

## Military Historical Society of Australia

### Queensland Division

#### Record of the meeting held at Cooroy RSL Club on the Saturday 26 November 2022

Neil Dearberg opened the meeting at 10.40am and welcomed members and guest to the meeting.

**Present:** Ron Sutton, Alan Roberts, Sue Roberts, Wuzzy Alford, David Geck, Cameron Elmes, Greg McGuire, Greg Ivey, Barbara Vines, Lex Hanlon, Diane Melloy, Jaques Follet, Craig Thiedecke, Allan Fuary, Sylvia Robertson, Philippa Grayburn, George Hulse, Beverley Hulse, Terry McMullan, Pamela Foley, Anthony Staunton, Neil Dearberg, Ian Curtis, Mac Coyden McKenzie (Lilly)

**Apologies:** Colin Piper, Ray Alcorn, Bill Beach, John Casey, Robert Simpson, Russell Linwood, David Kemp, James Martin, Frank Reid, Paul Newton, Graeme Jardine-Vidgeon, Bob Richardson, Jim Nuttal, David Charles, John Hardy, Ian Williams, Ray Eustace, Robbie Buck, Robert Smith, Russell Paten, Frank Olsen, Rod Hingston

**Guest Speaker No 1:** The first Guest Speaker was Lieutenant Colonel George Leslie Hulse OAM



George served 20 years in the Regular Army including tours to Vietnam, operational deployments with the United Nations Observer force in India and Pakistan, PNG and selected to attend a dog training course in the USA at Fort Benning. On his return, George commenced the Explosive Detection Dog Wing at School of Military Engineering.

After serving as a regular army officer, George had another 12 years in the Army Reserve. He attended the Reserve Command and Staff College course in 1987 and graduated as that course's Student of Honour and awarded the Blamey Award and Sword of Honour.

George was awarded the Order of Australian (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2020 and awarded the Brigadier-General CM Foott CB CMG award for rendering outstanding and significant service to the Corps of Royal Australian Engineers on 27 November 2020.

George is a former President of the Toowong RSL

He has authored "*In Dogs We Trust*" the story of military war dogs and is the President of Australian Tracker and War Dogs which were available for purchase at the meeting.

George (who was a big supporter of the Military Spectacular) told many of the stories that are in his book and others. In so doing gave a detailed history of the Trackers and War dogs in the Australian Defence Force.

Some of the stories he told were;

- Private Peter Haran and Caesar. Caesar saved Peter's life twice during his service in Vietnam
- Sapper Shannon Doherty and Mic.
- Man Work – training dogs to Attack.
- Explosive Dogs
- The importance of the dog as part of the team, the dog handler has become known as a DOGGIE
- Cpl John Cannon who was responsible for the success of explosive dogs with SAS in Afghanistan
- Cpl Mark Donaldson VC was a Doggie
- Future Robotic Canines
- New Breeds – Belgium Malinois
- Different size of the dog – Explosive (lighter)v Man Work(larger) the RAAF has the money so the bigger dog is being bred.
- Training of Defence Dogs from Infantry to Engineers to RAAF
- Equipment including harnesses, goggles to protect the most important part of the dog

At the end of George's presentation Anthony Staunton asked George to speak on his advocacy to have Private Richard Norden awarded the Victoria Cross.

George has recently presented to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal to have Private Richard Norden for most conspicuous acts of gallantry in the 'AO Surfers' Area of operations in Bien Hoa province, Vietnam on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral be awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia



**Hulse and the Department of Defence re: Norden DHAAT 11 (20 July 2022)**

File Number 2021/020

<https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Norden-Decision.pdf>

Note: Richard Leslie Norden was born on 24 August 1948 and at Gundagai, NSW. He was 19 years old at the time of the incident and was the youngest recipient of the Distinguished Conduct Medal in Vietnam. He was accidentally killed in October 1972 in Canberra when his ACT Police motorcycle skidded in wet weather.

Paragraph 31 Draft Victoria Cross for Australia (VCfA) citation

For most conspicuous acts of gallantry, for pre-eminent acts of valour and self-sacrifice, and for extreme devotion to duty in the 'AO Surfers' Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral.

Private Richard Norden enlisted in the Australian Army on 27 April 1966 and discharged three years later, having completed his three-year period of service. He arrived in Vietnam on 5 December 1967, on posting to 1 Australian Reinforcement Unit. On 31 January 1968, he was posted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, and on 10 April 1968 was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment. He left Vietnam on 13 August 1968 after being wounded in action on 5 August 1968.

On 14 May 1968 during Operation Toan Thang, 5th Platoon, B Company were ambushed and came under heavy fire from an estimated squad of 7-10 North Vietnamese Army regular soldiers in established positions dug into the ground or in trees, each armed with an automatic weapon. In the initial contact both the forward scout and the section commander were wounded some twenty to thirty metres in front of the remainder of the leading section, which was in turn isolated from the remainder of the platoon due to heavy and accurate enemy fire.

Aware that the scout and section commander had been incapacitated and entirely of his own initiative Private Norden, a member of the leading section, asked for covering fire and ran forward to the wounded section commander across ground that provided him little or no effective cover under heavy enemy fire. He killed one NVA soldier whilst moving forward and, having expended his ammunition, recovered that enemy's automatic weapon which he used against further NVA soldiers.

He then half-carried, half-dragged the severely wounded section commander back to the section. Due to this initial action the life of the section commander was saved under intense enemy fire. Although himself relatively seriously wounded in his initial move forward, Private Norden again

advanced to the forward scout. He was fired on by an enemy soldier but pressed forward and reached the scout, killing the NVA soldier who had been using the scout as a shield. Private Norden, having determined that the scout was dead, then returned to the section, collected grenades and, moving forward for a third time, cleared the area so that the body of the scout could be recovered. His three attacks into the enemy position on his own resulted in the enemy position being secured and likely saved the lives of other members of the platoon.

Private Norden showed a complete disregard for his own personal safety, and by his courage, selfless acts and devotion to duty ensured the evacuation and saved the life of a severely wounded man, allowed the recovery of the body of the forward scout, and avoided the potential for further deaths of platoon members. Private Norden personally killed at least three NVA soldiers in this action.

**It is recommended that members read the full Tribunal Report.**

Allan Fuary presented George with a book, Victoria Cross Heroes of World War One by Robert Hamilton

**Guest Speaker No 2:** – Mac Coyder McKenzie with Lily



Mac served 20 years with Navy and suffered from PTSD. He applied for and was given a Military Personnel Assistance Dog – (Lilly) He has suffered from PTSD since 1965 when HMAS Melbourne and Voyager incident. He was diagnosed in 1995. He lost his son on 10 October 2019 when he committed suicide at the age of 44 years old.

Lily is responsible to look after Mac and when working people are asked not to pat Lilly.

Mac also talked about the improvement in location access for Assistance Dogs and the need for he and Lily to carry a licence under the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009.

Mac is also an historian, and a Genealogist and has written a number of books under the name of Francis Cooper - Mac



If you would like to be involved see [www.smartpups.org.au](http://www.smartpups.org.au) for information on full-time and part-time fostering of pups.

**Show and Tell;**

**Wuzzy Alford**



Wuzzy displayed the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Association Badge and Dianne read on behalf of Wuzzy the following;

Many members may have wondered at the origins of the badge worn by members of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF Association, and the motto "Empire All". When the Battalion was formed at Enoggera in 1914 it was presumed that it would follow local custom and wear a badge of its own design, and so it was decided that the number 9 should be ringed, and that an outer ring bear the words "Aust Imp Force (Bn)" over the word "Queensland," the whole surrounded by a wreath of Golden Wattle surmounted by a Royal Crown, and underneath the motto "Empire All". However, it was decreed that all units of the AIF wear the badge of the Australian Commonwealth Military Forces. A replica of the badge was made at Mena Camp outside Cairo in 1914 and it also appeared on the Christmas stationery used by the Officers of the Battalion. In the early 30's the block was handed to the Hon. Secretary (D L Suller) by the late Brigadier General J C Robertson CB, CMG,

DSO, VD who felt that the Association may have some use for it. The Association immediately adopted the idea, and it has been used on all its stationary ever since.

“Those bonds of friendship still are held

In strength and lapse of time defy,

No breaking of that fast-bound weld

Until the last 9<sup>th</sup> man shall die.”

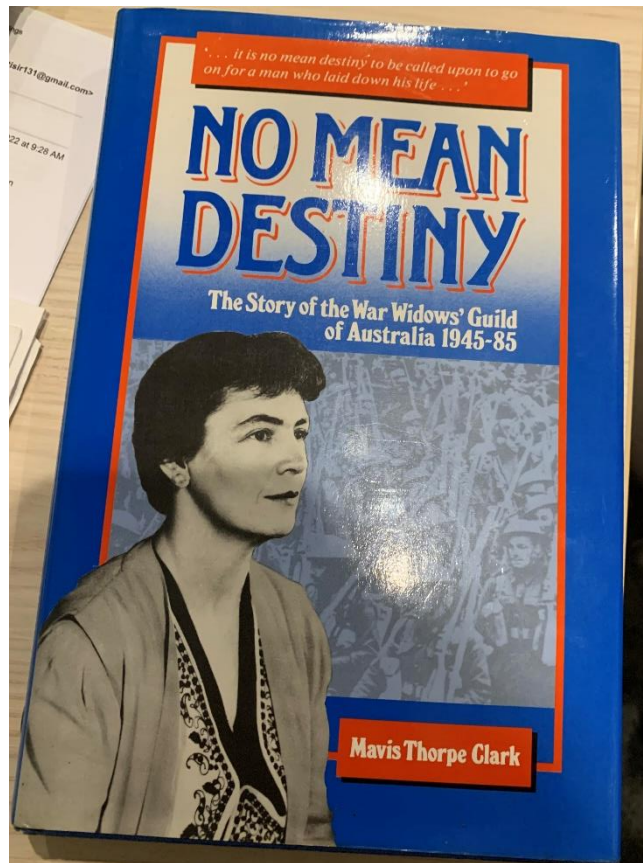
-Harry Wilce.

The Bronze Badge is vary rare and only seen on the 1967 Battalion Colour Belts

### **Dianne Melloy**

Diane spoke as a member of Australian War Widows Queensland, announcing proudly that Queensland is ‘top flight’ for several reasons. Last week, the Queensland president (for the past six years), Jenny Gregory, was declared the new Australian president, and Judy Smith (formerly president at Maroochydore branch of AWWQ) was elected Queensland president. These appointments continue the focus on Queensland, soon after the statement by Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk that War Widows Day will be celebrated annually in Queensland on 19 October – a first for Australia. This date marks the birthday of Mrs Jessie Mary Vasey who was born in Roma, Queensland in 1897. Her husband, Major General George Vasey, was killed on 5 March 1945 when the Hudson aircraft in which he was travelling to New Guinea, crashed into the sea off Cairns, killing all on board. On his last leave, husband and wife had again discussed their ideas about helping war widows post-war. They were aware of the plight of widows after the First World War, when government promises of care for soldiers’ dependents were not kept.

Jessie acted positively – that was her style – and swiftly. The first Queensland branch of the War Widows Guild was started in Toowoomba in 1947. The tradition continues. Widows and widowers from all conflicts receive support, encouragement, friendship, and comfort, built on a solid historical foundation. The logo of AWWQ – the kookaburra – was chosen to represent the positive and pro-active characteristics so necessary for war widows. Laughter to greet the day, and gatherings to share both glad and sad times with others who really understand, are exactly what these friendly birds epitomise. This is what makes war widows strong.



Diane showed two items - the book, No Mean Destiny: The Story of the War Widows Guild of Australia 1945-85 by Mavis Thorpe Clark



The badge struck to commemorate AWWQ 75 years, sent to all 2,200 members throughout Queensland, for remembrance and celebration.

<http://www.warwidowsqld.org.au/>

## Ron Sutton



Ron gave a detailed talk on his research on units that were located in the Cooroy area during WW2 whilst he was growing up in Belli Park. He has obtained a copy of a Cooroy Map and marked the locations from the grid references he found in the units War Diary.

The 57<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup> Battalion completed their final training in the area prior to departing via Townsville for New Guinea. They were originally raised in Victoria and had move progressively through NSW to Queensland to Caboolture before finally arriving at Tinbeerwah in 1942 via Kybong. Whilst in the area they undertook Schools for Officers and NCO's, rifle shooting at Enoggera, toughening up exercises by doing road works, Jungle Warfare exercises, before a Christmas Dinner and then to Tewantin for a swim. On New Years Day they participated in the Brigade sports at Cooroy Showgrounds, followed by a concert and 10% were give town leave. The town picture Show was well attended as well as the Tin Shed (Everyman's Hut) which was located near the War Memorial.

A water detachment was located in the Primary School yards during this period. Federal Hall was used to conduct a TEWT which was followed by a 24-mile route march to Eumundi. Prior to leaving the area the battalion went to Bribie Island to undertake amphibious training. They were trucked to Beachmere and then marched to Bribie Island in full marching order.

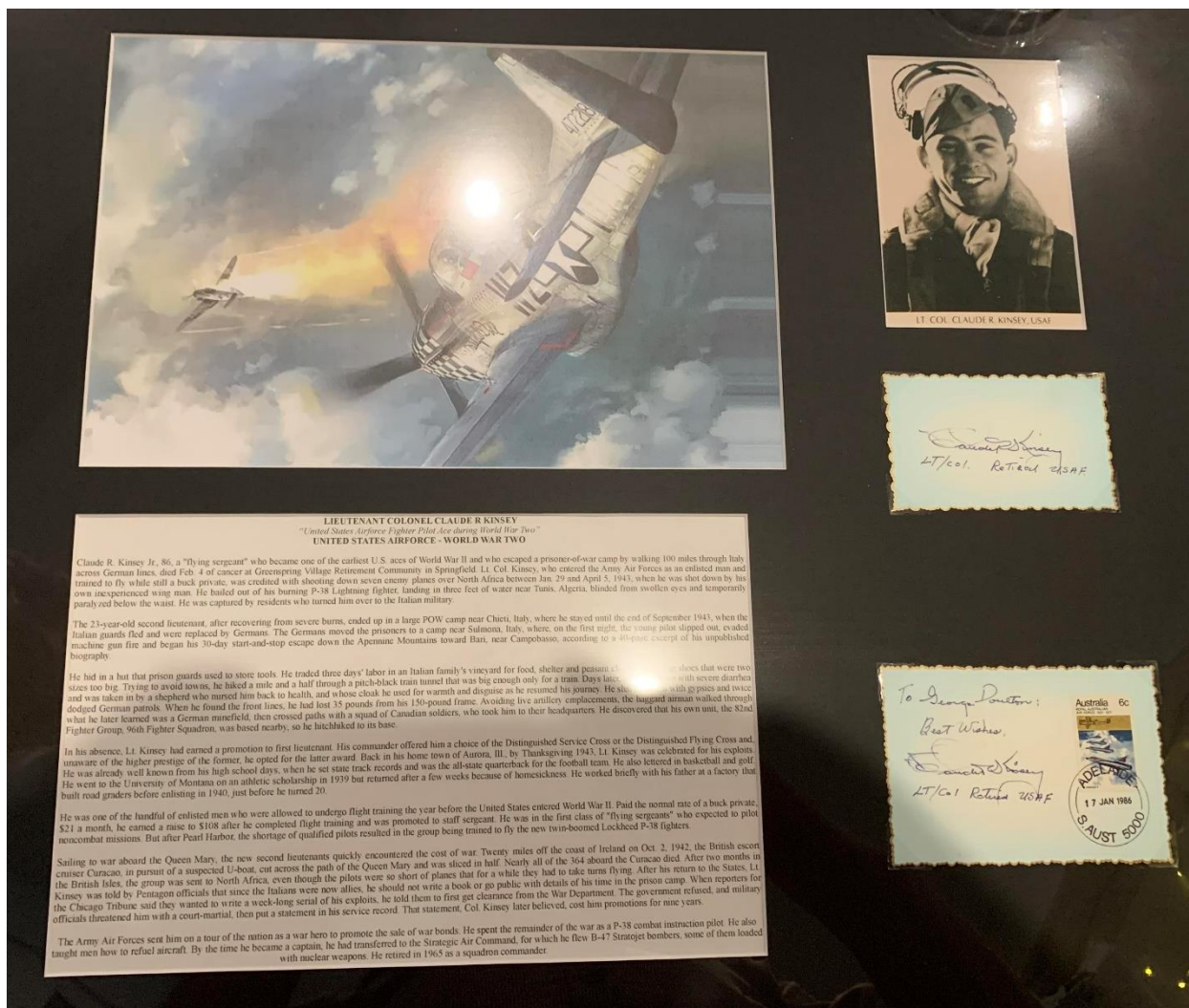


The Advance Party of the Battalion left Cooroy by train for Townsville before the remainder departed by ship in Brisbane a few days later.

Through out the war many convoys used the Bruce Highway to travel north and also many of the country roads in the area.

Enlistments at Cooroy were undertaken in the old RSL Club. 100 men enlisted in the town.

### Allen Fuary



Allan displayed a number of his US Airforce Posters

### Anthony Staunton FMHSA

#### 150,000 merchant seamen online at National Archives of Australia (NAA)

James Crichton, born in Ireland in 1879, served in the South African War 1899-1902 with the British Army and in WW1 with the New Zealand Army being awarded the Victoria Cross in 1918. He also served as a merchant seaman in the Second World War. James Crichton died in 1961 in New Zealand. His medals, held by the Auckland War Memorial Museum:

- Victoria Cross

- Queen's South Africa Medal 1899-1902 with clasps 'Cape Colony', 'Orange Free State', 'Transvaal', 'South Africa 1901' & 'South Africa 1902'
- 1914-15 Star
- British War Medal 1914-20
- Victory Medal 1914-19
- 1939-45 Star
- War Medal 1939-45
- New Zealand War Service Medal 1939-45
- King George VI Coronation Medal 1937
- Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Medal 1953

Anthony had been unaware of Crichton's Second World War service and wondered if he had visited Australia as a merchant seaman. It is twenty years since I was involved with merchant seaman records when working in the service eligibility area of DVA so I rang NAA.

At DVA, I used a set merchant seaman microfiche and was delighted to find that the same microfiche had been online at NAA for ten years! James Crichton VC did not visit Australia as a merchant seaman.

If James Crichton had visited Australia the NAA reference would have been NAA: A8877, 1926 TO 1966/13 (CORNEILLE, Thomas John to CUE) which contains 3567 pages. If this is the typical size of the 120 records, it suggests 400,000 pages and since some individuals have multiple pages at least 150,000+ merchant seamen.

At the end of Anthony's talk, he asked members if they were aware that you could download pdfs of NAA files. He was so delighted with the number who put up their hands to say that they were aware of the facility that he forgot to inform them that in this case, 3567 pages is too big to download as a pdf.

### **David Geck**

David advised the passing of Alex Wajer. His funeral is to be held on Thursday 2 December in Maryborough. (Information was advised to members by Secretary)

David also advises that his father who was a RAAF Nasho in the 1950 was advised that he was eligible for a medal which he has received. If anyone is aware of a person who is eligible, please tell them to apply.

## Greg Ivey



Greg displayed his Pacific Island Regiment Belt Buckle which has the motto ‘To find a Path’

## Ian Curtis

Ian called on all members who may have any information on Edgar Thomas Towner VC to kindly share it with him as he is in the process of research this Queenslander to produce an e-book. He also thanked Anthony Staunton and Allan Fuary for their assistance already.

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** The Record of the General Meeting held 10 September 2022 had been sent to members so it was summarised by the Secretary and accepted on a motion by Allen Fuary and seconded by Anthony Staunton. Carried

**Correspondence:** The correspondence consists of requests for research assistance, promotion of the play by the Queensland Theatre Company, ‘First Casualty’, Chronicle History Channel and various feedback from members re Tribute and other issues.

**Financial Statement:** The Financial Statement showing a credit balance of \$6997.68, was accepted and payments confirmed on a motion by Cameron Elmes and seconded by David Geck.

The Treasurer advised the meeting that the Annual MHSA Fees were paid to in October. The Military Spectacular Account which has income of \$3598.00 was also distributed to all members present. All Expenditure for the Spectacular, mostly refunds have been paid.

## General Business:

1. Presentation to Elsie Meyers and Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum. This is progressing slowly due to the availability of a traditional pewter tray and engraving of a

large number of words. The Secretary is dealing with a Jeweller in Caloundra to have the presentations finalised.

2. The future of the Military Spectacular. Due to the 2023 commitments of the Defence Force in particular Exercise Talisman Sabre it is not expected to hold the postponed Military Spectacular till 2024.
3. MHSA AGM. The Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 5 December at 6pm via Zoom
4. New Logo. The new logo is hoped to be ready for launch in 2023.
5. TRIBUTE 2023. The Editor advised that there will be no January Edition as he is taking a short break over the Christmas/New Year period. The first 2023 edition will be published in February and will feature some changes and improvements.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on Saturday 21 January 2023. Location TBA

The president advised that the March 2023 meeting is hope to be held at the Kybong (Gympie) Airfield featuring displays and demonstrations, vehicles etc More information to follow.

The president wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**Meeting closed at 2.45pm**