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HIGHGATE NEWS

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

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MONTHLY LUNCHEON AND AGM

Monday 17 March 2014 (St Patrick's Day)

Venue: Gallipoli Room
Time: 1130 hrs for 1215 hrs



GUEST SPEAKERS: We are to be graced with TWO Guest Speakers this month: **Sharon Harford** (R), a former academic at Edith Cowan Uni, who has been appointed to Centenary Program Manager of the RSLWA; and **John Arthur**, a former journalist, who is now employed by the RSLWA as Manager: Media and Marketing. Their topic is the RSLWA and the planned ANZAC Centenary celebrations for a very interesting year ahead.



For the next Luncheon (Monday 17th March) **PLEASE** enter your name electronically on the **BOOK-IN SHEET** (by Friday 14th March). Cost: \$30, to be paid at Reception Desk or by EFT.

Method: GO TO the web-site. Click once on "**MARCH LUNCHEON**" under the photo of the Flame of Remembrance and **AS IF BY MAGIC**, the printing will change colour and be underlined. 'Click' on it again and the spreadsheet/Book In list will appear). ****FOR THOSE WITHOUT email** please call **Margot Harness: 9293 1076** (or any of the committee listed at left) to book in.

Please note that the Book-In Sheet allows you to enter a "P" in Column 3 to indicate you are a **PERMANENT** booking. EFT details appear at the **TOP** of the Book-In spreadsheet.



President's Report

From feedback received, members are appreciative of the Birthday Cards, which Margot has so kindly agreed to mail out. Thanks Margot. Ray Galliot instituted the Birthday Cards when he was Secretary, and it has proved to be quite a hit.

A new initiative of the committee is to offer those over 80 years of age a Luncheon Voucher in recognition of the contribution over the years. Margot has volunteered to include these with their birthday cards and to oversee their "redemption". Our

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

LUNCHEON - 17 March 2014

(Committee: 10am same day)



(Continued from p.1)

first Luncheon Vouchers went out with the cards last month. If you receive one, please bring it with you and present to the Reception Desk - no \$30 payment will be necessary that day!

Unfortunately, some of our older members are having difficulty getting to luncheons despite our offers of assistance and are considering not renewing their membership. We are looking at ways of keeping them as part of our Highgate family as we believe it is important for all to retain our contacts. All ideas and assistance are welcome. Most of the problem is getting from the railway station in Perth to ANZAC House (and of course, the return). We realise too, that parking can be a problem.

IF any member is being prevented from attending due to these factors, but would be able to travel 'to' and 'fro' by taxi, (thus being dropped 'at-the-door'), the Committee has approved reimbursing you for this expense. However, you **MUST** ask for a receipt from the cab-driver to present to Margot, who will reimburse you.

At the May meeting we intend featuring the work of the Honour Avenue Group (who voluntarily maintain the plaques at Kings Park), with a special invitation for members of the group to attend. Like all of us their age is increasing and we need younger members to carry on their work. Norm Manners will give a short presentation on their tasks. Of our 240 members, we only have about 90 who are less than 70 years of age. It is obvious that unless we encourage younger servicemen and women to join, we are in danger of

disappearing as an organisation. Please encourage eligible younger members to join us.

After last luncheon, I had many members remark to me that it was a very happy and enjoyable meeting. There were a few "hiccups" due to some not remembering to book in and the necessity for an extra table to be added just before the meeting. Please try to indicate by the Friday before as we endeavour to give the ANZAC Club Manager notice of expected numbers to assist with the catering.

Please join us for the next Luncheon on the 17th of March.

Yours in fellowship,

Peter

HONOUR AVENUE AGM

The Group held its AGM on 25th February and the following office-bearers were reappointed or voted in:

Chairman Norm Manners

Deputy Chairman Rod Halcombe

Secretary Ken Jones

Treasurer Chris Chapple

Assistant Secretary Robin Slater

Chairman, Norm Manners, paid a warm, grateful tribute to retiring long-time Deputy Chairman and Treasurer, Alf Till, thanking him sincerely for his loyalty, dedication and hard work over the past 14 years.

Hear Ye Hear Ye Our hard-working Treasurer, Richard Adams (who does such a good job, it is unlikely he will ever be 'relieved' in this role!) - backed up by President Peter - wants to encourage as many members as possible to utilise payments to the Sub-Branch by Electronic Transfer (EFT) please. This includes pre-payment for Monthly Luncheons (\$30). For those who use electronic banking, the Highgate RSL Sub-Branch is with the CBA. BSB is 066-001, A/c: 00925571. **Ensure you include your surname. This will help ease Richard's burden a great deal, and will be much appreciated.**

A Pun Can be Fun Corner

I wonder whether any of you recall the old BBC Radio Programmes: "My Word" and "My Music", a panel game that featured the inimitable wits: Frank Muir and Denis Norden. They were required to come up with improbable tales as to the origins of many old sayings and adages, resulting in some amusing, but atrocious puns. (As my supply of "funny punny" yarns is running low, I thought I might try to follow suitEditor)

Beatrice was a lanky girl - even her loving Mum described her as "awkward and clumsy ... I'll never forget the day she spilled a hot coffee in the lap of the Governor-General", she'd sigh. But to everyone's surprise - including her own, Bea blossomed when she started taking Karate lessons. Something in her responded - she was "a natural" - far better at it than "Bazz-the-Bodgie" Baxter - and HE was a Bikie! And it was whilst attending the Monday 7pm class that Bea met the equally lanky, bookish Cyril Cox. He lacked her deft moves - but Cupid struck nevertheless. Enchanted by their budding romance, Bea, in her kindly way, offered to take Cyril aside - as often as possible - to practise the kicks, precise footwork, hand-chopping of chunks of wood and side-stepping moves that characterise that martial art. Cyril was delighted to accept her kind offer. Being a bit of an unimaginative lad, he promised to buy her any book she wanted, in repayment for her time and trouble. After all, as the old adage so aptly puts it: "Ka-ra-te Bea gains a tome"! (G-r-o-a-n)



SUB WARDENS DUTIES

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

Sunday 23 March : 1200 for 1230 hrs - Greek Consul: National Day of Greece
Saturday 29 March : 0915 for 0945 hrs - Royal Australian Air Force Association (WA Division)

"The Way We Were" Gallery Our Golden Oldies

From a very early age it seems that young Bob Mercer was always destined for a life of service and being ready to take on responsibility. But far from being a burden to him, he embraced this as a gift - and it has certainly coloured his long career and connections with the Australian Army and a host of other worthy bodies as well. Along the way, he has become something of a distinguished "Elder Statesman" within the Highgate RSL Sub-Branch, AND the WA State Branch.

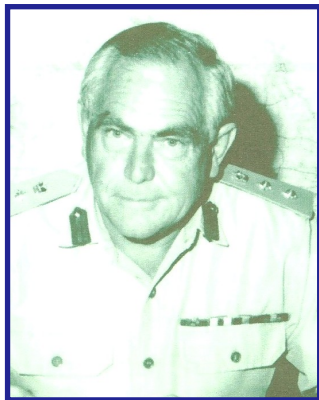
Bob was born in Perth in 1930 at the height of the "great Depression" - the youngest of seven children.. He attended North Perth State School and later Wesley College, where he was a boarder, before joining the Mercer family company of Fruit and Vegetable Agents and Exporters in 1946: first as a general hand but in time rising to General Manager.

Even in his youth, Bob had a yen to join the military - something of a family tradition. His oldest brother went overseas with the 2/11th Battalion in 1940; and sister Nancy, in the AAMWAS - served in WA and a stint in New Guinea during WW2. Two other brothers - twins - also served in the Army. Bob enlisted in the 16 / 28th Battalion - a unit of the Citizens Military Force, in June 1948, just after his 18th birthday. Despite often working from dawn until dusk in the family business, he rose swiftly through the "non-comm" ranks before being commissioned as a Lieutenant (Provisional) in 1950 - a trajectory which, as most of us would know, was little short of meteoric!! Adroitly balancing his civilian working life with his CMF obligations, Bob accepted various Regimental postings and staff appointments on HQ 13 Inf Brigade before, as a senior major, he was selected to become the first Company Commander of B Coy of the new State Regiment: 1 RWAR, in 1960. The following year he was chosen to attend a six-week exchange tour of duty with the US Army in Hawaii.

In 1964 he was appointed Chief Instructor of the 5th Training Group. In May 1967, at barely 37 years of age, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and almost immediately spent three weeks in Vietnam as part of a CMF Observer Group attached to 2RAR. Within months he was appointed CO of 11 RWAR.

11 RWAR was in camp at Northam in 1969 when he heard that the town of Meckering had been struck by an earthquake. With admirable initiative, Bob immediately despatched the Assault Pioneer and Medical Platoons at his disposal to assist the civilian residents of the town - a decision which, he later learned, had displeased the Army top brass in Perth. Managing, finally, to explain to them that the communication system with W Comd HQ had broken down due to the 'quake, Lt Col Mercer was able to justify his action - but there is little doubt the worthy citizens of Meckering were very grateful that a resolute, dynamic man had been at the helm that day!

Bob's military accomplishments didn't end there. He was appointed to the rank of Colonel in 1976, appointed as Assistant Commander 5th Military District and 5th /Field Force Group - later serving a period as Honorary ADC to the then-Governor General of Australia: Sir John Kerr. With the Western Command Staff Training Unit, he chaired Officer Direct Entry Boards for members of the Army Reserve. He was honoured in 1979 by being made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM); and in 1985, awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal. On his retirement in 1985, after 37 years service, Colonel Mercer was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Royal Western Australia Regiment, and served two terms in that role. Bob's warm, friendly, approachable manner, blended with a myriad of his other capabilities, have led to him being invited on to various civilian Boards and Trusts throughout his long dual careers: both in business and the Army (CMF/Reserves). He was especially honoured by the National Executive of the RSL in 2010 (along with six chosen from other states) with the award of "Anzac of the Year".



Bob married his beloved Jean in 1953. She was the sister of his old school pal, Syd - their father had been an Army Chaplain during the War. Having celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary last year, they have two daughters and a son.

Not surprisingly, with a long history of dedicated commitment to so many worthy tasks, Bob has had little time for hobbies! But now, finally retired and having wound back a bit on committee-work etc - he is enjoying spending more time in their garden, and "hanging out" with Jean.

It is time for yourself you richly deserve Bob! A heartfelt "Thank You!" from us all in the Sub-Branch!

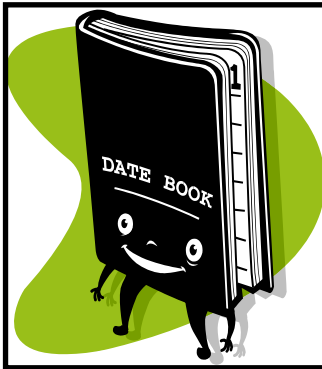


LAST POST

All deceased men and women of Highgate Sub-Branch. R.I.P.

Lest We Forget



**EARLY REMINDERS. Mark in your Diaries**

ANZAC Day. 25 April - GUNFIRE BREAKFAST. Venue, time and cost still to be advised.

SUNDAY LUNCHEON AT ROYAL FRESHWATER BAY YACHT CLUB. To be on 29th June. You may like to invite family and friends to join you for what is usually a wonderful relaxing day in one of the most "plum" dining locations on the Swan River. Your Committee has, thanks to member: Lynn Lovell-Durant, negotiated a special price of \$40 a head for a Roast+Hot dish/Veg/Salads meal + Dessert. Further details to follow. PAYMENT WILL BE "AT THE DOOR" - but we will need to ascertain numbers attending beforehand, to assist the Yacht Club with catering.

Are YOU, or someone you know in the Sub-Branch "doing-it-tough"???



We have all seen it widely publicised in the media, that rises in the cost of living are affecting many families, including older retired people - either on limited pensions or dependent on modest superannuation for their income. We know that organisations like Anglicare, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Salvation Army are being inundated with requests from the community at large for financial relief to pay electricity accounts, major car repairs, rent arrears, Shire rates and the like; or to replace a key item in the home that may have broken down (eg: a hot water service; a refrigerator or washing machine). Sometimes a couple need to move house, and seek assistance with removal costs; the need to pay a Bond up-front for a "new" Rental arrangement.

If you, or someone you know in the Sub-Branch, is experiencing such difficulties, never forget that RSL Welfare may be able to assist. (And this includes members who served with Commonwealth and Allied Forces).

There are TWO avenues of assistance:

1. **Direct through the Sub-Branch.** Margot Harness is the Welfare Officer, and the only "Port-of-call". Approach Margot and, in total confidence, explain your problem. If you have bills you cannot pay - present them to her. **Cash cannot be issued**, but she will suggest/facilitate ways to help you out of your financial predicament - and hopefully, put you "a bit ahead", to help you get back on your feet.

The source for this assistance comes from the HIGHGATE SUB-BRANCH Amelioration Fund.

(She DOES need the "OK" of the President, to authorise the Treasurer to make the necessary Payment(s). However, they are the ONLY two people in the Sub-Branch who know who you are. Both are very aware and sensitive to the need for the utmost privacy and confidentiality).

2. **By approaching the RSL State Branch, and speaking to its Welfare Officer: Rosalind Howat:** Rosalind is entirely separate from the Sub-Branch. **She has TWO sources from which she can draw:** (NOTE: Unlike the Sub-Branch, applicants do not even have to be members of the RSL).

- a modest monthly Welfare "kitty" that allows her to issue cards for Coles and Woolworths supermarkets (for food/groceries), and assist with such things as purchasing medications and modest emergency outlays, at her own discretion. She can be phoned for an appointment (or talk) on 9287 3708.
- She is the Secretary to the WA Aged Sailors'. Soldiers' and Airmen's Relief Trust Fund. This requires a more formal "Application Form" together with documentation re your debt(s) etc, or Quote(s) - but **more substantial assistance** can be considered. Rosalind would guide and assist you with these matters.

BUT, bear in mind, that the majority of ALL these monies are raised via the annual Poppy Day Appeal - at which your Sub-Branch has been active for many years And the money is THERE for those in genuine need.

We WANT to be able to give a "HAND UP" to those who need it!!



Who has visited the Australian War Memorial in Canberra?

In this ANZAC centenary year, the Australian War Memorial - always a repository of an extraordinary number of records, mementoes and interactive exhibits - is 'pulling-out-the-stops' to mount some spectacular events in a landmark year of remembrance and commemoration.

Many Western Australians are more inclined to visit Bali than Canberra - and thus might be unaware that our National Capital is a fantastic, interesting city to visit: home to a host of galleries, unusual architecture, impressive gardens, tourist attractions and diverse things to see and do.

The "AWM" is actually one of the world's great museums. It is also the premier archive and centre for research into the history of Australian involvement in war. The Memorial commemorates the service and sacrifice of all Australian men and women in wartime. Dioramas portraying key battles in miniature, military hardware from all wars, medals, paintings, uniforms, aeroplanes, items of equipment, personal letters and all manner of belongings contributed by veterans and their families over the past 100 years - are all beautifully assembled.

Thousands of visitors each year discover the varied histories and unique experiences of war, thus connecting with the stories of people and events that shaped Australia. The moving Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the central Pool of Remembrance - surrounded, as it is, by walls bearing the names (and respective units) of every Australian who lost his/her life in the service of our nation, are sombre places that give an opportunity to honour their memory and reflect on what it means to be Australian.

The AWM is situated at one end of a broad, grand and sweeping boulevard called "ANZAC Parade". Across the central lake, (Lake Burley Griffin) at the other end, is the imposing edifice of Parliament House - seat of our Federal government.

Flanking the Parade, on each side, are the various Memorials to such Conflicts as the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and



The Lancaster Bomber: "G for George" which features in a moving Sound and Light show several times daily

Memorials to some of our closest allies in times of war, such as New Zealand, Great Britain and Greece. Much thought and symbolism has been invested in all of these commemorative Memorials - and it is a moving experience to walk amongst them: to touch their components, and contemplate their significance. The glass memorial to Nurses - representing wards in Field Hospitals, is another beautifully constructed tangible tribute.

If ever you are contemplating an interesting little holiday - DO think of treating yourself to a week or so in our national capital. There's more to see than you might think! And the Australian War Memorial is an absolute MUST!



The continuing support of Hollywood Private Hospital and their generous assistance to RSL Highgate Sub - Branch is warmly and gratefully acknowledged.

HOLLYWOOD
PRIVATE HOSPITAL



**THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRINTED AS A SERVICE TO THE VETERAN COMMUNITY
BY THE OFFICE OF THE HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN,
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR PERTH**