



HIGHGATE



NEWS

Issue 491
December 2009

Website: <http://Highgate-rsl.org.au>

The official newsletter of the Highgate (WA) Sub-Branch of the Returned & Services League of Australia

MONTHLY LUNCHEON

Monday 21st December 2009

Venue: Gallipoli Room

Time: 1130 hrs—Fellowship 1215 hrs—Luncheon

Guest Speaker:



Highgate Sub-Branch member
Max Kay AM CitWA

Max arrived in Perth from Scotland in 1967, and soon became one of WA's most sought after performers.

In 1976, Max opened the Civic Theatre Restaurant where he wrote, produced and performed in his own shows. The "Five Past Nine" shows as they were called, incorporated a unique blend of singing, dancing and satirical sketch comedy.

The Civic Theatre was a Perth icon for 25 years, playing to over 1.5 million people, and employing up to 100 people during the busy seasons including stage performers, stage technicians, administration and sales staff and food and beverage staff.

In January 2001 Max closed the Civic in order to pursue other goals including touring his successful "Five Past Nine" shows around Australia and running for council.

In 2001, Max's contribution to the entertainment industry in Western Australia was recognised when he received the Citizen of the Year Award in the Arts, Culture and Entertainment category.

In 2003 he earned his highest accolade when he was awarded the AM (Member of the Order of Australia). In this same year he was also one of the 1,300 West Australian's to receive the Prime Minister's Centenary Medal.

As an accomplished character comedian, scriptwriter, singer, songwriter and musician and entrepreneur Max Kay is truly one of Australia's most professional and versatile performers.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The most significant activity in the last month has been the RSL Poppy Day Appeal. This year over 50 Highgate volunteers coordinated by Jim Eayrs collected in excess of \$17500. I would like to thank Jim for his enthusiasm, sterling effort and meticulous attention to detail that ensured that everything ran smoothly and that an excellent result was achieved. As the Highgate Welfare

Continued on Page 2

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

(Note there are no meetings in January)

Committee: 1 Feb 10

Monthly Luncheon: 15 Feb 10

President

Martyn Thompson
Telephone: 9383 2681

Senior Vice President
Vacant

Junior Vice President
Leon Griffiths
Telephone: 9332 9039

Immediate Past President
Ian Mulholland
Telephone: 9572 2632

Secretary

Margot Harness
32 Lenori Road
GOOSEBERRY HILL WA
6076
Telephone: (H) 9293 1076
(M) 0438 936 405
Email:
mharness@westnet.com.au

Treasurer

Richard Adams
PO Box 1013
SUBIACO WA 6904
Telephone: 0411 737 723
Email:
rpadams@westnet.com.au

Editor

Bob Arnold
6 Currajong Road
DUNCRAIG WA 6023
Telephone 9448 2757
Email: arnold@wn.com.au

Pensions Officer

Jim Eayrs
Telephone: 9341 2979

Cadet Liaison

Dual Appointment
Leon Griffiths



(Continued from page 1)

account benefits from 50% of the nett proceeds we intend to set our sights even higher next November.

This year we tried hard to attract high calibre guest speakers to the monthly luncheons. All of the speakers gave their time gratis in return for the most simple of lunches. In the past two months members have been extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to hear Kim Beazley, Australian's next Ambassador to the USA and the Anglican Dean of Perth Dr John Shepherd. Both are very busy men whose command of language and passion for their subjects held the audience's attention. Kim reassured us of the excellence of our defence system and strength of Australia's alliance with the United States of America whilst John covered an often forgotten area - the horrors and challenges of chaplaincy in the battlefields of the Great War. Unfortunately Dr Shepherd's address was marred by malfunction of the Anzac House sound system apparently due to interference from building works nearby. We trust this will not happen again. Whilst there have been close to 70 members and guests attending recent lunches it would hearten the committee if there were at least this number every month.

As we approach the festive season and holidays I wish you all a relaxing and peaceful time with families and others who are important in your lives.

Our last opportunity for

Fellowship with one another this year is the luncheon on 21 December when Highgate member the inimitable Max Kay will entertain us. His wit and wisdom, maybe song is sure to make this a terrific event and will surely send you on your way with a smile. Do try to come.

Martyn Thompson



OH! WHAT MARVELLOUS MEMBERS WE HAVE

Our thanks go to Martyn Thompson and to John Hatley for providing the information, and it is with the greatest pleasure and much admiration of two exceptional members that we are able to give you a short synopsis of the life of our centurion member Harold Birch and of the outstanding sporting achievements of an OBE member Cecil Walkley.

Harold Everard Reid Birch was born in 1909 and is now obviously a centurion. Into this long lifetime he has crowded many varied activities, starting with a talent for freehand drawing, discovered when he started school in 1915 and progressing to fine woodwork. In 1922, he made a French Polished jarrah box which was exhibited in England at the British Empire Exhibition. The box remains in the U.K. to this day possibly still on display.

Harold commenced work with the West Australian newspaper in 1925 in the process engraving department which prepared photographs for printing. His first jobs as "the boy apprentice" involved cleaning up, fetching and carrying and, on one occasion, being appointed as rat catcher! This was the start of a distinguished career of 48 years with the newspaper. He soon enrolled in night school to study and perfect his understanding of light and shade and perspective under two well-known artists, L. Webb and James Linton and gained a distinction in his first year. As a 17 year old, Harold was conscripted (under the Universal Service scheme) into the Militia. He chose to join an artillery unit and, when service became voluntary in 1929 continued his service with such vigour that he won awards in tournaments and turnout. Proficient with a rifle he won a cup at Bushmead and retired as a Sergeant in 1934.

During the 1930's Harold was also following an interest in sport. He played a few games for the Claremont Football Club (and is now the Club's oldest living past player) and was the singles doubles and mixed doubles tennis champion at his local tennis club.

In 1936, he was able to arrange a 12 months leave of absence from the newspaper to travel around the world.

He broke his journey in London to attend an engraving school working at the same time as a process engraver in a small firm where he was offered the foreman's position. He turned the offer down and returned home. Harold's rapidly

(Continued on Page 3)



LAST POST

John Allen RFD ED - Peter Anderson - John Cutting OAM - Jack Manners

- Lest We Forget -



SUB WARDENS DUTIES

Wreath Laying Services currently scheduled at the State War Memorial Kings Park

Sunday 14 February 2010 1000 hrs for 1030 hrs - National Servicemen's Association of Australia WA Branch
Sunday 14 February 2010 1030 hrs for 1100 hrs - Women's Royal Australian Army Association (WA)

(Continued from page 2)

escalating reputation saw his name mentioned in "Who's Who" prior to 1939, and 30 years after he first attended the technical school as a young apprentice, he was invited to return and lecture the print trade apprentices of the day.

Harold married Merle in 1939, just a few months after war was declared. It was not until 1941 that he was able to persuade his employer to release him from his man powered occupation so that he could enlist. Merle also enlisted in the AWAS.

As a gunner in the 2/4th Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Harold saw action at El Alamein, then in New Guinea at Lae and Finschhavan.

In 1957 there was another break from the "West", when he took up an offer of a 12 month contract to instruct staff at the Government Printing Works in Djakarta, capital of Indonesia, funded by the Ford Foundation of America. Harold and Merle, with their two daughters, aged 10 and 12 were provided with a flat, two servants, a car and a driver and had a very successful and interesting time.

When Harold finally retired from the West Australian newspaper at the age of 63, he had the time to pursue his interest in woodwork and made many pieces of colonial reproduction furniture, intricately carved or decorated with inlay work.

Further he expressed his talent as a painter and artist in water colour, turning out many fine portraits (of people and animals) and flowers.

Harold has also been a "volunteer". As a boy still in short pants, he could be seen with his sister Dorothy in the streets of Perth collecting money for good causes. When Merle was a driver for "Meals on Wheels" from the 50's to the 60's, Harold was involved with raising funds again by street collections, or operating the chocolate wheel at country shows. Both he and Merle were made life members for their contribution.

From 1978 Harold turned his volunteer time towards the Royal Western Australian Historical Society by working in the library helping researchers and using his life-long skills in the photographic area making copies of some 1200 images in the Society's collection. During this time he was made a life member and until quite recent years was still helping out by folding newsletters.

With his army service it was natural that Harold had a soft spot for the Army Museum, commencing volunteering work for the museum when it was located at 'Dilhorn' in Perth. He worked in close liaison with the then curator, Captain Syd Jenkins, who engaged him to apply the above talent and skills to the Museum's photographic collection. He divided his volunteering between both organisations. This work involved the time consuming and sometimes difficult job of making negatives of individual photographs, enhancing the negative by hand if the image needed improvement, then producing positive copies. This work enabled the original photographs to be conserved while displaying the image in the Museum's galleries or earning revenue by the sale of copies.

The work was done at home in a purpose built (by Harold) dark room and work room, using his own handmade cameras and a very clever copying machine that produced 15 inch (38cm) by 10 inch (24.4cm) negatives with truly amazing detail.

He continued to assist in the photographic area when called upon after the Army Museum relocated to its roomier premises at Artillery Barracks in Fremantle in 1995.

Unfortunately, the advance of computer science which has made photographic negatives all but redundant and an increasing difficulty with mobility has brought Harold's photographic copying activities to an end. He now spends his time with another early talent woodworking, by hand carving army badges. He hopes that some of these may be displayed to visitors in the Army Museum. Although no longer an active volunteer Harold had a long association with the Army Museum and originally worked in the Curatorial area. (Images Section) in a time when chemical developing and negative film ruled the photographic industry. AMWA's oldest volunteer - He has not stopped yet!

Birch Family Link with Early Volunteer Military Forces

Harold's grandfather, Edmond Birch, served in the original Metropolitan Rifle Volunteers as a Sergeant from 1861. He was later appointed as Captain commanding the successor unit the Perth Company of Rifle Volunteers in 1872. Edmond's brother Richard Birch

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

also served in the Volunteer Forces as a Medical Sergeant and Richard's son GWH Birch served in the infantry.

DR CECIL WALKLEY

Please try and visualise the effort and endeavour necessary to achieve the following. Let's put ourselves in the position of tackling these athletic events and we might have some small appreciation of the enormity of Cecil's accomplishments.

(M75 = 75 to 80 years of age - M80 = 80 plus years) The times shown are in minutes, seconds and 10ths of seconds for the shorter events and in hours, minutes and seconds for the marathon events.

To Date - (Don't forget to keep us informed of future successes Cecil).

World Record Pending

M75 4 X 1500 meters relay 34:17.00
(Together with 3 friends from the WA Marathon Club)

Australian Record

M75 4 X 800 meters relay 16:07.01
(as above with 3 friends)

State Records

M75	400 meters	1:24.1
M75	800 meters	3:28.7
M75	1500 meters	6:52.7
M75	2000 meters steeplechase	11:26.08
M80	Bunbury Half Marathon	2:12:08
M80	Perth Marathon	6:06:05
M80	25 kilometre road run	3:28:16

And, as his daughter Clare, herself a marathon runner, writes in the WA Marathon Club newsletter - he has no intention of hanging up his running shoes yet.



REPORT ON POPPY DAY COLLECTIONS

6 NOVEMBER 09

Poppy Day collection this year was most successful. We were able to put Highgate collectors into the Esplanade Station, the Wellington St Bus Port and the William St station entrance. Total moneys collected this year came to \$17701.30. Our expenses were \$1929.00. The expenses were incurred in purchasing poppys, collection tins, collection bags, wrappers for tins etc.

This was a most gratifying result, due to the



high number of Highgate collectors who turned out from about 0600 hrs to 1100 hrs. Phil Loffman who is almost 90 years old was on duty and seated in a comfortable fold up chair from about 0600 to the end of collection at 1100 hrs. He enjoyed the day and as a draw-card I think he would have collected at least \$1000.00 on his own.

For the first time this year we had Ken Bladen collecting at the Mount Hospital and he did very well collecting over \$300.

I believe that the high turnout this year was influenced by President Martyn who phoned or wrote letters to most people in our Sub-Branch, at his own expense.

Well done Martyn.

Next year we want to try for \$20,000. Hope you can be there.

Cheers from Jim Eayrs

This publication is produced with the support of Hollywood Private Hospital and their

HOLLYWOOD PRIVATE HOSPITAL