



THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA HIGHGATE SUB BRANCH

www.highgate-rsl.org.au



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Highgate Happenings JUNE 2022

Premier to be June Guest Speaker

Thanks to the efforts of Vice President John Cleary, the Premier of Western Australia, Mark McGowan MLA, will be the guest speaker at our June lunch. We expect a large attendance and therefore it is suggested you book early. Guests are most welcome. The lunch, to be held on Monday 20 June at 1200 for 1230, will be on the fifth floor with tables of ten. Other Sub-Branches have been invited but Highgate members and guests will have priority. Dress males coat and tie, ladies' day wear.

Cost is \$40 per person, raffle tickets \$5 extra. Bookings can be made at

<https://forms.gle/PrCe1HCds4hnYJt7A>

You can view attendees at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1m4CIW4pJYPHOC6rzrxk0Ae1KAJMPRI3ihEym3djz1UI/edit?usp=sharing>



The Honourable Mark McGowan MLA is the Premier and Treasurer of Western Australia.

Born in 1967 to his wool classer father Dennis and public-school teacher mother Mary, in regional New South Wales, Mark McGowan's parents taught him the importance of hard work and compassion. He studied Arts and Law at the University of Queensland, before joining the Royal Australian Navy and driving across the Nullarbor to Western Australia, serving as a Lieutenant at HMAS STIRLING in Rockingham.

Elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1996 representing the state seat of Rockingham, Mark McGowan served as a Minister in the Gallop and Carpenter Governments, and was subsequently elected Leader of the WA Labor Party in 2012, a role he has now served in for over nine years, through three state elections.

Mr McGowan is currently serving his second term as the 30th Premier of Western Australia. He is also the Treasurer and Minister responsible for Public Sector Management and Federal-State Relations.

Mark McGowan still lives in Rockingham, where he met his wife Sarah and they are raising their three children – Samuel, Alexander and Amelia.

Mr McGowan was awarded a Governor General's Commendation for Brave Conduct for actions he took in 1995 rescuing an unconscious driver from a burning car. He remains a standby member of the Naval Reserves.

(Biography courtesy of Dept of Premier and Cabinet)

Welcome new members

Welcome to new members Rhogan Aitken and his wife Tania. Both are serving Army members, Rhogan at 13 Bde HQ and Tania at 3 Sqn, Pilbara Regt.

Vale:

Jan (John) Klein, passed away 11 April 22, funeral held 22 April, aged 94. Jan served in the Royal Dutch Army Princess Irene Brigade at Arnhem, Netherlands from 1945 to 1953. He trained at Aldershot in 1946. In 1952 he joined the Dutch National Police Force. After emigrating to Australia Jan joined the Australian Army serving in RAEME in Sabah, North Borneo 1966- 67, followed by South Vietnam 1967 – 68 and PNG 1969 -73. He was a member of the RAEME Association and Life Member of Lions Clubs International.

Peter Mahoney.

Peter, a member of Armadale RSL Sub-Branch, was well known Royal Australian Artillery Officer having served as BC at 7 Field Battery, 3 Field Regiment. He served with many members of Highgate in the Army Reserve and was a regular attendee with his wife Wendy at our meetings pre-COVID. Peter had suffered ill health for a number of years before passing at age 68 on 20 May.

Lest We Forget

Highgate Calendar

John Cleary has again produced an outstanding list of guest speakers for the next few months. *Please note there are some changes from our regular lunch date of third Monday of the month.*

Monday 18 July the speaker will be Professor Dr Alexandra Ludewig, Head of School of Humanities UWA. She will be launching a book "*War Time on Wadjemup - a social history of Rottnest Island internment camp.*" Dr Ludewig was suggested to us by Hon CG of Germany, Dr Gabriele Maluga, who will also attend in her official capacity. Further details on this subject further into this newsletter,.

August – Subject to confirmation, our guest will be His Excellency YAMAGAMI Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia. The Ambassador has an engagement in Broome that week and to meet his commitments our meeting has moved to **Wednesday 24 August**. The Anzac Club has been booked for that day. If the Ambassador becomes unavailable, the Consul-General Mr Suzuki, will be his replacement.

17 September – AGM and OBE lunch.

17 October – CMDRE Ivan Ingham AM RAN Senior ADF Officer WA.

Friday 11 November – Poppy Day – coordinator Ray Ward.

Sunday 13 November – Remembrance Day lunch Frasers, Guest speaker MAJGEN Barry Nunn AO RFD ED, Warden of the State War Memorial.

12 December (second Monday) – Christmas lunch with the 2UP Bush Band.



Happy Birthday to our June babies: -

Barry Campbell, Bruce Taylor, Bob Mummery, Bob Mercer, Jeff Astfalck, Lurie Stanley, Adrian Young, Jeremy Sher, Gerry Postmus, Tim Harrison, Paul Conti, Stuart Henry, Noel Sive-wright, Helen Birch, Lou Halvorson, David MacLean, Murray Lampard, Ken Chapman, Peter Mack.

Also, a big shout out to **Brian Walley**, who is the subject of this month's bio. Brian will celebrate his 100th birthday on 2 July.



Past President Bill Munro has provided the following information on our July speaker's topic for information.

Rottnest Island Internment Camp

Rottnest Island is located off the coast of Western Australia near Fremantle. Rottnest Island had been used as a prison and then a tourist destination before the Commonwealth Government took it over at the outbreak of World War One for use as an internment camp. The internment camp was located at Thomson Bay.



Rottnest Island Map, c.1920. Courtesy National Library of Australia

A large number of those interned at Rottnest Island were Austrian Slavs forced out of work from the Kalgoorlie mines. Since their homelands were under the control of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were considered enemy aliens. Australian trade unions used this as an excuse to remove 'foreign' workers from the Australian labour market. Other internees and prisoners of war were Austrian and Italian.

The Rottnest Island camp also housed the Western Australian German Consul General and crews of the German merchant vessels *SS Greifswald*, *SS Thüringen* and *SS Neumünster* captured off Fremantle at the outset of war.

The first internee arrivals to Rottnest Island lived in stone houses. Later arrivals had to make do with the tents originally erected for short tourist stays. Sanitation in the camp was poor, food supplies could be insufficient and internees were required to do their own cooking at their tents as there was no camp kitchen. The records contain complaints about these conditions and also about mistreatment by guards. Despite this, the internees made efforts to make their time in the camp more enjoyable. They formed a band and football team, held lectures, opened a café and enjoyed the beach and the sea.

The internees and guards needed day to day items like tobacco and coffee etc which was supplied by the State Store on the island operated by the Western Australian Tourism Department. The State Store had the monopoly on the island and overcharged the internees and guards. After complaints the Military Commander of the Camp authorised the transportation of goods from the mainland to be sold at cheaper prices at the Camp Canteen as happened in other camps. The Western Australian Government complained to the Prime Minister Andrew Fischer about the loss of revenues from the trade with internees. The Prime Minister responded 'it is not considered that the department is bound to give the State Store the monopoly of the prisoner of war trade as long as the camp remains at Rottnest'.

After complaints from internees about the treatment and conditions and constant bickering with the State Government, the Commonwealth closed the Rottnest Island camp in 1915. The Rottnest Island camp held almost 1000 men prior to its closure in late 1915. The internees were transferred first to Garden Island Internment Camp in Western Australia and then to **Holsworthy** in New South Wales.

Highgate's own: "Who's that?" SOoooo



"LET'S GET TO KNOW": BRIAN WALLEY – ex RAF Bomber Command pilot and long-time POW(E)

Few of our current Highgate members would have had the privilege of knowing Brian – but he WAS an active member during the days when we had many ex-WW2-era men amongst us. Brian and his adored wife, Mair – moved down to an Aged Care facility at Margaret River some years ago due to Mair's increasing frailty. Those of us who knew him, remember him well: he had (and still has!) more energy yet quiet "swashbuckle" in his make-up than Errol Flynn and Clark Gable put together!

Brian was still only 17 years old when he enlisted in the RAF on 1 July 1940 and was accepted for aircrew training. He graduated (with an above average rating) exactly one year later; but with the war situation at that time grim, there was no graduation ceremony or passing out parade: it was simply "down-to-the-stores" with a chit to collect a "Badge Flying" – which he has drily said: "was only a slight jump ahead on the list ahead of 'Boot laces'".

At his OTU in Scotland, he learned to fly a twin engine Whitley bomber, and was subsequently posted to 51 Sqn, Dishforth, in Yorkshire – completing four "ops" over Germany as second pilot. His fifth – on 7th November, 1941, one of 350 aircraft bound for Berlin, in a night op and atrocious weather, was the last he saw of his British home for 3.5 years. Over Kiel, flak and enemy bombardment set their port engine on fire. Despite jettisoning ALL ammo and armaments their forced landing in mountainous seas, in a plane that largely disintegrated on impact, was terrifying. His last view of their plane was a glimpse of its landing lights shining 20 feet below him as it sank.

Part of the wreckage became entwined around Brian's left flying boot, tearing it off as he fought to get above the waves. His left kneecap was broken, and his thighs lacerated and bleeding – but his four fellow crew members made it to the dinghy – partially damaged and leaking, with minimal provisions/flares still intact. When dawn came, the storm had worsened, with the dinghy being swept to the crest of 20 foot waves, hang for a moment, then swept down the troughs. A spiteful gust of wind capsized them all at one stage and dumped them in the raging sea. He never saw the rear gunner or Wireless Op again.

It took the three remaining men ages to clamber back into the dinghy. In sodden clothes, sitting in six inches of ice-cold water and covered in flecks of ice, another dreadful night passed – but when dawn came, the Navigator had died: simply frozen to death. In the afternoon, his skipper died of exposure, leaving Brian on his own. He estimates now that they must have drifted about 100 miles from where the plane ditched. Close to death himself, a Heinkel 59 seaplane suddenly roared overhead – and as the seas had calmed a lot, were able to rescue Brian and the bodies of his two crewmen comrades. Although a captive, five kindly German doctors treated his broken kneecap, fed and warmed him and patched up his wounds. In the morning, the Squadron Kommandant visited him and commiserated, saying: "For you the war is over" – words that haunted Brian for many years.

But in 1995, Brian visited Germany. He met this man once more and thanked him for his rescue. He was also able to visit and pay homage to his less fortunate crew members, who now lie side by side in a cemetery near Oldenburg, in Northern Germany.

Brian's had a full life: husband of Mair, five children, many descendants, well-travelled – a true “survivor” in every fine sense of the word. And on 2nd July this year – he will celebrate his 100th Birthday! “CONGRATULATIONS from us all at Highgate Brian!! We wish you a truly wonderful day!”

NOTE: Brian later wrote a book of his exploits and 3.5 years in various Stalags, titled “Sole Survivor”. After migrating to Australia, he edited a wonderful collection of short survival stories written by former Bomber Command members residing in WA, who had been shot down, (mostly) parachuted from fiery planes, and spent the remainder of WW2 in captivity. It's title is: “Silk and barbed Wire”. (*Story Margot Harness*)

From the Treasurer

Attendance Desk

After many years of looking after the attendance desk for our monthly luncheons, Robert Campbell is calling it a day due to his health not being as robust as it once was.

Therefore it would be appreciated if a member would be prepared to take on this task alongside Peter Garside. If you are willing to do so could you please contact the Honorary Treasurer

on 0409 42 66 77 or email c42ward@bigpond.net.au

Payment by EFT

A considerable number of members are choosing to pay by card or cash on the day of the lunch. Please be aware that if you register and pay by EFT, minimises the time to have your attendance acknowledged. However, if for any reason that you cannot attend, I am more than happy to refund the money or carry it over to the next luncheon. ANZAC House unlike the Karrakatta Club only invoices Highgate for the number of lunches served on the day. So please consider this option and so save the Attendance Officers and yourself time when coming into lunch.



CHUCKLE CORNER (*from Margot*)

Sean Muldoon lived alone in the Irish countryside with only a pet dog for company. One day the dog died, and Muldoon went to the parish priest and asked, 'Father, my dog is dead. Could ya' be saying a mass for the poor creature?'

Father Patrick replied, 'Begorra I'm afraid not. We cannot have services for an animal in the church. But there are some Baptists down the lane, and there's no tellin' what they believe. Maybe they'll do something for the creature.'

Muldoon said, 'I'll go right away Father. Do ya' think \$5,000 is enough to donate to them for the service?'

Father Patrick exclaimed, 'Sweet Mary, Mother of God! Why didn't ya tell me the dog was Catholic?'

Insights of the Vietnam War - Guided Tour



ABOUT

On 18 August, we commemorate Vietnam Veterans' Day on the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan in 1966. We remember the sacrifices of those who died and say thank you to almost 60,000 Australians who served during the 10 years of our involvement in the Vietnam War.

To commemorate this day, we invite you to join one of our expertly guided tours of the Museum as we take you through key events of the Vietnam War. Morning tea provided.

DATES

Wednesday 17 August 2022 - Friday 19 August 2022 (UTC+08)

LOCATION

Army Museum of Western Australia
Artillery Barracks, Burt Street, Fremantle WA 6160

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND BOOKINGS <https://www.trybooking.com/BZJNQ>