



Respect, Gratitude, Admiration

TRIBUTE

The Newsletter of the Military
Historical Society Australia,
Queensland Division

President: Russell Paten
Website: www.mhsa.org.au

JUNE 2024 No. 30

This beautiful seat is at the RSL in Beaudesert. The sun shines on it and puts the writing on the ground underneath the seat. ❤️❤️❤️



Strong message: Terry Dinneen has sent in the above pic following on from last edition. He says the seat was home grown in Beaudesert and installed at least six years ago. "The more the better," Terry says.

Vice-president's report

By Glenn Lyons, CSC

Having only recently taken up the position of Vice President many of you who read this may not know or have met me. My wife and I live 20km south of Maryborough (QLD), and we are enjoying the Fraser Coast region. Coincidentally Kelly became the Treasurer of MHSA-Q and a few months later I accepted the offer of VP as it was vacant at the time.

Since then I have been working with Russel Paten to evolve the role of my position in support of the president. Queensland is a large state and many of us would like to contribute where possible. My thoughts are to connect our members together in a better way with the use of technology.

Many of us lead busy lives, either in our work, as a family member or in retirement. I proposed to Russell in our Meeting in Gympie that we could trial a meeting platform called Zoom which is a form of video conferencing.

That way if people were not able to attend the meetings in person then it could be recorded and our members could watch it at their own convenience from the MHSA-Q website.

Last month at the Hervey Bay meeting we ran a trial using Zoom and although the meeting invite went out to almost 70 people we only had one member from Far North Queensland link in via video. Despite the low take up in video attendees, the actual attendees in the room were the largest I had experienced numbering 25.

I felt it was well received by all of those present and will be making the recommendation to Russell that MHSA-Q purchase a 12-month subscription to Zoom so that we can continue to evolve the way that we connect our own experiences together through each of our members. John our Far North Queensland member was also very pleased to be involved through Zoom.

As we move through the second half of this year there will be some updates to the website which will include new biographies from the committee and Zoom step-by-step guides for those who may be unfamiliar with its use.

I hope to see and meet you at some stage down the track either in person at a meeting or online as we move into our new way of connecting.

Yours in history....

From the Editor

Firstly, thanks to Glen for putting together a great column in the absence of president Russ Paten. Glen said he appreciated the chance to contribute.

Hopefully Russ will get to visit some significant military sites on his trip and will regale us with some interesting stories on his return.

Obviously, this month is the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings to liberate Europe in 1944 and there has been plenty of publicity, events and socials on this momentous event.

However, it is also fitting to acknowledge the anniversary of the sinking of the Centaur even if it was last month as it happened so close to home.

Letter to the editor

Firstly, thank you for the latest edition, Number 29, of the 'TRIBUNE', as always, it is of the highest standards. I particularly like a couple of the articles, such as the visit to Kokoda Barracks and also those related to WO2 Kevin Conway and WO2 'Dasher' Wheatly.

I spent a total of eight years at Kokoda Barracks, starting as a sergeant instructor on Battle Wing, JTC, conducting the battle Efficiency courses for those posted to Vietnam. From there I was posted back to Vietnam, this time to the Australian Army Training Team, (AATTV).

I returned to Kokoda Barracks a few years later as a captain instructor instructing on close country tactics. By this time the barracks had undergone a name change to the Land Warfare Centre. Then I returned, as a major, to take up the position of SO2 (training) on the HQ. Finally, I then moved across to take over a Chief Instructor of what was then WO &NCO Wing, (now Academy).

I have always claimed that my time there as a sergeant was the pivotal posting of my long career as I learned so much about soldiering in general in the Australian Army, underlined by the fact that I had only been in the Australian Army just on three years, including 12 months in Vietnam! I also met my wife there at that time, but that is another story!

What really caught my eye in this edition of the magazine was the headline stating that WO Kevin Conway, KIA on the 6th Jul '64, was the first Australia soldier KIA in Vietnam! I would like to dispute this! The first soldier killed in Vietnam was Sergeant William (Bill) Hacking who was killed on the 1st Jun '63.

Sadly, the manner in which he was killed has never been able to be confirmed, and I do not intend to speculate on that. To deny that he was KIA would be grossly unjust.

The irony of this is that when the AATTV was formed it was expected that only officers and WOs, based on their Service experience, would be posted to Vietnam to act as advisers. However, as stated, the first Australian soldier killed was a *sergeant* and the last Australian killed was a *corporal*, Corporal Blackhurst, who was killed on 17th Apr 71. Both were members of the AATTV!

What makes the AATTV unique is that, I believe, it is the only Australian army unit that never served, as a unit, in Australia! It was our first unit into Vietnam and, with the exception of the Embassy Guard, the last out. Over the ten years of service about 1000 soldiers served in various capacities. This includes 11 NZ soldiers. It is also worthy of mention that this unit was the most decorated Australian unit of the war. If the number, far too long to list here, of Australian, US and Vietnamese decorations, together the four VC's, awarded to members, were compared to other well decorated units, then this unit would arguably be the most decorated unit in our military history. Even without the foreign awards the unit still rates very highly in the top most decorated. Both the US and the South Vietnamese Government of the day, awarded the AATTV coveted high ranking unit citations. What makes this hard to swallow is that, despite a number of submissions, no Australian unit citation has been awarded to this unit!

There is an AATTV Memorial Grove of trees within Kokoda Barracks, which is considered to be our 'home', and each member who served with 'The Team', has a designated tree. When we learn of a member's passing an Australian flag, together with a poppy, is placed at his tree. Our ultimate aim is for everyone to also have a bronze plaque, containing his Vietnam service details, placed at his tree. Currently there are well over 500 flags, poppies and plaques within the grove.

S.F. (Frank) Reid, AM, JP (qual)
8 Garce St
Boonah
Qld 4310

Feature Article

Sad but special anniversary



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00444.081

The sinking of the Centaur

Karl James, 02 May 2023

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the 2/3rd Australian Hospital Ship (AHS) *Centaur*. On 14 May 1943 *Centaur* was en route from Sydney to Cairns when she was sunk by a Japanese submarine south of Moreton Island, off the Queensland coast. From the 332 people on board, only 64 survived.

Centaur was a merchant vessel built in Scotland on the Clyde River, and was launched in 1924. She could carry a mixed cargo of passengers and freight, and was employed on a run between Fremantle, Western Australia, and Singapore. When the war began in September 1939, she was placed under the government's control. In November 1941 *Centaur* was one of the ships used in the search for HMAS *Sydney*, and found a lifeboat with survivors from the German raider *Kormoran*. Among the Germans rescued was the *Kormoran*'s captain, Fregattenkapitdn Theodor Detmers.

Following Japan's entry into the war and the subsequent bloody fighting in Papua during 1942, *Centaur* was converted into a hospital ship with the aim of ferrying

patients between Port Moresby and Townsville. Her conversion began in January 1943 and was completed two months later.

Now the 2/3rd AHS *Centaur*, the vessel had a fully equipped operating theatre and dental surgery, and could carry 252 patients. She was also clearly marked as a hospital ship. Around her freshly painted white hull a thick green band ran, broken in several places by large red crosses. At night, the vessel was brightly illuminated by powerful spotlights.

Centaur kept her civilian crew, but her medical staff were all members of the army. The men were from the Australian Army Medical Corps and the women were from the Australian Army Nursing Service. *Centaur* only completed two voyages with patients, before she began her ill-fated third and final voyage.

In the early afternoon of 12 May *Centaur* steamed from Sydney for Cairns carrying members of the 2/12th Field Ambulance. Shortly after 4 am on 14 May, while most people were asleep, a torpedo struck *Centaur*'s port side, hitting the oil fuel tank which ignited in a massive explosion. The bridge superstructure collapsed and the funnel crashed onto the deck. Everything was covered with burning oil and a fire quickly began to roar across the ship. Water, meanwhile, rushed in through the gaping hole in her side. Many of those onboard not killed in the explosion or fire, were trapped as the ship started to go down bow first, and then broke in two. In just three minutes *Centaur* was gone.

The survivors were at sea for a day and half before they were rescued. The ship's crew and medical staff suffered heavily, as did the 2/12th Field Ambulance - 178 men, from a total of 193, died. It was the nurses though, who suffered the worst. Of the 12 nurses onboard only one, Sister Nell Savage, survived.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

044427

Although badly hurt herself, Sister Savage concealed her injuries and gave what help she could to the other survivors. After sharks circled their raft, and when

ships and planes passed without seeing them, a sing-along was organised to help keep up their spirits. For her "conspicuous gallantry" Sister Savage was awarded a George Medal.

The loss of the *Centaur* deeply shocked Australia, and for many Australians she became a symbol of the determination to win the war. The attack on a clearly marked and illuminated hospital ship was taken as further proof that Australia was fighting against a brutal enemy.

***Centaur* found**

Since the end of the war, many people have pushed to locate *Centaur* as a way of providing some solace to those family and friends who had lost loved ones, and to possibly answer some the unresolved questions surrounding its sinking.

A search led by David Mearns, who had previously led the team that found the wrecks of HMAS *Sydney* and HSK *Kormoran*, discovered *Centaur*'s wreck on 20 December 2009. *Centaur* was located about 30 nautical miles off the southern tip of Moreton Island, off Queensland's south-east coast.

The wreck was in one piece although it appears as though the hull broke in at least one, and maybe two, places. *Centaur*'s approximate position is 27° 16.98'S, 153° 59.22'E at a depth of over 2,000 metres. The ship's location is less than 1 nautical mile (1.85 kilometres) from that calculated by the navigator, 2nd Mate Gordon Rippon, who was on the bridge taking regular bearings the night *Centaur* was torpedoed.

Now that the wreck is found, it will be protected by the Australian government's *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. The site will therefore become a memorial to the lives that were lost.

Memorial to chaplains at Toowong

From Wuzzy Alford



Finished just ahead of ANZAC Day 2024, *The National Defence Chaplains' Memorial Grove* in Toowong's Anzac Park honours the unsung gallantry,

sacrifice and humble devotion to Australian Defence Force personnel, in times of war and peace, of our military chaplains.

It is the first time — anywhere in Australia — that a portion of a civic park has been set aside for a public memorial dedicated to ADF Chaplains and the incredibly significant role they have performed — in effect since the First Fleet arrived and “nationally” since the Commonwealth formed in 1901 — for the spiritual and material wellbeing of our fighting men and women.

Designed by Brisbane City Council architects and delivered by Council staff and contractors, the Memorial Grove consists of a circular polished and engraved concrete circle, flanked by dainty flowerbeds set inside a grand guard of eight magnificent, mature pine trees. At the ends of the east-west arms of a "Maltese Cross" motif, outlined on the ground in ochre-coloured, decomposed granite, is a backless, monolithic "seat" of Brisbane tuff sandstone, that entices visitors to pause awhile and contemplate the simple proposition advanced in the Memorial Centrepiece inscription:

THE NATIONAL DEFENCE CHAPLAINS' MEMORIAL GROVE

*Dedicated to Australian Defence Force Chaplains who have
humbly served this nation in times of war and peace.*

LEST WE FORGET

In February 2020, lead proponent, Brisbane resident, Mr. Peter Collins CGMM, Convenor of Canon Garland Memorial. and the Stone of Remembrance Centenary Committee, submitted an e-Petition to Brisbane City Council, setting out the case for the Grove.

Council agreed and settled upon a design, determined a budget, did soil and technical studies, engaged expert landscaping contractors and liaised with the proponent and the office of the Australian Army, Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force Directors-General (Chaplaincy) to discern a suitable form of words for the centrepiece engraving and associated interpretative sign.

At the invitation of the Stone of Remembrance Centenary Committee, his Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC CGMM (Retd.), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Mrs. Linda Hurley, visited the Memorial Grove on Thursday morning, 4 April 2024, having spent an hour inspecting *The Stone of Remembrance* and *The Cross of Sacrifice* in Toowong Cemetery's Canon Garland Place (located just across Mount Coot-tha Road from Anzac Park).

At as ANZAC Day 2024, *The National Defence Chaplains' Memorial Grove* was yet to be officially unveiled, blessed and dedicated.

Information sought on relics

Ian Curtis has sent in the following as something of interest.

The article is from the *Corryong Courier*.

The Australian Flag Society is continuing extensive enquiries about a New Zealand red ensign which was converted into an Australian red ensign during WWII, that is presently on loan from a kind donor.

The flag (pictured) bears the words “Changi ‘41 ‘42” on one star and “Chitty flag” on another.

It is thought to have been at the Changi prisoner-of-war camp during the fall of Singapore as the facility had previously been occupied by NZ forces.

Cudgewa-born Peter Chitty’s connection to the flag is yet to be determined, however it is unlikely to have belonged to him personally as his sons have no recollection of a red ensign.

Instead, it may be the red ensign which is thought to have flown over the game of Australian Rules football where St Kilda player Chitty won the folkloric ‘Changi Brownlow’ medal that is now on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



Curator, Jane Peek, confirmed there is a Changi survivor on record as saying that the Japanese tolerated the keeping of burial flags and allowed the prisoners to wash and hang them along fence lines to dry.

Also on loan are five whistles, including one that was manufactured in 1941 by Bell and Rider in Sydney and another that bears the inscription 'Changi football league'.

The whistles were discovered inside a leather Aussie rules ball and a basketball bearing the inscription 'Changi basketball league.'

"None of the inscriptions appear to be recent additions and taken altogether; the artifacts are difficult to dismiss as a long-planned fraud," said Australian Flag Society CEO, Nigel Morris.



"It is my recommendation that these great and glorious relics of the Second World War go on public display in the hopes that amateur war historians can provide further information and materials concerning their provenance."

If anyone has more information about the red ensign or other Changi relics they can contact Mr Morris on 0431 149 177 or (02) 6742 3689 or via email at nigelrmorris@hotmail.com

Humour

How do you play RAF Bingo? "A-10... B-52... F-16..."

Important dates for June

June 1, 1918 – RAN aircraft used for first time. Launched from *HMAS Sydney* and *HMAS Melbourne*.

June 1, 1941 - Evacuation from Crete completed. More than 16,000 troops taken off over four nights.

June 2, 1967 – 2nd Battalion, RAR, arrives in Vietnam.

June 3-6, 1942 – Battle of Midway.

June 3, 1944 – Last major air combat by RAAF in WWII, South of Biak Island 78 Sqn attacked 15 Japanese aircraft shooting down 10.

June 5, 1941 – Cyprus reinforced by Australian troops. Germans abandoned plans against the island.

June 6, 1944 – D-Day landings at Normandy.

June 6, 1969 – Battle of Binh Ba, South Vietnam. Enemy driven off after more than day of fighting.

June 7, 1917 – VC for Captain R.C. Grieve at Messines.

June 7, 1951 – 3rd Battalion, RAR sends patrols across the Imjin River in Korea.

June 7, 1968 – Australian Prime Minister John Gorton makes two-day visit for Vietnam.

June 7, 1917 – VC for Pte J. Carrol of Brisbane at St Yves during battle of Messines.

June 8, 1941 – Australians attack Vichy French in Syria.

June 8, 1942 – Japanese shell Sydney and Newcastle but to little effect.

June 8, 1950 – General Sir Thomas Blamey appointed Field Marshall, the only Australian to ever attain this rank.

June 9, 1941 – Australians in action against the French at Litani River in Lebanon.

June 10, 1940 – Italy declares war on the Allies.

June 10, 1941 – Recruiting begins for Torres Strait Defence Force.

June 10, 1944 – Last Japanese aircraft shot down in New Guinea by an Australian pilot.

June 10, 1945 -Landings at Brunei, Labuan and Muar in Borneo to establish a fleet base to protect oil and rubber resources.

June 11, 1900 – New South Wales Lancers take part in battle of Diamond Hill in South Africa.

June 12, 1901 – Victorian troops trapped in surprise attack at Wilmansrust, Cape Colony, South Africa.

June 13, 1941 – Battle for Jezzine in Lebanon against Vichy French.

June 13, 1945 – Australians capture Brunei.

June 14, 1966 – 6th Battalion, RAR, arrives in Vietnam. D company was in the battle of Long Tan.

June 15, 1901 – VC for Sgt J. Rogers from New South Wales in Orange Free State.

June 15, 1951 - *HMAS Bataan* bombs Chongjin in Korea.

June 16, 1942 – *HMAS Nestor* sunk in Mediterranean north of Tobruk.

June 16, 1948 – Malayan Emergency declared. The Australian involvement last 10 years.

June 17, 1945 – Australians land at Weston, North Borneo.

June 18, 1943 – Australian government announces Australia is no longer threatened with invasion.

June 19, 1952 – Jamestown Line, Korea.

June 19-July 6, 1941 – VC for Lt Roden Cutler for actions in Lebanon.

June 20, 1943 – Darwin bombed by Japanese.

June 21, 1864 – Australians in action at Te Ranga, New Zealand during New Zealand Wars.

June 21, 1941 – Damascus occupied.

June 21, 1951 – 3rd Battalion, RAR awarded USA Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation after battle of Kapyong, Korea.

June 22, 1941 – Operation Barbarossa launched.

June 22, 1945 – Beaufort, Borneo occupied.

June 22, 1945 – Japanese resistance on Tarakan ends.

June 23, 1885 – Sudan contingent disembarks.

June 24, 1942 – Germany's Panzerarmee Africa attacks Egypt.

June 25, 1917 – US troops in France.

June 25, 1950 – North Korea invades South Korea.

June 25-26 – VC for Pte JWA Jackson for action near Armentieres, France.

June 26, 1956 – Fight at Sungei Siput, Malaya.

June 27, 1911 – Royal Military College, Duntroon, opens.

June 27, 1950 – UN recommends assistance to South Korea.

June 27, 1950 – RAAF bomber squadron to Malaya.

June 28, 1918 – VC for Cpl P. Davey at Merris, France.

June 28, 1919 – Treaty of Versailles signed.

June 28, 1945 – VC for Pte LT Starcevich at Beaufort, North Borneo.

June 28, 1950 - Seoul captured.

June 29, 1950 – Australia commits military units to the UN force in Korea.

June 30, 1941 – *HMAS Waterhen* sunk on the Tobruk run.

June 30, 1942 – Australian troops raid Salamaua in PNG.

June 30, 1950 – No. 77 Squadron, RAAF, committed to Korea.

June 30, 1971 – Final anti-war rally.

Military Historical Society of Australia, Qld Division Committee 2023 – 24

President	Russell Paten
Vice President	Glenn Lyons
Honorary Secretary	Russell Paten
Honorary Treasurer	Kelly Lyons
Committee Members	Scott Meares, Neil Dearberg, David Geck, Wuzzy Alford and Sean Carwadine

<p><u>IMPORTANT EVENTS AND DATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p><u>FELLOWS of MHPA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Meyers (Deceased) • Anthony Staunton • Donald Wright <p><u>NEW MEMBERS</u></p> <p><u>VALE</u></p>
--	---

Contact details

President: Russell Paten	Editor: Alan Quinney
Phone: 0427 207 307	Phone: 0439 557 475
Email: patens@bigpond.com.au	Email: alanq.tribute@gmail.com
Website: www.mhsa.org.au	
Address: 27/11 Innovation Parkway, Birtinya. Qld 4575	Annual Membership Fees Ordinary Member \$50 Family Membership \$55



MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Business Number (ABN) 97 764 781 363

Membership Application

Queensland Division

Membership Fee Ordinary Member \$50, Family Member \$55 (ie 2 or more domiciled at the one address)

Name/s

Postal Address

.....

Telephone

E-mail

Date/year joined the Society.....

Military Interests

I understand the above details will only be used by the Qld Division and the Federal Secretary of the Military Historical Society of Australia to maintain correct records of my membership and for general branch or administrative business, and by the Journal editor to assist with editorial planning. I understand that the Society's Constitution requires the Federal Secretary to maintain a membership register (including the Journal mailing list).

In addition to information kept for these purposes:

OPT IN I agree to my email details being included on the Federal Secretary's contact list which will be used solely to distribute Society business and convey items of interest to members (including members' notices) **YES /NO (cross out whichever does not apply)**

OPT IN I wish to be included on the members' interests register and give permission for my military interests and my phone/email/address contact details to be included on it (cross out whichever does not apply). **YES/NO (cross out whichever does not apply)**

I understand that I can revoke permission for inclusion on register and contact lists at any time

As part of your membership you will receive a quarterly edition of Sabretache, the journal of the MHSA. **I require a hard copy (mail) / electronic (via email) version. (circle your option)**

.Cheque/Money Order: Military Historical Society of Australia, Qld Division - Please send this form and your membership fee to:

Treasurer, Qld Division
Military Historical Society of Australia
27/11 Innovation Parkway
Birtinya. Qld 4575.
Email: patens@bigpond.com.au

Or,

Direct deposit to the Qld Division MHSA Westpac Account at Maryborough, Qld.

BSB No. 034-128 Account No. 23-3618

If paying by Direct deposit, reference your name and forward the application form as well.

