



War Veterans Village [Narrabeen] RSL sub-Branch

Through an active membership we keep the ANZAC spirit alive and growing

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Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am – 12pm.

ACTING PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our Secretary John Sowden has distributed to members a full explanation of the why and how of the elections that need to be held to return our sub-Branch to legitimacy in the eyes of the NSW RSL constitution and I have nothing further to contribute that would improve on John's work.

What I would like to comment on is the direction that the sub-Branch might progress in terms of the way it will operate after its re-constitution.

Our membership is relatively unique in that most active members live in the village and have a commonality of attractions and "things to do" available to them.

In a lot of ways this is a benefit to our sub-Branch in that it is usually the case that occurrences organised by the sub-Branch can attract sufficient interest and participation to make them viable and of sufficient interest to be pursued.

In the past (and currently) the task of arranging and bringing these endeavours to fruition has fallen on a narrow band of members prepared to offer assistance to the committee, usually headed by John Sowden.

We were partially shielded from this situation because our past President (Bob) had over 30 years' experience of how things were done and who did them in the field of administration of the NSW RSL

What needs to be fully understood is that as a group, most of those current committee members who have volunteered to work to re-establish the legitimacy of our sub-Branch have done so on the basis that at the next formal elections (to be held in 2 years' time), they will not be candidates. Keep in mind that most are in their mid-eighties.

Replacement candidates need to be found and trained in undertaking all the various types of work that the committee is involved in.

I ask that all members have a good think as to what they are prepared to contribute to the success of this sub-Branch and become involved in the planning required in trying to ensure the

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Address Label

READ YOUR EDITION AND ENJOY

successful re-constitution of our group and its management structure and be prepared to participate in the various discussions and decisions that await us.

Regards

Roy Parkinson

Acting President.

Our August Meeting
Thursday 8th August 9.30am
in Lone Pine lounge.
Guest Speaker- Pauline James
President RSL NSW Auxiliaries
Morning tea will follow the meeting

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Total membership –	134
Life Member	2
Life Subscriber	2
Affiliate	62
Service	52
Associates	16

Christmas in July Luncheon

Where: Vivian Bullwinkel Lounge – Dardanelles.
When: Thursday 11th July at 12 noon
Why: Because it is Winter!
Cost: \$45pp
RSVP 5th July (cash or card) at Sub-Branch Office lower-ground floor of Gallipoli
Menu:
Sliced Glazed and Baked Ham with Chili Jam, Sliced Roast Turkey with Cranberry Sauce,
Herb Roasted Vegetables, German Potato salad with Egg, Gerkin and Dill Broccoli, Bean and Snow Pea Salad with toasted Sesame Vinaigrette. Bread rolls and butter portions.
Christmas Pudding with custard.
Bubbly on arrival with wine on your table

July General Meeting – This is to be held prior to the Christmas luncheon, in the Vivian Bullwinkel Lounge, Dardanelles 11.30 to noon. Please be sure to allow time to assemble before 11.30am. This meeting will consider amongst other matters, the election of our President and Vice President.

If you are unable or don't wish to attend the luncheon please come for the important meeting

82nd Anniversary Defence of Sydney

Our sub-Branch was represented by John and Elizabeth Sowden, Helen Gribble, Shirley Beggs, Patti Page and Bev Ash (whom we thank for this report) who attended the 82nd Anniversary Defence of Sydney Commemorative Service established by the Australia Remembers Northern Beaches and North Shore Committee.

Mr James Griffin MP, member for Manly hosted the proceedings with General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC (MIL) CVO MC (Retd) Former Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia as the special guest speaker.

The Paul Fenn Oration was presented by Mosman High School students Rafferty Laight and Katie McPherson outlining children's perspective of what occurred when the submarines entered Sydney Harbour and the confusion that followed.

Wreaths were laid by distinguished guests and multiple organisations including many local Schools.

It is encouraging to see these young people keeping memories of the past alive while going forward into an uncertain future.

Music was amply provided by the Manly District Band and the Manly Warringah Choir which included Song of Australia and I Vow to Thee My Country.

The service was well represented and fortunately for us was set up inside one of the vast buildings so we did not have to cope with the definite chill outside.

(We thank Bev Ash for this report)



One of the Floral Tributes



Peter Cosgrove Guest Speaker

Peter Cole our Treasurer and Web Master has posted on our website, this event in full. Copy the link to google.

<https://warvetsrsl.org.au/defence-of-sydney-commemoration/>

ANZAC DAY FUNDRAISING REPORT

Without the wonderful effort by small group of sub-Branch members and several non-member volunteer helpers, this fundraising campaign would not have been possible. Following on from our policy last year, there was no door-to-door canvassing in the village in 2024.

There was a pop-up table in the Gallipoli Building for four days, at Warriewood Square for four days, Vivian Bullwinkel Lounge on the night of the Dardanelles Residents' April meeting, a pop-up at the Bunnings BBQ on Remembrance Walkway and Secretary John had a pop-up at RSL LifeCare, St Leonards. Regrettably, there were too few volunteers to staff Augusta shops or Bunnings Narrabeen store.

The location we were allocated at Warriewood Square was not optimum. The requested location outside Kmart was occupied by a commercial pop-up targeting teen-age girls having their hair plaited and extended. Vicinity Centres is likely to have charged the pop-up operator premium leasing charges during the school holidays.

The Square EFTPOS terminals were used in all but one of the venues and demonstrated the value of being able to accept credit cards and payment through apps on smart devices. Some of the helpers gained practical experience using the Square and the user manual helped in this regard. About 43% of transactions were made through the square terminals.

Competition from Woolworths increased this year with the offering of 14 types of badges from \$5.00 to \$50.00 at each checkout. This fundraising is said to have raised \$13 million over the last 10 years and it is understood that funds raised go to RSL National.

Due to circumstances largely beyond our control there was a larger than usual amount of stock (\$1,309.48) carried forward from Remembrance Day 2023. Additional stock (\$518.00) of badges and lapel pins was purchased from The Military Shop.

Promotion of the pop-up table in the Gallipoli Building was published in the April edition of the Village Voice.

Result:

Sales – cash	\$1924.00
Sales – Square	\$1607.00
Donations	\$233.60
Total sales and donations	\$3764.60
Gross profit	\$1937.60
Stock carried forward	\$309.00

Leigh Haines
Fundraising Coordinator.
1 Jun 2024

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The last two months have been full of different and interesting challenges. I drove across the Nullabour from Sydney to Perth both ways although there and back were different routes at each end of the Nullabour itself – a wonderful trip over 5 weeks.

Your sub-Branch has become constitutionally non-complying as the result of being in a position where we have no President or Vice-President (Roy Parkinson as V-P is Acting President in the interim. Many members attended the extremely interesting talk from the War Museum volunteers Dave and Barb Coupland on our May meeting day.

The next two months are looking just as challenging

1. Our next meeting is our “Christmas in July” lunch. This will be held in the Vivian Bullwinkel Lounge in the Dardanelles where we held the very successful Christmas lunch last December. The meeting and lunch will be from 11.30AM for 12 midday. The cost will be \$45 (same as December) which the sub-Branch is subsidizing. Wives/husbands/partners are welcome. The caterers are the same (Corella Catering) and we decided that a hot lunch would be appropriate for this time of year. If you live in the Village outside of the Dardanelles, there will be a bus pick-up at your nearest bus stop between 11 and 11.30AM and your return will be organized as well. Please register and pay at the office which is open with a member volunteer between 0930 and 1200 each weekday. Card or cash is acceptable for payment. The latest booking time is Friday 5th July 10AM.

2. Our next meeting is extremely important. At the June meeting, Ivan Brisot (RSL NSW) spelt out the process and procedure we need to go through to resolve our current non-complying status. The issue now is to find a President and Vice-President as soon as possible. To this end there will be a motion presented on July 11 to have an election to fill these positions – which we hope will be successful and enable us to continue as the War Vets RSL sub-Branch until at least the elections in March 2026. This gives us almost two years to find members who can fill executive and committee positions at the time and take on possible assistant roles in the meantime as a learning period.

3. The sub-Branch is organizing this year's Vietnam Veterans' Day Commemoration Service to be held on Sunday August 18 at 2PM in the War Memorial Chapel. There will be a guest speaker and afternoon tea will follow the service.

You are encouraged to attend and show your support for all Vietnam veterans.

4. Your committee is in the process of organizing a tour of the Garden Island Naval Base – this will be on a meeting day as Thursday is the only day this tour is offered. Numbers are restricted to 20 and it is not suitable for members using a walker as there are several steps.

5. It is also planned to have Mrs. Pauline James as our guest speaker at a meeting to talk about RSL Auxiliaries of which she is NSW President. You may recall she came with husband Ray when he spoke last year in his capacity as RSL NSW President at that time.

I look forward to you joining the sub-Branch for the Christmas in July Lunch.

John Sowden

Secretary

MATE by Duncan Butler

I have travelled down some lonely roads, both crooked tracks and straight
and I have learned of life's noblest creed, summed up in one word – MATE.

I am thinking back across the years, as I do a lot of late, and this word just sticks between my ears, you have got to have a MATE.

Someone who will take you as you are, regardless of your state,
and stand by you like Ayers Rock, because he is your MATE.

My mind goes back to '42, to slavery and hate,
When man's last chance to stay alive depended on his MATE.

With bamboo for a billy can and bamboo for a plate
A bamboo paradise for bugs was bed for me and MATE.

You would slip and slither through the mud and curse
your rotten fate,

But then you would hear a quiet word,
do not drop your bundle MATE.

And though it is all so long ago, this truth I must state
A man does not know what lonely means until he has lost his MATE.

So, if there is a life that follows this, if there is a 'golden gate'

The welcome that I want to hear is just 'good on ya MATE'

So, to all that ask us why it is we keep these special dates

Like Anzac Day, I answer 'Why, we are thinking of our MATES.

And when I have left that driver's seat and handed in my plates

I will tell old Peter at the door, 'I have come to join my MATES'

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT WORLD WAR ONE - continued

Compiled by John Sowden.

PART 4. Letter dated November 1917

I have now been sent, with other gunners, to relieve the gun crews and had my first experience of firing a shell at Fritz. I am in one of six guns which make up a battery of artillery. The gun (a corporal and three of us gunners) is 30 yards off the road and under a green net to screen it from foreign aircraft. Our dugout was 10 yards in rear of the gun and consisted of a house that had previously stood there. The original roof had long since gone but had now been reinforced with steel/hardwood beams and bricks.

We lived here for a fortnight, oscillating between the gun and the dugout, firing, and carrying shells and hiding in the dugout when in turn he shelled us. A week before the first infantry advance, the Aussies took over from the Tommies. More Australians were in these battles of Flanders than have ever fought together before. OUR infantry who had been out spelling for this affair, were in magnificent condition with the majority of them towering over the retiring Tommies – they looked fit enough for anything, careless as to marching order, and joking as usual as they went past us to the line ahead. A fellow felt proud being their countryman.

20th September, Battle of Menin Road – saw us awakened by the sentry to say a phone message had come through from the officer at the other gun position to stand by the gun to open up at 5.40AM. The corporal has the table of the ranges to fire at certain times to keep pace with the advancing infantry. We turn out and stand by and at the appointed time, the EXACT TIME the boys hop over, the message comes by phone OPEN FIRE! 3 rounds per gun per minute. We fire and hurl 35lbs weight of Lyddite into Fritz's vitals, two miles ahead, at the same instant every gun on the sector opens up. Crash! The noise is indescribable. The ground is alive with every calibre from the 18 pounders to the great 13.5 naval gun, 10,000 guns. It is wonderful, awesome, terrible, the report of no individual gun can be heard, it is all merged into one mighty roar. To make oneself heard it is necessary to place both hands to the ear and shout. Four hours later (9am) the order to ease up to 2 rounds per minute and we take the opportunity of slipping away for a few minutes, one by one, for our breakfast (one piece of bacon fat and a slice of dry bread washed down with cold tea). At 11 am we ease up to a round every two minutes and at 12.30 pm cease fire.

Since we started 600 rounds have been fired. We allow ourselves ½ hour for dinner. Then commences shell carrying. 600 from the road to the guns pit. This is finished at 4.30 pm. About 5 pm Fritz launches a counter-attack against his lost positions, another ¾ hour firing, then tea – dry bread and tea – then clean and oil the gun, then two more counter attacks, then the wagons arrive on the road with more shells, unload them. 9 pm carry 200 more shells from the road – finish 11 pm. Just manage to stand up, go in dugout, bail out 6 inches of water, draw lots for different shifts of sentry, mine 2 – 3 am.

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Fall into exhausted sleep, too tired for even the 'chats' to keep me awake. They woke me at 2 am then did one hour sentry. About 3.30 am the sentry woke all of us as Fritz was putting gas shells over. Early the following morning he started bombarding us to put as many guns out of commission as possible. We take refuge in the dugout. Crash! He lobs a 9-inch shell 3 yards from the gun and fills the pit with a cartload of muck. It is dark in the dugout and every time a shell bursts near the dugout, the concussion extinguishes the candle. We all look as unconcerned as possible and pretend to read papers. But we all feel more-or-less sorry for ourselves. Not far from the dugout we have a corrugated iron shelter where we keep the rations and boil tea. On this particular morning about 8 am he got a shell right on this and our day's rations went sky high, leaving a hole 6 ft. deep where the cookhouse had been (no food for troops that day). The concussion in Our Home was terrific, made it rock like a boat and we gasp for breath. Of course, the candle went out, and I can assure you it was rather a shaky hand that lit it again. However, all good things have an end and shortly afterward, his bombardment eased up.

A couple of days later we were moved up the line and we had as hot a time as ever I want to experience. We were ready for the next advance – Battle of Polygon Wood. Some of Fritz's 13-inch naval guns were firing ¾ ton of high explosives at us which made a hole 30 ft. in diameter, 20 ft. deep. We were ordered to leave the guns and ran into some infantry trenches. By September 26th he had got onto our battery determined to wipe us out. With one direct hit he killed 4 gunners and wounded three more and we were ordered to clear out. We found an unoccupied AMC dugout and soon noticed a peculiar smell. It turned out that a gas shell had come through the sandbags and burst in the floor perhaps 24 hours before we took refuge there. Our eyes began to run, so the four of us headed for the dressing station – but found it had been blown up, with the wounded lying about on stretchers – dead. So, we pushed further back towards Ypres. By the time we got there my eyes had completely closed up and I was totally blind for a week. Then by ambulance to the nearest clearing station, then hospital train to Rouen, two weeks in base hospital there, then across to Blighty in the hospital ship "Grantully Castle" from Le Havre to Southampton.

As we were carried from the boat to the waiting hospital train, we were overwhelmed with fruit and cigarettes etc. by scores of girls. It was 'some dope' I tell you. The train hurried us to this hospital where I have been ever since (seven weeks). I was burned by the mustard gas about the body and the eyes were bad for a long time, but I am now almost better. This is the largest hospital in the world, a beautiful building, sisters, and nurses' kindness itself, the best food and plenty of fair visitors with presents – 15 miles from London. I'm looking forward to 21 days furlough when I leave hospital.

TO BE CONTINUED