded men by plane from the Tunisian area to base hospitals, and, as you can imagine was in a rather disorganised manner. A US Army Medical Corps officer was busy transferring stretcher cases from ambulances to planes when he noticed a soldier wrapped in a blanket, standing by an empty stretcher.

“Who told you to get up?” demanded the officer sharply. “Lie down on that stretcher and lie down quick”. The soldier started to protest but was quickly silenced. “If you don't lie down I'll have you court-martialled”, the officer snapped. The soldier obeyed, was loaded aboard and flown to hospital 600 miles away. On arrival, he was asked the nature of his injury.

“Ain't nothing wrong with me”, the soldier explained. “Our company was getting deloused back there at the airfield and I just wandered over to see what was going on while my clothes were being done”.

A young lady received an envelope addressed in familiar handwriting from overseas. But instead of the expected letter, she found inside a slip of paper saying simply, “Your boyfriend still loves you, but he talks too much — Censor”.

Extracts from “Humour in Uniform” - Anecdotes from the War Years.



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.”*



Francis Atkins, Kathleen Craig, Ivor McKay,
Alec Phillips, Alex Reynolds, Denis Hogan,
Thomas Clark, Gweneth Miles.



Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Service 2020

The Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Service planned for 18 August 2020 (Long Tan Day) will not be conducted in its usual format this year due to the impact of COVID-19.

The Vietnam Veterans Federation is not prepared to expose the Veterans and members of the community who would normally attend the service to the possibility of COVID-19 infection given the incidents arising in Victoria and New South Wales. This is not a decision we have taken lightly.

A simple service will be held at the National Vietnam Memorial on Anzac Parade, Reid from 10AM on 18 August 2020. The Service will consist of a welcome address, a Prayer for Peace, the Last Post and the laying of wreaths or other commemorative items. There will be no seating available.

All Vietnam Veterans are invited to attend the brief Service and gather at the Ainslie Football Club, 52 Wakefield Avenue, Ainslie from 12:00 hours to 15:00 hours for the traditional camaraderie afternoon.

Ward Gainey JP
Chairman, Organising Committee
Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day 2020

ANZAC & Peace Ceremony Essay Competition
Third Prize Winner — 2020
Eleanor Graham - Chapman Primary School

Often when I travel around Australia I see a statue of a soldier in the middle of a small town resting his arms on his rifle with the muzzle resting on the ground. The Rest on Arms Reverse signifies gratitude towards someone that has fallen in battle. I find this image very powerful.

My Grandfather, Rex Adrian Wigney, fought in the Vietnam War fifty years ago. On the fiftieth anniversary last year he met up with the people from his platoon and I'm sure they reflected on the people they had lost. Every year on ANZAC Day, at the parades he looks at that Rest on Arms Reverse statue to think about the people who died fighting and how grateful he is for their sacrifices.

When I look at the statue of Rest on Arms Reverse it makes me think of my grandpa's experiences and all men and women who have died in wars. The stillness and silence makes it incredibly powerful. Their rifles pointed at the ground shows me that they truly want peace and how much their losses mean to them. I know what loss means. Even though no one close to me has died in war I have had losses such as my grandma, my grandad and my uncle. Death is devastating but I think the Rest on Arms Reverse really shows how much the people who have fallen mean to us. It's a way of thanking them. All over the world there are people who have dealt with loss and I hope when they look to Rest on Arms they think of them even if they did not fall in war.

Each soldier has a different story all of which are meaningful. No matter how they died we will always remember and thank them for the sacrifices they made for us.

As General Douglas MacArthur once said: "The soldier above all others pray for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war". Which means that the soldier suffers the most if there is no peace. In the future I hope that there will be fewer wars but everyone will still remember who they have lost in past wars.

"Without memory there is no culture. Without memory there would be no civilization, no society, no future" — Elie Wiesel. [1928-2016]

Note: Elie Wiesel was a Romanian born American writer, professor, political activist, Nobel laureate, and Holocaust survivor. He authored 57 books, written mostly in French and English, including Night, a work based on his experiences as a Jewish prisoner in the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps.

You'll Be Sorry

Les Cook

I enlisted at the recruiting depot at the Flinders Street Railway Station in Melbourne. After completing our applications we were given a brief preliminary medical examination. There was only one doctor, who dealt with ten men together in a group. The minimum height in those days was 5ft 6ins (1.6m). Minimum chest measurement was 32ins (80mm), and by taking a deep breath this must be increased to 36ins (90mm). We had undressed and did some physical activities to show that we were reasonably fit.

After the medical tests we walked as a group to the Melbourne Town Hall where we were sworn in. A room at the town hall had been especially prepared for this service. We had enlisted for the duration of the present war and 12 months thereafter. We then went by train to the suburb of Caulfield where the Defence Department had taken over the Caulfield racecourse. We were issued with a kit bag, webbing, clothing and two blankets and remained there for two days. Using the blankets we slept on the long wooden seats in the grandstand, and were provided with food. We were then given a short period of leave on the second day to return our civilian clothes to our homes. On the morning of the third day we went by train to the town of Seymour on the Hume Highway about 90kms north-east of Melbourne.

Most of the military training camps in Victoria had been created in the Seymour area during WWI. The major campsite was at Puckapunyal, the others aligned along a road leading from Seymour town. From an accommodation point of view Puckapunyal would have been rated as 5-Star when compared with the tent camps. The men were housed in large wooden buildings and the ablution and toilet facilities were reasonably modern. Conditions at the tent camps were; its hard to find a suitable word - primitive or archaic, and that's where we were. We had home leave every second weekend, and those who had a home to go to were able to have a bath.

The ablution facilities for a company of about 100 men was a cast iron wheeled water tank manufactured by Furphy and Sons at Shepparton, Victoria, possibly during WWI. The firm's name was cast in relief in large letters on the end of the tank above the tap. The congregation of men around the tank to wash and shave in the early hours every morning provided ideal conditions for the introduction and spreading of rumours, which became known as "furphies" as a direct result of this connection. As we walked to our camp from the Seymour Railway Station it would have been obvious to the people in the other camps that we were newcomers. When we approached the first campsite we were greeted with the cry, "You'll be sorry", and we were to hear this cry repeated often as we continued on our way. Apparently it had become an established custom. Of course the whole thing was a complete joke - simply just a typical example of Australian humour in those days. The situation at the time was not duplicated for me, and I was never to hear the phrase again.

Of course war conditions are not always safe and comfortable, but in the six years I served, I did not hear anyone even suggest he might be sorry that he had enlisted voluntarily. I have always considered it to have been a privilege for me that I was given the opportunity to serve in the AIF. The following final two lines from a famous - or perhaps infamous - WWII poem express this sentiment admirably:

*"In spite of our critics this war will end and those of us that are left
will proudly proclaim with voice and pen, I was in the AIF".*

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH

OF THE RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE WILL BE HELD ON

THURSDAY 29th OCT 2020

Grant Cameron Community Centre - The Corey Room

commencing at 2:00PM



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

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Thursday 29th Oct 2020
AGENDA**

1. Roll Call
2. Minutes of previous AGM [28th May 2019] – 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 Oct 2020
13. Closure
14. Ode

Social Art Program for Veterans



ACT Government Veterans' Grant Scheme

The Veterans' Social Art Program run by Margaret Hadfield at the Artists Shed in Fyshwick was completed with ten graduates. The program was run over five sessions with lessons conducted by three teachers; Margaret, Julianne and Denis.

The course began on 18 March, however, we were forced to put classes on hold until 27 May due to COVID-19 restrictions. Observing social distancing, classes resumed and were successfully completed on 17 June. The friendly environment ensured that everyone felt at home and was free to express their talent under the guidance of excellent teachers.

Over the five weeks, students were taught colour mixing, drawing methods and textures, positioning a composition, framing a section of work for focusing on and acrylic painting techniques. Our graduates were presented with their certificate of completion by Minister Gordon Ramsay, Minister for Seniors and Veterans and Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events. This was followed by a BBQ at the Artists Shed.

We are all looking forward to the next round of classes in the future.

RSL ACTIVITIES

At the Ordinary General Meeting Dinner on 25 February 2020, the following is a transcript of the speech by Guest Speaker Terry Colhoun AM.

Although a member of the RSL on and off since 1945, I didn't become involved in the League's activities until I retired at the end of 1984. Then I became involved in four major activities.

I started in 1994 when I read a speech made at the AWM by the late Major General Digger James. He was speaking as National President at a ceremony that marked the start of the *Year of Remembrance*, which preceded the 50th anniversary of the end of the WWII. His speech included some lines that made me sit up. I will quote them:

“Let this not be a year in which we look inwards...but one in which our gratitude for service leads us to look Forward”

“As a Nation, Japan has yet to come to terms with her past; what a significant achievement it would be if that happened this year”

AND..this specially, “To visit the sins of one generation upon another is uncivilised. May we never be guilty of it”.

I was interested as an RAAF WWII veteran who had been working for better understanding between Australian and Japanese people for more than 20 years. I was aware of the horrific and, at times, inhuman behaviour of some Japanese military personnel during the Pacific War, particularly because a cousin had been killed by Japanese soldiers at Laha on Ambon Island after he had surrendered.

But I also knew that Australia and Japan had been at peace for 50 years; they were strong trading partners, and more than half of the Japanese population had been born since the war ended. The RSL was still strongly anti-Japan and I wondered; was Digger James saying to the RSL that it was time to soften its anti-Japanese attitude?

I wanted to meet and talk with Digger James but given my lack of any standing in the RSL it was a bold hope that he would meet me. I sought advice from Ian Gollings, a member of this Sub-Branch and a past National President, and he made it possible.

Digger explained his wishes for the Year of Remembrance, but said moving his National Council would not be easy. We agreed to work together to develop an act of reconciliation - perhaps a simple but symbolic ceremony at the AWM involving Australian and Japanese veterans. But no Australian veteran or war-bereaved family should be hurt. I asked Digger if he would meet the Japanese Ambassador if I could arrange it. He agreed and I saw Ambassador Hasagawa at the Embassy and explained to him that our war veterans had always enjoyed wide community respect because they had volunteered their lives to defend their country. War bereaved families were shown great sympathy by the Nation and that if the Embassy wanted to understand Australia and its people it had to recognize the special place that our war dead, surviving veterans, and our bereaved families had in the community.

>>>

The RSL represented these people and I recommended Digger James as a person he should meet. I explained Digger's extraordinary military service and gave him a copy of Digger's speech.

Mr Hasagawa warmly accepted the idea of meeting Digger, and in November 1984 we three met in his office. I believe this was the first formal meeting between the RSL's National President and a Japanese Ambassador since World War II. We agreed to start work after the *Year of Remembrance* ended on what we named **THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP**. The agreed objective was:

To effect a meaningful and lasting reconciliation between those who suffered in Australia and Japan as a result of wartime activities 1941-1945.

At a planning meeting in May 1995, Digger affirmed that *The Hand of Friendship* was an RSL project. He rejected a proposal from the Cowra Shire Council that they should take over the project - at RSL expense - and it should involve Rev. Father Tony Glynn, an Australian Catholic priest in Japan. Digger said he wanted no politicians and no priests of any religion in our project. The Ambassador fully agreed. Digger asked me to keep working on the project.

In August 1995 Ambassador Hasagawa wrote a letter that was published by the Canberra Times, in which he apologised for atrocities committed during the war by Japanese military personnel. It was a courageous and sincere act that impressed Digger. In March 1996, Digger and I met a new Ambassador, Mr Satoh, who told us Mr Hasagawa had commended our project to him and he would give it his full support. He warned us that the Japanese Imperial Family could not be involved, for Constitutional reasons.

We decided it was time to let our Foreign Affairs Department know what we were doing. We met Mr Alexander Downer, the Foreign Affairs Minister, who gave us his personal support, and said we would be assisted by his department if we requested. He told us his father, Sir Alick Downer, had served as a gunner in the 2/14 Field Regiment AIF, and had been a prisoner of war in Changi, but neither of them bore any ill will to post-war Japan.

There was a significant sign of progress when Digger retired at the end of 1997 and his RSL farewell was attended by Ambassador Satoh. No Japanese Ambassador had attended an RSL function of this type before and he was well received.

Digger's successor, Major General Peter Phillips asked me to continue to look for a suitable Japanese group to invite and suggested that I contact the World Veteran's Association. They named a retired Major General as their Japanese representative but my letter to him was returned "unknown". Our Tokyo embassy couldn't find him either. As we could not find any suitable body of Japanese veterans or war widows to invite, I was almost ready to give up when an idea came to us from Bob Piper and his Japanese-born wife Misako. Bob was a civilian war historian with RAAF contacts and he believed it was possible to identify the Japanese airmen whose planes had been shot down over the Northern Territory, and possibly to locate some others whose bodies were never found. Peter Phillips and I gratefully accepted this as the new direction for "The Hand of Friendship".

With support from new ambassador, Mr Takahashi, a search was undertaken in the Northern Territory but no remains were found.

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Mr and Mrs Piper, using Australian and Japanese sources, were already starting to identify all of the “unknown” airmen who were now in the Japanese War Cemetery at Cowra. The Office of Australian War Graves agreed to provide new headstones for the graves when the Piper’s information was confirmed, which it was without any problems. The Minister for Veterans Affairs was briefed and gave us support.

Meanwhile, the relationship between RSL National office and the Embassy was improving. National President Peter Phillips visited Japan as a government guest. In August 2001 a party of Japanese politicians visited Canberra and given an unprecedented reception at National Headquarters. They were welcomed by our National President and I briefed one of the visitors on the Hand of Friendship. Later, the whole of the RSL National Council went to Japan as guests of the government.

When Peter Phillips ended his term as National President his successor was Major General Bill Crews. I briefed him and he said I could continue with the project. We were now working to fix a date for a ceremony at the Cowra War Cemetery. It took time to suit everybody but 26 May 2006 was chosen. It was roughly 12 years after Digger and I first met. At the first planning meeting, held at National Headquarters, with the Japanese Defense Attache and myself present, Major General Crews said he would host the event and the MC would be a Cowra man. He would not need my participation in the ceremony. OK, but when I got to Cowra I learned that the ceremony was not to be called “*Hand of Friendship*”. Our National President had renamed it: “*Unveiling of Replacement of Grave Markers*”.

The Ambassador of Japan, the Minister for Veterans Affairs, senior officers of his department and the Mayor of Cowra were there, and it was attended by the elderly, frail sister of an airman whose grave was renamed. She was taken in a wheelchair to his grave where she performed a Buddhist ceremony, flanked on either side by one of our war widows, who then placed white roses on the other renamed graves. The National President presented the renaming to the Japanese Ambassador as an act of reconciliation. They both thanked Digger James, Bob and Misako Piper and myself in their speeches, and Major General Crews said I had inspired Digger James to launch the “*Hand of Friendship*” and what its objective was. Not so: Digger inspired me.

Activity Number 2.

In 1997 I was invited to meet the Director of the AWM, Major General Steve Gower to discuss my becoming the commentator for the ANZAC Day march at the memorial. I gladly accepted his invitation. He told me the ACT branch of the RSL was looking for an MC for the Dawn Service which led to my meeting Colleen Thurgar who, at that time, was Branch President. She explained that the Dawn Ceremony had been moved outside the Memorial’s Cloister because the number of people attending had outgrown that space. She appointed me the first MC of the RSL’s Dawn Service. Soon after Jan Paulga, the organiser of the service, and I discussed how I would do it. He accepted my suggestion that I should start with an explanation of why the Dawn Service was held, not just for the people standing in the dark, but for listeners to the ABC’s domestic and short wave radio services.

The response to my march commentary was very good in 1997 and 1998, but when it was time to plan the 1999 march the mood at the AWM had changed. A new ceremonial officer told me I needed to enliven my commentary.

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I pointed out this was a solemn event with veterans remembering fallen comrades; it was not entertainment. After that he made it increasingly difficult for me to prepare for the march, and I decided to resign after ANZAC Day. I continued to MC the Dawn Service with full support from our Branch President and Jan Paulga. I felt that no one could be asked to do anything more satisfying on ANZAC Day. I knew that thousands of people were there, holding candles and torches but not seeing us, while even more were hearing us on radio; that the Governor General of Australia was with us without ceremony; and that I was privileged to be leading a traditional ceremony that Australian and New Zealand defence forces had shared before leaving West Australia for the Gallipoli landing.

Unfortunately, certain people in the AWM were planning to control how I should do this job, although it was not their business. At first they wanted me to give a long talk about Gallipoli - which they would write for me - before the service began. I refused, believing it was unnecessary and would affect the solemnity of the morning. Later, they told an ANZAC Day planning meeting in my absence that I was too old to be the MC, and proposed as my replacement a popular female broadcaster on ABC local radio. RSL Branch representatives demanded that those remarks be deleted from the minutes, and confirmed that I would continue as MC.

As my 9th Dawn Service approached, two female staff from the AWM demanded my script so they could edit it to conform with AWM practices. I refused, on the grounds that it was an RSL service, not a War Memorial function. When Jan Paulga told me these women were putting pressure on him too, I decided it was in the best interests of the RSL for me to stand aside. The Branch President did not wish to accept my resignation, but I left and gave permission for my scripts to be used by my successor, which they were.

Activity Number 3.

In 1998, Digger James (now retired National President) rang me from Brisbane concerning the naming of Canberra-Nara Park, alongside Lake Burley Griffin. He told me the Canberra-Nara Sister City Committee was naming it a Peace Park and this was unacceptable to many veterans and war widows. He said the Prime Minister and the Minister for Veterans Affairs were concerned that this could affect Australia-Japan relations. He asked me to see if the Japanese Ambassador could help to change it from "Peace" to "Friendship", which had been proposed by the Woden Valley Sub-Branch and would be broadly acceptable.

After talking with National President Peter Phillips and our Branch President, I saw Kate Carnell, the ACT Chief Minister. We had two unhelpful meetings but I accepted her advice and met Mr Brian Jones, President of the Sister City Committee. I told him this was an issue of concern to WWII veterans and war widows, and suggested that "Friendship Park" should replace "Peace Park". I gave him a copy of the Woden Sub-Branch's proposal. He replied that the Mayor of Nara wanted "Peace Park", and the Sister City Committee agreed, because it had received from Nara a gift of \$100,000 and two stone lanterns valued at \$300,000. He argued that there had to be peace before friendship. My reply was that we had been at peace with Japan for over 50 years and that there were organisations in Japan and Australia, including the RSL, that were promoting friendship. My discussions with the Ambassador were interesting. After he reported to his Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, they spoke with the Mayor of Nara who told them he didn't care what the park was called. I informed all interested parties. Nothing happened after that. The park wasn't named.

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Then in 2005, the naming of the park came up again when Chief Minister Jon Stanhope decided it would be “Canberra Nara Peace Park”. Branch President, Gary Brodie, apparently unaware of the earlier debate, agreed with him. I quickly briefed him and gave him a copy of my file. I also briefed National President Bill Crews. Despite Branch Council publicly opposing Stanhope’s decision, the Sister City Committee obeyed his direction, and it is now a “Peace Park”.

Last activity.

In 1990 the National Library of Australia asked me to record an oral history of the RSL, to accompany the National Executive’s documents which were being held by the Library. It was a great learning experience that took me from the beginning of the League, up to 2007. After that I could not continue because I was caring for my wife who had developed bowel cancer.

The people who told me about their lives and their involvement in the RSL:

Major General Digger James, (National President)
Sir William Keys, (National Secretary and National President)
Brigadier Alf Garland, (National President)
Major General Sir William Refshauge, (National Trustee)
Mr Bruce Ruxton, (Victorian State President)
Mr Ian Gollings, (National Secretary),
Mrs June Healey, (National Secretary),
Mrs Colleen Thurgar, (ACT President and first woman to become Branch President),
Major General Peter Phillips, (National President).

I am restricted on what I can say about the interviews, but I can tell you Alf Garland and Bill Keys strongly disliked each other and Bill was deeply hurt when Alf banned him from entering National Headquarters. Mr Garland admitted that he had publicly called Prime Minister Keating “a bog-eyed Irish Catholic”, and he believed that Bill Keys had made the RSL a political organization that was too close to the Labor Party.

Bill Keys expressed his concern that Mr Garland had ruined the goodwill he had built up with succeeding Prime Ministers. This was confirmed by Digger James who said he had to spend a lot of time getting the government to talk with the RSL again.

Bruce Ruxton, whom we remember as one of the RSL’s most outspoken anti-Japan office bearers, surprised me when he told me that he and his wife were the Australian host family for a Japanese boy who was attending a school in Geelong.

The experiences I have revealed tonight were a privilege. I am a better person because I met and worked with some great Australians, and I am proud to have been able to serve the RSL with them.

NOTES FOR THE DIARY IN 2020



OGM - Tue 28 Jul at 1400 in the GCCC - 'The Corey Room'

AGM - Thursday 29 Oct at GCCC - 'The Corey Room' - See notice Page 27

Closing Date for Christmas edition of 'The Serviceman' : Fri 16th Oct.

Note: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 virus it is not possible to indicate firm dates for any other meetings or activities.

Australian Remembrance Trail along the Western Front

The Australian Remembrance Trail, an Australian Government initiative incorporating sites in Belgium and France, was developed in partnership with local communities to give visitors an understanding of the breadth of achievement and sacrifice of Australians in the main theatre of conflict of WWI.

Plugstreet 14-18 is a multimedia driven interpretive centre, established at a cost of more than \$2.8M. Visitors are taken on a journey through the experiences of the soldiers and civilians who fought and lived in the area around Commines-Warneton in the south of Belgium. When the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company built the Catacombs near Ploegsteert Wood, to the devastating mines that detonated under the German line along Messines Ridge signalling the start of the Battle of Messines, visitors will leave with a greater appreciation of Australia's role in the area. On the Trail in France, major roadworks were completed at the Australian National Memorial near Villers-Bretonneux.

At Fromelles, the museum telling the story of Australia's first battle in France, the 1916 Battle of Fromelles. Visitors will learn of the recovery and reinterment of 250 Australian and British soldiers from mass graves discovered in nearby Pheasant Wood.

At Pozières, France, walking trails supported by traditional signage and digital media will encompass points of significance including the 1st Division Memorial, the Gibraltar blockhouse captured by Australians, and the Pozières Windmill site.

To learn more about the Trail visit the Australians on the Western Front 1914-1918 website at www.wwl.westernfront.gov.au

The Fifties

Pasta had not been invented. It was macaroni or spaghetti
Curry was a surname
A take-away was a mathematical problem
Pizza? Sounded like a leaning tower somewhere
Bananas and oranges only appeared at Christmas time
All chips were plain
Oil was for lubricating. Fat was for cooking
Tea was made in a teapot with tea leaves and never green
Cubed sugar was regarded as posh
Fish didn't have fingers
None of us had ever heard of yogurt
Healthy food consisted of anything edible
Cooking outside was called camping
Seaweed was not a recognised food
'Kebab' was not even a word, never mind a food
Sugar enjoyed a good press and was regarded as being white gold
Prunes were medicinal
Muesli was readily available - It was called 'Cattle Feed'
Pineapple came in a tin - we had only seen a picture of a real one
Water came from the tap - if anyone had suggested bottling it and
charging more than petrol for it, they would have been considered mad
The things that we NEVER EVER had on, or at our table, was elbows or hats

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SUB-BRANCH SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Health and Fitness Program. The arrangements in place between the Southern Cross Health Club and the Sub-Branch relating to gym use have changed. For details, call the office on 6285 1931.

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

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

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

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