



# Highgate Highlights

Official newsletter of Highgate RSL Sub-Branch  
Returned & Services League of Australia (WA)  
[www.highgate-rsl.org.au](http://www.highgate-rsl.org.au)

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Peter Garside & Jack Suriano

## From our President

None of you will know my Great Uncle Walter and to be honest, I don't know much about him either. But I am going to visit him shortly.

What I know is that he volunteered to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force in Dubbo, NSW when he was 28 years and 10 months old. He was a country lad and single. He enlisted on 19 September 1916 and on 31 October he embarked, in Sydney, for the war. He was part of the 17th reinforcements for the 24th Infantry Battalion.

For the next two years the 24th Battalion took part in many of the major battles undertaken by the Australians in Europe. In May 1917, at Bullecourt, the battalion suffered over 80 per cent casualties but later in the year they fought in the Third Ypres Campaign. In 1918, despite being severely depleted, the 24th Battalion fought at Hamel and then Amiens.

(continued on page 2)

*New and better way to book  
your luncheon and buy your  
raffle ticket, with email  
confirmation as well!*

## Our next meeting is on Monday 21 May at the Western Australian Club

**Important: Please book before COB on Wednesday 16 May**

The Western Australian Club is located in the Grosvenor Building at 12 St Georges Terrace, directly opposite the byway between Perth Concert Hall and Duxton Hotel. Enter through the revolving door and use only the far right-hand lift to Level 11.

### Monthly luncheon bookings

Our monthly luncheon meetings are \$30 per person and held at the Western Australian Club on the third Monday of each month. For catering reasons, your booking must be made no later than 1700 on the Wednesday prior to the luncheon, please.

### Three ways to book - Choose the best for you

**1. Via the Highgate RSL website at <http://highgate-rsl.org.au>** Click on *Click here to view our next luncheons details*. Then click on *Luncheon Details* and you'll be transferred to our *new booking sheet page*. Electronic funds transfer details are also on the page.

**Or...**

**2. Go direct to our new luncheon booking sheet by clicking or pasting**

<https://goo.gl/forms/zMQxB3HpiP0FLbTU2>

*(If you book your luncheon, via our website or direct, you will receive an email a couple of minutes later confirming your booking.)*

**Or...**

**3. Via Committee Member:** If you do not have internet access, please call Margot Harness on 9349 2847, or any Committee member, and they will help you book in.

**Importantly, please note you can also register your inability to attend apology via the new booking sheet**

## Important dates & events | please diarise now

- 1100 | **Mon 21 May** | Committee Meeting - WA Club
- 1130 for 1215 | **Mon 21 May** | Monthly Luncheon
- 1100 | **Mon 18 Jun** | Committee Meeting - WA Club
- 1130 for 1215 | **Mon 21 May** | Monthly Luncheon

## Last Post | Lest We Forget

We remember with deep sadness and affection our departed Members and convey sincere condolences and sympathy to their family and friends





## From our President

(continued from page 1)

battles of World War I. And the next several months will see the commemoration of the centenaries of some of the most important battles in Australian history. Given the global nature of World War I, it could be rationally argued that they were some of the most important battles in world history.

Those battles were part of the Allied offensive that led to the 1918 Armistice. It was an offensive in which the Australian Imperial Force had prominent roles.

On this coming 04 July, the Australian Government will highlight the centenary of the Battle of Hamel. In this battle, new and innovative tactical methods were used with an emphasis on surprise and the use of tanks. It was a 93-minute exemplar AIF victory, planned by John Monash and just three minutes longer than his calculated battle time.

The Battle of Hamel became a 'dress rehearsal' for the later offensive at Amiens, on 8 August 1918. Using combined arms tactics at Amiens the Australian and Canadian forces spearheaded a breakthrough on the first day of battle and this set the scene for a 100 day campaign that ended the war.

The plan for the Battle of Amiens was also devised by Monash and accepted by the British and French commanders. By then Monash was a Lieutenant General in command of the Australian Corps.

His plan was for a joint Allied effort with the Canadians and British flanking the Australians. All five Australian divisions under Monash took part in the Battle of Amiens.

In a single day, the Australians and Canadians advanced 10 kilometres and the battle broke the spirit of the German Army. The German commander, Ludendorff, called this the black day of the German Army.

In the days following the battle, King George V personally knighted Monash in the field.

After the war ended, on 11 November 1918, Monash was not given any Australian Government award for his many achievements. Belatedly, on Armistice/Remembrance Day 1929,

Monash and Sir Harry Chauvel received long overdue promotions from Lieutenant General to General. Incoming Labor Prime Minister James Scullin did this.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, in his recent book *Maestro John Monash*, argues that evidence abounds of discrimination against Monash and the downplaying of his leadership achievements, and that of the AIF. Fischer contends that Australia should give a symbolic salute to both Monash and the AIF by posthumously promoting Monash to Field Marshal.

Prime Minister R G Menzies set precedents when he appointed Sir Thomas Blamey a Field Marshal retrospectively in 1950, and in 1954, he made Prince Philip an Australian Field Marshal. This was a symbolic rank for both to acknowledge past service.

In 1976, George Washington was posthumously promoted from General to General of the Armies (or Field Marshal equivalent). Washington had been dead for 176 years in 1976.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull recently decided not to posthumously promote Sir John Monash to the highest rank in the Australian Army, after lobbying from military leaders against the change.

Chief of Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Binskin, wrote in a letter to the Prime Minister: "Unlike some overseas nations which award promotions posthumously, Australia has no legal precedent for this action".

Legal precedent, of course, is set every day and many other Australians support the symbolic promotion of Monash, including Federal Cabinet Minister Josh Frydenberg and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten. Frydenberg says, "It is never too late to complete history".

Tim Fischer argues that this is not about rewriting history but about

honouring our own history. It is about further recognising the achievements of the AIF, through Monash. It is not about doing this for Monash but rather, it is about doing this for Australia.

We are hopeful that Tim Fischer will be a Highgate guest speaker later this year.

Monash is widely regarded as Australia's greatest-ever military commander. If he is to be promoted to Field Marshall, this year is the appropriate time.

Getting back to Uncle Walter, it is not known if he ever met Monash. Chances are that he would have at least seen him.

What is certain is that on 05 October 1918, just five weeks before the Armistice, Walter's battalion attacked the village of Montbrechain. The 24th Battalion and two other battalions captured the village.

It was during this attack that one of the 24th Battalion's subalterns, George Ingram, was awarded the Battalion's only Victoria Cross of the war. This battle was the last action involving Australian infantry on the Western Front. Although it was not strategically important, the attack cost Australia more than 400 men, including Gallipoli veterans.

Walter was wounded during the attack and was last seen moving to an aid post. He never made it back. 6069 Private Walter Hourn is buried in the British Cemetery at Bellicourt.

The day after Walter died, the 24th Battalion was withdrawn from the line to recover. Like the rest of the AIF Divisions, the Battalion did not take part in further combat before the war came to an end on 11 November 1918.

Great Uncle Walter fought in many of the epic battles of World War I. Like many others, he came so close to making it home.

To end this month, I apologise for omitting any mention of the 11th Battalion when I researched and wrote my last President's Pen, about Gallipoli. To set the record straight, the 11th Battalion was the first ashore at Gallipoli, at around 0430 on 25 April 1915. Ten days after the landing, the 11th Battalion mounted the AIF's first raid of the war against Turkish positions.

***This newsletter is printed  
as a service to the  
Veterans Community  
by the Office of  
Tim Hammond MP  
Federal Member for Perth***

**Sub Warden Duties | 2018****Wreath Laying Services | State War Memorial Kings Park**POC: Geoff Simpson OAM RFD  
Deputy Warden State War Memorial

<b>Sun 20 May</b>	1130 for 1200	76th Anniversary Battle of Crete & Mainland Greece
<b>Mon 28 May</b>	1020 for 1050	North American Veterans' Unit (USA Memorial Day)
<b>Wed 30 May</b>	0930 for 1000	Indigenous Veterans' Ceremony
<b>Sat 02 Jun</b>	1330 for 1400	Sikh Association of WA
<b>Fri 15 Jun</b>	1530 for 1600	RSLWA State Congress
<b>Sun 09 Sep</b>	0845 for 0930	Maltese Association of WA

**2018 National Commemorations**

13 May	50th Anniversary of Battles at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, Vietnam	Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, ANZAC Parade, Canberra
04 Jul	100th Anniversary of Battle of Le Hamel	Australian Corps Memorial, Le Hamel, France
27 Jul	65th Anniversary of Korean War Armistice	Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial, Ballarat
16 Oct	75th Anniversary of Australian work on Hell Fire Pass and completion of Thai Burma Railway	Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial, Ballarat
11 Nov	100th Anniversary of First World War Armistice ( <i>possible joint service with New Zealand</i> )	Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, France

**From our President***(continued from page 2)*

Subsequently, the Battalion was heavily involved in defending the front line of the ANZAC beachhead.

In August 1915, the 11th Battalion made preparatory attacks before the battle of Lone Pine and continued to serve at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.

On the local front, Ray Galliot has become Assistant Treasurer, and I warmly welcome him back to Committee.

You will all remember Ray's previous service to Highgate as Secretary and also his past service to RSLWA as a member of the Board of Directors. Ray will take over the financial arrangements for our luncheon meetings and assist Peter Garside on the front desk.

Tim Hammond MP, Member for Perth, has recently resigned from Federal Parliament for family reasons.

Tim and his staff have been supportive of Highgate RSL, duplicating our newsletters for posting to non-internet members, and providing letters of support for our Centenary of Armistice proposals planned for November this year.

We thank Tim and his Team, and wish them all well for the future.

With best wishes

- Geoff Hourn

**About Highgate RSL Sub-Branch**

Formed in 1947, Highgate RSL Sub-Branch has long had responsibility for managing commemorative activities at the State War Memorial, and our members also form the Honour Avenue Group that installs and maintains the commemorative tree plaques in Kings Park that memorialise West Australians who have fallen in service of their nation, but are not buried in WA.

As well as information specific to Highgate Sub-Branch, our newsletter also includes from time to time relevant items relating to State and national RSL administrations; projects and issues from the Department of Veteran Affairs; comment by the Minister for Veterans Affairs; articles on significant historical events and achievements; information from the Australian War Museum in Canberra; and of course, the obligatory humour moments to lighten things up a little.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY****Members celebrating their birthday in May include:**

Neil Anderson, John Blylevens, Christopher Brooks, John Cleary, Bob Colligan, Terry Gill, Les Herbert, Thomas James, Stephen Lucks and William Wilson

**And a very special birthday greeting to Abe Sher who turned 100 on 09 May!**

oOo

**New members****We welcome new members**

Shirly Mooney, Squadron Leader  
Bernie Clarke and  
Flight Lieutenant Leo Hermans

We have enjoyable luncheons on the third Monday of each month with fascinating guest speakers. Until ANZAC House is rebuilt, we meet in the serene surroundings of the Western Australian Club, high above St Georges Terrace, opposite the Perth Concert Hall. RSL members of other Sub-Branches are very welcome to join us for luncheon, and booking information is provided on the first page of this newsletter.

**REMINDER | You're invited to WA Club socialising and events**

RSL WA Service Members are now able to dine and socialise at the Western Australian Club, and to also attend Club events of their choosing, such as specialist speakers on a wide range of topics, professional luncheons and sundowners, and other general social events in the WA Club premises.



## ***'Young lives were cut short in a foreign country'***

On ANZAC Day in France, at the opening of Australia's newest museum recognising the courage and sacrifice of the men and women of World War One, French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe delivered a message of utter sadness and meaning that brought many of those present to tears.

**W**e will never forget," said Édouard Philippe, while paying tribute to ANZAC troops at the Sir John Monash Centre opening.



Édouard Philippe, Prime Minister of France

"Coming here, seeing this centre, looking at the names of the 11,000 Australians who died for France and freedom, I could not help thinking of the terrible loneliness which these thousands of young Australians must have felt as their young lives were cut short in a foreign country.

"A foreign country. A far away country. A cold country whose earth had neither the colour nor texture of their native bush. A far away, foreign country which they defended inch by inch.

"In Fromelles in the Nord region, in Bullecourt in Pas-de-Calais and of course, here in Villers-Bretonneux. As if it were their own country. And it is their own country.

"For many young Australians, this earth was their final safe place. For many of them, this earth was the final confidante of a thought or a word intended for a loved one from the other side of the world. Loved ones who would only learn the sad news several months later.

"It is rare to turn the tide of a battle. And even rarer to do so twice in quick succession. The first time was right here on 24 April 1918. The Germans wanted to finish things off. One of the goals was to take Amiens. To get there, they had to pass through Villers-Bretonneux.

"On the 17th it was raining shellfire. The Australian troops stood firm. In fact, they went one better, because on the 24th at 10pm, with the help of the British, they counter-attacked.

"After the fiercest of battles, parts of which took place on the very site of

this memorial, they repelled the Germans and went down in history.

"And that's when the tide was turned for the second time.

"It was then that a meticulous, wise and dogged man took centre stage. As an engineer, the son of Prussian Jewish immigrants who had worked hard to pay for his studies and had quickly joined the army reserves of a young Australian nation.

"That man was John Monash. It was July 1918. The Allies were back on the offensive. But thanks to Monash, they had a new attack strategy. They were combining tanks with infantry using the tanks as 'moving fire' to allow the men to advance in relative safety. After 93 minutes, the troops had completed their mission.

"This has been noted in history because Monash, with typical British composure and Prussian precision, had calculated that the operation would take 90 minutes, so he was not far off the mark at a time in the war when as you know soldiers often fought for hours to gain just a few metres.



Four unidentified soldiers inspect the ruins of Villers-Bretonneux - E02193  
Photograph courtesy Australian War Memorial

"The strategy, which even surprised the Germans, would subsequently be employed on a much larger scale with the outcome which we all know.

"So this was how this Australian engineer with his unerring instinct came to be hailed as one of the best allied tacticians, on par with France's Estienne and Britain's Fuller.

"Then came the episode which

perhaps struck the most. It was when King George V of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, Emperor of India, grandson of Queen Victoria, conferred a knighthood on the field of battle to the son of Prussian Jewish immigrants who had gone to Australia to start a new life.

"We cannot relive these stories. The mud, the rats, the lice, the gas, the shellfire, the fallen comrades; we can never truly imagine what it was like. So we must tell them. We must show them. Again and again.

"Show the faces of these young men whose lives were snuffed out in the mud of the trenches. Show the daily lives of these 20-year-old volunteers from far away who listened only to their youthful courage, to their love for country, or that of their parents or grand parents, to die here in Villers-Bretonneux.

"Show it with the help of modern technology. Without taking our eyes off the names etched on to the memorial – names which are real, not virtual.

"We must also embody, experience and pass on the friendship which now unites the people of the Somme, the Hauts-de-France region and its representatives and the thousands of Australians who come here each year to pay their respects.

"For them I have just one simple message, which I believe all schoolchildren in the north of France now know: *'We will never forget Australians'* to which you reply in Australia: *'Lest we forget.'*

"We will never forget their courage, we will never forget that they sacrificed their young, happy and peaceful lives to experience the horrors of war thousands of miles from their homes when they had no obligation to do so.

"We will never forget that 100 years ago, a young and brave nation on the other side of the world made history by writing our history."



## Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull Opening of Sir John Monash Centre | Villers-Bretonneux ANZAC Day 2018

**In the quiet peace of dawn, we pause and remember this place as it was 100 years ago. Green fields and trees have returned to take the place of mud and trenches and all the wreckage of war.**

A landscape of peace - but one hard-won by young Australians fighting with the soldiers of the British Empire and of France.

The deeds of these young men have echoed down the years. Here on the Western Front, death had seized the landscape and refused to yield. A stalemate.

And then, in March 1918, a German onslaught began. The spring offensive, Ludendorff's battle of annihilation. Their march west seemed unstoppable. And on 24 April Villers-Bretonneux was captured for a second time.

The small village had to be rescued. A vital point, the key to Amiens, it could not be allowed to be held by the enemy.

The Australians were called upon, just three years removed from the landing on Gallipoli. It was said they had no chance. But they were confident and it was ANZAC Day the next day.

At ten past ten, 13 Brigade advanced in classic Australian style.

"Boys, you know what you have to do. Get on with it", was the laconic pep-talk from one officer.

"The whistle of bullets," said one captain, "Became a swish and patter, and boys fell all round me, generally without a sound."

It was fire unlike any experienced before. But still they pushed on. And shortly before midnight, with a ferocious roar, 15 Brigade joined the assault.

As dawn broke at this moment a century ago, victory appeared certain. 25 April 1918. ANZAC Day.

It was, to both friend and foe, one of the greatest feats of the war. The cost was great. Ordered to fight were 3,900 Australian men. There were about 2,500 casualties.

But Villers-Bretonneux was saved. The architect of the victory, Sir John Monash, described it as the turning point in the war. The Australians had come from the other side of the world to defend the freedom of France.

We meet here 100 years later; on land long healed — to remember them. And we join Australians everywhere in remembering all the men and women who have served our nation, and who are serving it today.

We honour their bravery, their sacrifice and their loyalty. We show that they are not forgotten. For the best way to honour the courage and sacrifice of the Diggers of World War One, is to support the Servicemen and women, the Veterans and the families of today.

On this dawn, we are joined by friends. The people of France, the people of Villers-Bretonneux, do not forget Australia's sons. They are their sons, too.



Here the Australian flag flies high. Kangaroos guard the entrance to the town hall. Victoria School — rebuilt with donations from Australian children — is stamped with the words, *N'oublions jamais l'Australie* - (Let us never forget Australia).

There is love and heartfelt gratitude, here. There is friendship. We are mates, brothers in arms - just as the Australian Digger and the French Poilu were mates a century ago. Just as they are in freedom's cause today.

Let us remember the value of friendship on this day and in this year - 100 years since the terrible destruction of the First World War ended. Let us vow to learn the lessons of that destruction, to open our arms and our hearts to our neighbours. And let us commit to forging a stronger, safer world. Together. Lest we forget.

We honour the sacrifice of the ANZACs and we honour the values for which they fought. Freedom, democracy and the rule of law – our Australian way of life. In every age, freedoms hard won and hard fought.

## 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral Fire Support Bases, South Vietnam | 13 May 1968

*Story and photograph courtesy Australian War Memorial*

During the Mini-Tet offensive mounted by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in May 1968, the 1st Australian Task Force deployed two battalions to an area 20 kilometres north of Bien Hoa city to intercept and disrupt enemy forces withdrawing from the capital, Saigon, and the Bien Hoa–Long Binh base complex.

Several fire support bases (FSB) were established to provide defended firing points for artillery and mortars which would cover foot patrols to be sent out by the battalions (1RAR and 3RAR). One of these FSBs was dubbed Coral, seven kilometres north of Tan Uyen.

Occupation of Coral began on 12 May, but the defences remained unfinished when at about 0330 on 13 May, it was attacked following a brief but intense rocket and mortar barrage. The 1RAR mortar platoon position was overrun, along with one of 102 Field Battery's six 105 mm M2A2 howitzers in the base. With the aid of extensive air support, the attack was beaten off by 0630 and the captured gun-pit retaken – still with the gun in it (this howitzer is now on display in the Vietnam gallery at the Australian War Memorial).



**Fire Support Base Coral - 13 May 1968**  
A 105 mm M2A2 howitzer of 102 Field Battery, 12th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery. C269848

Eleven Australians were killed and 28 wounded, while the attackers lost more than the 52 bodies they left behind. A further three Australians died in patrol clashes on 14 May.

At 0230 on 16 May, Coral again came under attack from a North Vietnamese Army force estimated at three battalions strong. (cont..)



## 50th Anniversary Battle of Coral-Balmoral (cont.)

The base was now defended by armoured personnel carriers of A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, and 1RAR's Rifle Companies, all of which were heavily engaged. Part of the A Company position was occupied for a period, but the enemy was forced to withdraw. The attack was repelled after four hours of fighting, with the Australians having suffered five men killed and 19 wounded. Two members of an American battery which had reinforced the base were also wounded. Only 34 enemy bodies were recovered, but blood trails and drag marks indicated that many more casualties had been removed.

On 22 May, Coral was subjected to yet another rocket and mortar barrage, but this time the NVA troops were dispersed by return fire from 1RAR's mortars as they formed up to attack. Although further bombardments on 26 and 28 May, and patrols sent out from the base came into contact with the enemy, Coral was not seriously threatened again. During fighting on 26 May, the base's defenders even turned the tables on the NVA by sending a troop of Centurion tanks from C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment (which had arrived as reinforcements three days earlier), outside the perimeter wire with infantry support. These forces engaged and destroyed most of a NVA bunker system that had been discovered.

Enemy efforts on 26 May were primarily focused on another FSB named Balmoral, which was established about 4.5 kilometres further north on 24-25 May by 3RAR, supported by tanks. The defenders threw back assaults launched against Balmoral on 26 and 28 May. On the latter occasion, the attacking NVA regiment lost at least 42 killed and seven prisoners, but again casualties were thought to have been higher.



Highgate RSL Gunfire Breakfast  
Guest Speaker BRIG David Thompson  
Warden | State War Memorial



ANZAC Day: Highgaters who are also members of the Airborne Forces Assoc. | These photos by Ted McGreal