



THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA HIGHGATE SUB BRANCH

www.highgate-rsl.org.au

President: John Cleary, Secretary Greg Wilson RFD
Mobile 0412 095 201 Email: highgate.secretary@sb.rslwa.org.au
All correspondence to PO Box 66 Duncraig East 6023



Highgate Happenings January 2024

New Lunch Arrangements

Welcome to another New Year at Highgate Sub-Branch.

This year we have a few changes to our lunch arrangements. A sub-committee comprising Sub – Branch Warden Bill Munro, Senior VP Ray Galliot and Treasurer Ray Ward met with the Anzac Club management in early December to discuss lunch cost and venue arrangements. The result was that due to rising staff and other costs, lunch will now be \$50 per person. The venue will change from a function room upstairs, to the Anzac Club on the first floor. We will have exclusive use of the Club. As we will be close to the kitchen a superior food service will be offered. The change also puts us adjacent to the main bar, with a greater range of drinks on offer.

Our next lunch is on Monday 22 January (**fourth Monday** of the month). This is due to the Anzac Club being closed until that day for the Christmas break. Time 1200 for 1230h. Cost is \$50 per person, raffle \$5 if you wish to indulge. Due to the season, ties optional. Bookings can be made at:

<https://forms.gle/iYpwJa9kBZyGgxq88>

The Response Sheet (view only) link is:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1F6CKrg1L_ttUM0sN6QW9C4slrT37AvG0Up-GMX74oZFU/edit?usp=sharing

The menu will be

MAIN: Slow Cooked Lamb Rump, Butternut Puree, Gratin, Seasonal Greens, Chimichurri

DESSERT: Chocolate Tart, Berry Coulis, Cacao Cream.

Guest speaker is Affiliate member and WA historian Richard Offen. His talk last year was very entertaining and we look forward to another dose of local history from Richard.

Thank you to our raffle supporters:



GROSVENOR HOTEL

Hay Street, East Perth

Spudshed



Woolworths



President's Reach-Out:

A happy New Year to all our members.

Of course, for some it will be a sombre start to the new year and particularly those who have lost loved ones in 2023. And at this time, I wish to vale our very esteemed Highgate member Jack Suri-ano who passed away on December 17, 2023. Our deepest condolences to his wife Shirley and his extended family. As per Jack's wishes no funeral was held.

As I write this, we are about to say farewell to 2023 and welcome in 2024. In 2024 we will benefit from one extra day of the year, an Olympic Games in Paris on July 26, 2024 and from a military per-spective, the 80th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

Members of the Sub-Branch enjoyed their Christmas lunch in December with all of the trimmings, Christmas attire and entertainment by Rick Steele. Many members invited their partners to help celebrate and I encourage more members to invite their partners to future lunches to embrace our Sub-Branch activities and events.



On December 12, 2023, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was signed off by Vince Connelly CEO RSLWA, Alan Barrett CEO BGPA and John Cleary President Highgate RSL Sub-Branch. The SLA, which was crafted over a 12-month period, covers off roles, responsibilities, reporting rela-tionships and outlines in detail insurances provided by both BGPA and RSLWA. For Highgate and in addition to the above, the SLA covers off HAG and the Deputy and Sub Warden activities. As part of the agreement, HAG becomes a sub-commit-tee of Highgate and is required to decou-ple its Incorporation. As a service provider to BGPA, it will retain sufficient autonomy to undertake its service provision. Robin Slater has taken this occasion to step down as Chair of HAG. I thank Robin for his passionate leadership he has provided HAG over the years, and I welcome Mike Har-ness in to the role as acting HAG Chairman and Highgate Committee Member.

As I have alluded to in previous newsletters, the Sub-Branch is confronted with higher costs de-manded by our service providers particularly where food and labour are concerned which therefore impacts on most of what we do. We have attempted to absorb some of those costs such as the Me-morial Lunch in November where the Sub-Branch contributed \$10 per person towards the lunch. The cost will be offset by a raffle with the prize being a military sword generously donated by Leon Griffiths. More details on that raffle to be advised.

As I have alluded to in previous newsletters, the Sub-Branch is confronted with higher costs de-manded by our service providers particularly where food and labour are concerned which therefore impacts on most of what we do. We have attempted to absorb some of those costs such as the Me-morial Lunch in November where the Sub-Branch contributed \$10 per person towards the lunch. The cost will be offset by a raffle with the prize being a military sword generously donated by Leon Griffiths. More details on that raffle to be advised.

Our lunch to be held on January 22, 2024 is no exception to the cost increases we are confronted with and as such, we have unfortunately been forced to increase the cost to each member to \$50 pp and for future lunches. The cost could have been higher if not for the innovative work by our lunch committee led by Ray Galliot with Ray Ward and Bill Munro assisting. We will meet and eat on level 1 at ANZAC House and to mitigate some of the cost we will be served with better quality meals and a full bar from which to choose. The restaurant will be closed to the general public. We trust you will continue to support our lunches with a guest speaker and enjoy the camaraderie.

Our guest speaker in January is the very popular Richard Offen. Richard has spoken to us before. Richard is a historian, heritage engagement consultant, writer, broadcaster and speaker. He specialises in public engagement with history and heritage. Richard spent 14 years as a senior staff member of the UK National Trust.

I wish you all well for 2024!

John Cleary

Happy Birthday January arrivals



Chris Chapple, Barry Greville, Ken Ashman, Alan Shephard, Kevin Campbell, Evelyn Barrett, Leon Griffiths, Annette Newell, Phil Sumner, Frank LeFaucheur, John Stephens, Frank Taylor, Annette Buddrige, Tom Arnautovic, Stephen Sinclair, Rod Willox, Jamie Holloway, Peter Bevilacqua, Don Blair, Trevor Boag, Roy Chase.



Vale Jack Suriano RFD

After a courageous battle against blood cancer and leukemia, Jack Suriano passed away early on 17th December, aged 94, with his beloved wife Shirley bedside.

After being diagnosed in early November, Jack decided to forego any treatment as the doctors could not guarantee that they could get him through to Anzac Day 2024. They had determined that without treatment Jack could only be expected to survive for 1-2 weeks but Jack stretched that out to 5 weeks.

In the interim, Jack made the most of the time he had - on Friday's the hospice provided a drinks trolley which gave Jack a chance to have a G&T in addition to his glass of red wine from a bottle of NZ wine kindly provided by Royce Spencer. He enjoyed this wine so much that he purchased an additional bottle!



Jack had many visitors over his period of hospitalisation, including a large group of his Fleet Air Arm mates who cranked up a BBQ at the hospice that Jack enjoyed enormously, and his good friends from Highgate & NMAFC.

A Korean War veteran, Jack was proud of his service with the RAN Fleet Air Arm where he flew as an Observer in the Fairey Firefly responsible for navigation and weapon systems. A newly released book on the Fleet Air Arm - "Birdies",

Left: Jack and Shirley enjoying the RAN FAA "wake" at his hospice.

written by Sharon Spargo - has been donated to Highgate and NMAFC by Jack as he proudly contributed to its writing.

He was a proud long serving Rotarian and Past Commodore Perth Fleet and Life member of the International Yachting Fellowship of Rotarians South West WA fleet. Jack's interest in boats is carried on by his sons who are both boat builders.

Jack was a regular at NMAFC and Highgate luncheons, which he thoroughly enjoyed attending even after he was forced to 'drive in' on his 'gopher'.

A bon vivant who embraced life to the fullest, his good nature, wicked humour and kindness will be sorely missed. (Story Ray Galliot)

What's Happening

22 January 24 – Member Richard Offen. Further details and costs to be advised.

19 February – Ashley Morrison, freelance broadcaster and commentator.

18 March 24 – Jonathon Langer - Chiropractic and Soft Tissue Therapist.

25 April 24 – Anzac Day Gun-fire Breakfast at The Weld Club. Cost and guest speaker to be advised.

20 May - Brian Haggarty, alternative fuels.

Welcome

New member Bob Schrugin; transfer Terence Jones (from Riverton).

Honours and Awards LIEUT J. Suriano RFD:

United Nations Service Medal - Korea
Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasp 'KOREA'
Australian General Service Medal for Korea
Reserve Force Decoration
Australian Defence Medal
Returned from Active Service Badge (Korea)

Perth Garden of Remembrance (GRM) and Dutch Annex

The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG), on behalf of the Australian Government, is undertaking structural engineering assessments and remediation works to the brick walls within the Perth Garden of Remembrance (GRM) and Dutch Annex. During this period, there will be partial closure of walls within the GRM and the Dutch Annex will be temporarily closed to the public due to safety concerns.

The Office of Australian War Graves recognises that the site is a special place for many families and apologises for any inconvenience caused by these necessary safety works.
(OAWG Web page 10 Nov 23)

Just Joking



. Doctor: "Sir, it turns out we're going to have to amputate two fingers off your right hand due to the hypothermia you experienced."

Patient: "Will I still be able to write with my right hand after the procedure?"

Doctor: "Maybe, but I wouldn't count on it."



Vale Bill Ritchie AM

Permanent Navy Force 24 July 1944 – 27 February 1981; RAN
Emergency Reserve 28 February 1981 – 1 September 1983

Bill was born in Kalgoorlie on 13 March 1926. After schooling at CBC Kalgoorlie and the School of Mines, he became a junior surveyor. Always having an interest in sailing he attempted to enlist at 15 but was told he was too young and in a restricted occupation. After nearly a year of battling scarlet fever and changing his occupation, he enlisted on 25 July 1944.

Bill was actually christened as Bill but, when enlisting in the RAN, was told that the navy would not recognise the name Bill, so Bill became William. After initial training at HMAS Cerberus Bill moved to Sydney and trained as a radar operator.

His long service as a sailor and an officer in the RAN included active service in WWII, Korea, the Malaysian Emergency and Vietnam. He was Officer of the Day in the carrier HMAS MELBOURNE on Christmas Day 1974 in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Tracy. What followed kept Bill a very busy man for some time.

In an interview he noted he served in seven aircraft carriers – or aircraft carriers seven times – plus the *Sydney* when it went to Vietnam with the helicopter flight. He served as the Deputy Director of Naval Training and also of User Requirements. It was while he was with User Requirements that he was detailed off to look after the West Australian Naval Support Facility. (Now HMAS Stirling). He later became the first Executive Officer, the 2nd Commanding Officer, the 3rd Executive Officer of HMAS Stirling. Bill finished up completing thirty-nine years and thirty-nine days service in the Royal Australian Navy, including his final posting as Naval Officer Commanding, Western Australia.

His stories of that time, and others, are legendary. He has written quite a tome on his naval career, maybe sometime in the future we may get to see and read it.

RIP Bill, you will be missed by many of your family and friends.

Bob Mummery

A very interesting oral history interview with Bill, recorded in 1992, is available on the AWM web site (**S01786 - F5430 (O1421, R/31845) Ritchie, William Gray**). In this he describes his experiences on Royal Australian Navy (RAN) corvettes, HMAS *Broome*, *Bathurst* and *Fremantle*. He describes his schooling; early employment as a surveyor; being ill with scarlet fever; the side effects of the drug Sulfa; recruitment into the RAN; basic training at HMAS *Cerberus*; radar training at HMAS Penguin; active service; transporting British ex-prisoners of war [ex-POWs]; minesweeping; with the 20th Mine Sweeping Squadron off Hong Kong; shore leave in Hong Kong; return to Australia and becoming a permanent member of the RAN. (A copy of the transcript is available from the Highgate Secretary)

Honours and Awards Bill Ritchie AM:

Member of the Order of Australia

1939-45 Star

Pacific Star

War Medal 1939-45

Australia Service Medal 1939-45

Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasps 'KOREA', 'VIETNAM', 'MALAYSIA'
Korea Medal

United Nations Service Medal - Korea

General Service Medal 1962 with Clasp 'MALAY PENINSULA'

Vietnam Medal

Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasps 'JAPAN', 'SW PACIFIC', 'FESR'

Defence Force Service Medal with First, Second, Third and Forth Clasps

National Medal with First and Second Clasps

Australian Defence Medal

Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal

Pingat Jasa Malaysia

United States of America Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation

South Korean Unit Presidential Unit Citation

Naval Board Commendation

Returned from Active Service Badge



Australians at War – January

1 January 1901 Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia. The union of the six former colonies came into being with a proclamation by the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun at Centennial Park Sydney.

3 January 1941 6th Division in action at Bardia, Libya The attack against the Italians at Bardia was the beginning of Australia's first major ground campaign of the Second World War. Of the division's infantry battalions, all except one – the [2/11th](#) – were raised in either New South Wales or Victoria.

4 January 1942 Japanese air attacks begin against Rabaul, New Britain. Rabaul possessed a number of airfields and one of the best natural harbours in the south-west Pacific. Its capture gave Japan a base from which to launch air attacks towards New Guinea and north-eastern Australia as well as a strong south-eastern corner to its defensive perimeter in the Pacific.

5 January 1941 Bardia captured. The Australian 6th Division captured 40,000 Italian prisoners, including four generals, at a cost of 130 killed and 326 wounded in Australia's first major land battle of the Second World War.

5 January 1945 HMAS Australia damaged by Kamikaze aircraft. Australian ships were operating in support of United States amphibious landings in the Lingayen Gulf, Philippines when the Australia, for the second time in the war, became one of seven Allied ships to be struck by Kamikaze aircraft. 25 of her crew were killed and 30 wounded.

8 January 1952 RAAF launch first meteor rocket attack against ground forces. Meteors proved unsuitable in air-to-air combat against the superior MIGs and were reassigned to ground attack duties.

9 January 1966 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in Operation Crimp The operation became the scene of a major action against a Viet Cong tunnel complex.

14 January 1942 Gemas, Malaya. 8th Division inflicts heavy casualties on Japanese in an ambush at Gemas in the first Australian contact with Japanese troops of the Second World War.

15 January 1944 Sio. The capture of Sio by the 9th Australian Division represented the final destruction of the Japanese 20th Division in the protracted Huon Peninsula campaign of 1943-1944.

16 January 1952 HMAS Sydney begins its seventh patrol in Korean waters Sydney began its service in Korea in August 1951. This was the ship's final patrol in Korean waters.

16 January 1962 Death of Frank Hurley. Hurley was the first official AIF photographer, having been appointed in 1917.

17 January 1917 4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps sail for France. No. 4 Squadron was the final Australian Flying Corps squadron formed in the First World War. Its pilots flew Sopwith Camels over the Western Front beginning their active service in the battle of Cambrai.

19 January 1951 No. 77 Squadron raids Pyongyang. Mustangs of No. 77 Squadron attacked a suspected Chinese headquarters with rockets.

20 January 1942 Wirraways engage Japanese fighter and bomber formations over Rabaul. In the days before the fall of Rabaul, Japanese aircraft conducted a series of raids on the town. In an engagement lasting less than ten minutes three of 24 Squadron's eight Wirraways were shot down, one crashed on take-off and two were damaged in crash-landings.

22 January 1941 Tobruk surrenders to Australian 6th Division After its capture Tobruk was garrisoned by the 9th Division, elements of the 7th Division and other Allied units. The town was surrounded on three sides by the German Afrika Korps in April and remained besieged, but able to be re-supplied by sea, until December. Most Australian, however, left Tobruk between August and October.

23 January 1944 7th Division defeat Japanese at Shaggy Ridge, New Guinea. Australian troops cut the main Japanese routes through the Finisterre ranges with the capture of Shaggy Ridge, north west of Lae, after days of heavy fighting.

25 January 1952 Last day of HMAS Sydney's service in the Korean war. HMAS Sydney had served in Korean waters since August 1951. The carrier had operated Firefly and Sea Fury aircraft (both types can be seen in the Australian War Memorial's Aircraft Hall).

26 January 1945 Beginning of Sandakan death march, Borneo. Sandakan prisoner of war camp was established by the Japanese in July 1942. Fearing invasion from Allied forces, Japanese troops marched the prisoners inland to Ranau in January 1945. Many of the prisoners died of malnutrition, exhaustion, disease and ill-treatment and the survivors were shot when they reached their destination. Only six out of 2,500 Australian and British prisoners sent to Sandakan survived.

27 January 1941 Fighting at Derna, Libya, begins Following the capture of Tobruk two brigades of the 6th Australian Division under Major General Iven Mackay pursued the Italians westwards and encountered an Italian rear guard at Derna.

27 January 1973 Conclusion of hostilities in Vietnam by United States forces. The United States government announced a policy of 'Vietnamisation' whereby the burden of fighting the war against the communists would be borne entirely by the South Vietnamese.

30 January 1968 Tet offensive begins in Vietnam. While the Tet Offensive, named for Tet, the Vietnamese lunar new year holiday period over which the attacks occurred, was a military defeat for the Communist forces, it proved to be a propaganda victory accelerating the American public's growing opposition to the war and causing United States military planners to question whether victory was possible.



Last action hero now showing

The last RAAF aircraft to have engaged in combat in a conflict has been restored and is now on display at the RAAF Williamtown Heritage Centre (WLM AHC).

Restoration of the Meteor A77851 (aka Halestorm), in which Sergeant George Hale shot down a MiG-15 in the final air-to-air engagement

of the Korean War, was overseen by Air Force's History and Heritage branch.

WOFF Stan Lawler from the Directorate of Air Force Heritage said RAAF Williamtown is the right spot for Halestorm as it was an aircraft of 77SQN, which is based at Williamtown.

'The ranks of Korean War veterans are getting thin, so it's good to have Halestorm completed to honour them – especially since this year is the 70th anniversary of the Armistice of the Korean War,' WOFF Lawler said.

On March 27, 1953, Sergeant George Hale from 77SQN flew Halestorm on a routine reconnaissance mission over North Korea. He engaged with, and shot down, an enemy MiG-15 fighter in the last air-to-air engagement of the Korean War.

Sergeant Hale returned to Australia after his period of duty.

Following the Korean War, Air Force converted Halestorm into a remotely piloted aircraft and used it to conduct aviation trials at Woomera in South Australia. Volunteers from the South Australian Aviation Museum later recovered and refurbished Halestorm's cockpit/forward fuselage and put it on display. In early 2022, the museum gifted the cockpit/forward fuselage to the Air Force.

The restoration of Halestorm took about 18 months, which included merging the cockpit/forward fuselage to another Meteor to create the aircraft now showcased at WLM AHC.

'We managed to get a lot of unique components, making the aircraft almost identical to the one that flew in Korea,' WOFF Lawler said.

'We were very lucky to find parts that had been in storage at the RAAF Museum at Point Cook. These included a long-range fuel tank to fit to the underbelly, three out of the four cannons and rocket rails that went underneath the wings.

'The aircraft just bolts together like a Meccano kit.'

Wing Commander Linda New, the officer in charge of WLM AHC, was pleased to receive such an important heritage aircraft into the heritage centre's collection.

'Halestorm complements our display of artefacts commemorating 70 years since the cessation of hostilities in Korea, and honours the service and sacrifice of those RAAF members who served in Korea, particularly the members of 77SQN,' she said.

Image: Meteor A77-851 (aka Halestorm) on display at the RAAF Williamtown Aviation Heritage Centre. Photo: GPCAPT Peter Norford (Story by Flight Lieutenant Karyn Markwell and Flight Lieutenant Julia Ravell, courtesy of Air Force News.)



Operation Marauder – January 1966

Operation Marauder, a collaborative effort between the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR), unfolded in the challenging terrain of the Plain of Reeds within the Mekong Delta. Spanning from January 1 to January 8, 1966, this military endeavour showcased the coordinated deployment and strategic prowess of the participating forces.

The operation kicked off on January 1, 1966, as 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 1 RAR, and C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Artillery Regiment, which included 161 Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery, were airlifted into Ba Tri airfield from Hậu Nghĩa Province. The initial phase saw the establishment of a formidable

presence on the ground, setting the stage for subsequent engagements.

On January 2, 2/503rd encountered a well-entrenched Viet Cong force upon landing at Landing Zone Wine. A fierce battle ensued, with the 2/503rd receiving support from artillery fire and air assistance. Despite the challenges, the unit successfully overran the VC position, discovering 111 deceased insurgents. The subsequent days of the operation witnessed sporadic contact with the Viet Cong, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of the allied forces.

Tragically, on January 3, 1966, two rounds fired by 161 Battery accidentally landed on C Company, 2/503rd, resulting in the loss of three paratroopers and the injury of seven others. Investigations later revealed that the tragic incident was caused by damp powder affecting the trajectory of the artillery rounds.

Simultaneously, the Australian contingent from 1 RAR engaged in extensive patrolling activities from January 2 to January 6. While making small, sporadic contact with the enemy, resulting in the elimination of two Viet Cong members, the Australians also discovered an ammunition cache and several substantial rice caches. On January 5, a patrol from 1 RAR engaged a VC platoon near Hoa Khanh, forcing the enemy to break contact and retreat.

One of the notable achievements of the operation occurred on January 6 when the 2/503rd located the abandoned headquarters of the 506th Battalion. This discovery proved instrumental as the allied forces recovered arms, ammunition, maps, and personnel rosters, providing valuable intelligence for future operations.

Operation Marauder, with its blend of airborne deployment, ground engagement, and strategic discoveries, underscored the effectiveness of joint military efforts in countering insurgent forces. The operation's success in neutralizing a significant Viet Cong position and obtaining valuable intelligence showcased the determination and proficiency of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, 1 RAR, and their allies in the Plain of Reeds during this critical period of the Vietnam War.

HIGHGATE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

