



**Respect, Gratitude, Admiration**

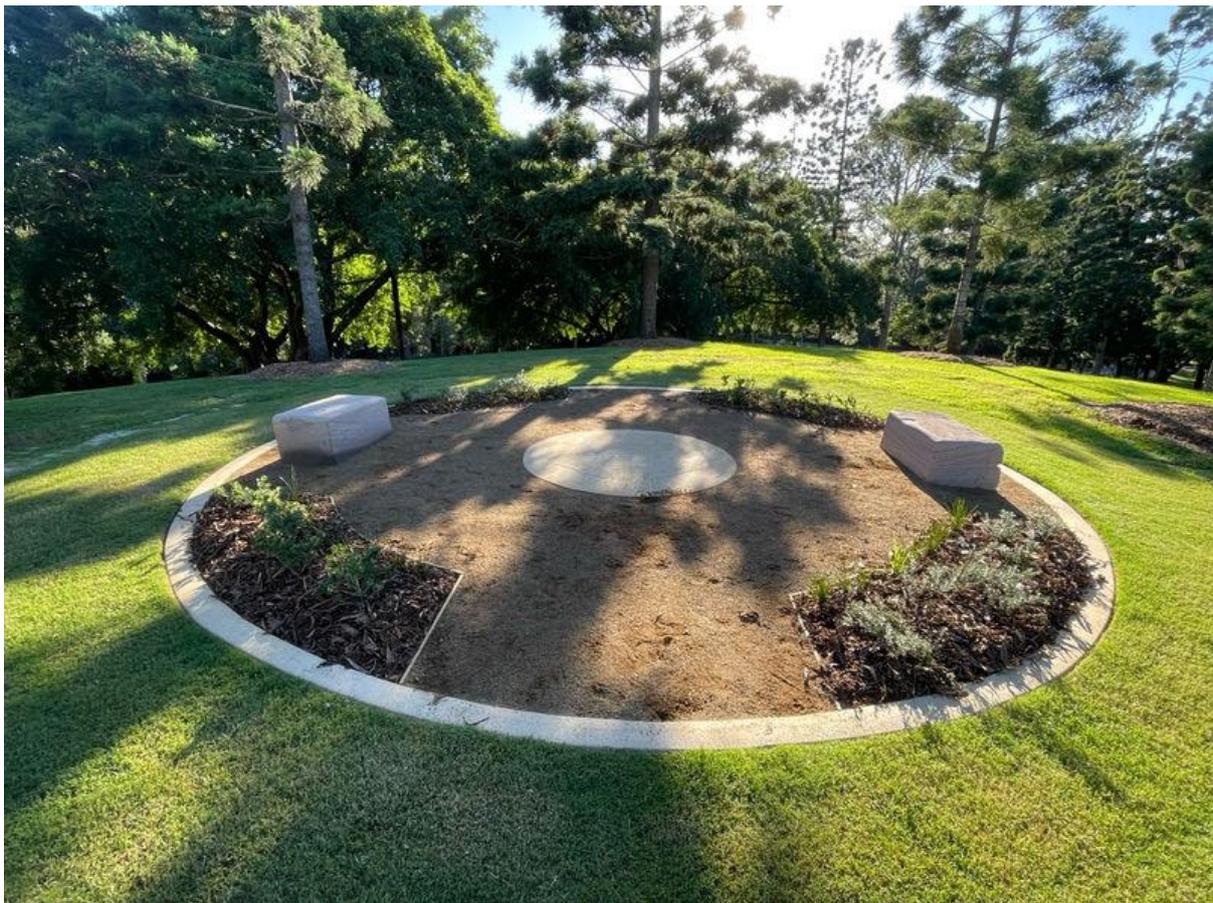
# *TRIBUTE*

The Newsletter of the Military  
Historical Society Australia,  
Queensland Division

President: Russell Paten  
Website: [www.mhsa.org.au](http://www.mhsa.org.au)

**DECEMBER 2024 No. 33**

## Chaplains remembered with memorial



The National Defence Chaplains' Memorial Grove, in Toowong's historic Anzac Park, was officially unveiled and dedicated on Wednesday afternoon, October 9, 2024.

Designed and erected by Brisbane City Council, this serene space is the first civic memorial — anywhere in the Commonwealth of Australia — to honour the gallantry, sacrifice, dedication to duty and commitment of our nation's military Chaplains to the spiritual and material wellbeing of Australian Defence Force personnel — alongside of whom they have humbly served in time of war and in peacekeeping operations.

Located on a slight ridge in the eastern quarter of the park (entry off Wool Street), not far from The World War I Nurses Memorial Grove, the National Defence Chaplains' Memorial Grove overlooks Canon Garland Overpass, the Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mount Coot-tha and a section of the Western Freeway Bikeway.

After Council acceded to a brief, citizens-lead petition campaign that circulated in early 2020, Council business units — including architects and arborists — liaised with the proponent, who in turn engaged with ADF Directors-General — Chaplaincy in Canberra and Brisbane.

Walter Taylor Ward representatives (Councillors Penny Wolff and James Mackay) guided the project funding and a design that took full advantage of an existing semi-circle of six hoop pines (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) that flanked the site was chosen.

In 2022, to complete a ring effect, Council arborists successfully planted two more mature pines. Two years later Council landscaping staff juxtaposed — east and west — heavy blocks of Brisbane sandstone to form two “seats.”

Four garden beds of bottlebrush (*Callistemons*), native rosemary (*Westringia*) and grasses were then arrayed around an embossed, concrete disk centrepiece inscribed with the words, "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."

**Contributed by Wuzzy Alford**

## President's report

Well, 2024 has come and almost gone. The Qld Division conducted some interesting meetings during the year and were privileged to be shown several high-quality presentations from people with long and full experiences with the ADF and other organisations.

Thanks to the efforts of John Steel and Russell Linwood, one of these was conducted on the Gold Coast for the first time. The success of this meeting will ensure future meetings down there.

Currently, our plan for next year is for six meetings, probably at Gold Coast, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Gympie and Maryborough/Hervey Bay. Please consider in advance, potential guest presenters for these meetings.

I would like to thank my committee and standing officers who have served you very well during the year. They are Glenn Lyons (Vice-President), Kelly Lyons (Treasurer), Jim Nuttall (Treasurer), Wuzzy Alford, David Geck, Scott Meares (Committee members).

Special thanks also to Alan Quinney who has taken Tribute under his wing and constantly produces interesting, informative and high-quality editions.

Initiatives this year include the purchase of a Zoom licence (yet to be finalised), EFT payments and polo shirts. Other initiatives are being considered for 2025.

A disappointing element of the year was our declining membership with a considerable number of members not resubscribing. I sincerely hope that more members resubscribe as time progresses.

For me, it has been a rewarding year during which I have learned a great deal about the responsibilities and intricacies of being a President. Many thanks to my mentors, most of whom are mentioned above. I welcome all feedback and am always keen to hear your thoughts on how we can do things better and how to add value for our members.

Thank you for your support during the year. I wish all of you a safe and happy Christmas with your families and other special people. I am very much looking forward to continuing forward in the new year. - **Russell Paten, President**

## **From the editor**

With the end of the year approaching and all that entails, this maybe a somewhat abridged edition but I wanted to get something out before Christmas.

At this stage I cannot say when the next edition will be as I am having old computer issues, which, if cannot be remedied, may require a new machine.

Please have a great but safe festive season no matter your plans.

Hopefully I can get to meet some of you next year.

## **The Inner Sanctum**

### **From Terry Dinneen**

Only a very, very small percentage of us ever got to see inside the Task Force Headquarters Command Post or, for that matter, the Battalion Command Post.

At the TFHQ CP only the GSO2 (Ops) and the two GSO3 (Ops) were given access to that domain and then their reason for being there had to be legitimate. Several Captains who were posted to the HQ were trained to be relief duty officers and they were normally rostered for the night shifts.

John Bullen, author of *Vietnam War Diary* and a relief Duty Officer has provided us with a description of how it all works.

For the second half of my time in Vietnam I was posted to the Battle Int section of the TFHQ and therefore qualified as a relief Duty Officer for the Command Post.

It was different and I remember one time while I was reading myself in as to what was in progress before starting my night shift.

At the time the 'A' Team was deployed to Op Coburg north and outside of Phuoc Tuy. Us leftovers, that included the remainder of the TF who were not deployed north, had to look after our base at Nui Dat.

So, some of the routine TAOR patrols were on the TF rear ops net and usually comprised cooks, drivers, clerks and anybody fit enough to patrol.

I was to relieve one of the GSO3 (Ops) who manned the CP during the day. A Kiwi voice from my former unit came on the radio and reported that 45 enemy had just entered the western side of Hoa Long.

The Ops Officer who was a full time ARES/CMF replied, ‘How do you know there were 45’? To which the Kiwi replied, ‘We are lying beside the paddy bund in the shadow and they walked along the top of it and I counted 90 feet walk past and I divided that by two’.

All Blacks one, Wallabies nil (as usual).

## **Chinook milestone recognised**

Two aviators have recently marked the milestone of 3000 flying hours in Chinooks.

Aircrew operator technician with Army's C Squadron, Sergeant John Van-Vegchel, and instructor development officer Jim Crowe, join only three others in the annals of the ADF to have spent as much time in the dependable airframe.

By chance the pair reached the figure within days of each other. Sergeant Van-Vegchel on August 22 while flying cargo between HMAS *Canberra* and Townsville; and Mr Crowe reached the mark just four days later while training junior pilots.

The pair have also taken very different journeys to reach the milestone.

Sergeant Van-Vegchel began flying in helicopters after more than a decade fixing them, switching from maintenance technician to aircrew operator technician in a trade transfer in 2014.

His maintenance background means, on top of his usual duties helping transport troops and cargo, he can undertake minor repairs and servicing on helicopters in the field.

Originally from Atherton in north Queensland, Sergeant Van-Vegchel is a veteran of overseas deployments, including Afghanistan, Timor-Leste and Tonga, and has taken part in numerous domestic disaster relief operations.

“There’s been some very nice views over the years,” he said.

“Ayers Rock [Uluru] and the Olgas are amazing from above. Papua New Guinea is another beautiful place to fly.”

Also, Townsville-based, Mr Crowe is a Boeing contractor embedded with the CH-47F Chinook Wing at the School of Army Aviation.

He served with the UK’s Royal Air Force for 18 years, piloting a variety of aircraft in places such as Northern Ireland, Hong Kong and the Middle East,

before emigrating to join the ADF in 2004 as part of the lateral recruitment initiative.

Four tours in Afghanistan spanning three years were key contributors to his high-flying hours tally, the first deployment to Kandahar as troop commander among his proudest Chinook memories.

“Watching our first operational mission take-off; all the work that went into that. The effort involved to take us from a peacetime posture to conducting combat operations in Afghanistan was extraordinary,” Mr Crowe said.

Both men are full of praise for the airframe they have operated across several variants, which first saw service in the 1960s, but has undergone regular upgrades.

“They are very reliable. They love to be flown and are battle proven,” Sergeant Van-Vegchel said.

For the record, aircrew operator technician Greg Maiden, formerly of C Squadron, 5th Aviation Regiment, has the highest number of ADF flying hours in Chinooks with 5596.8.

*Used with thanks and acknowledgement to Defence News*

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **Troy Knight – Havoc-06: A Combat Controller on Operations**

*Big Sky Publishing, 2022*

*Havoc-06* is one of an increasing number of publications covering the experiences of troops deployed in 21<sup>st</sup> century wars. The author, assisted by a professional writer colleague (Brooke Strahan), was an RAAF Combat Controller whose operational deployments included Iraq and Afghanistan. After initially seeking to join the Army in 2000 for service in the East Timor deployment he found himself in the RAAF when there were few opportunities that he was looking for in Army. From there on, he tells the story of his service during one of Australia’s busiest series of deployments, all occurring at a time of unprecedented technological change, including in warfighting.

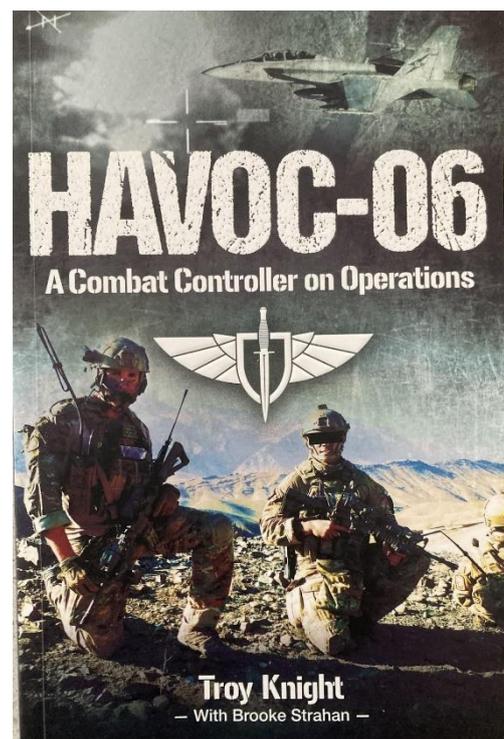
Until recently, most of us would probably not have heard of a RAAF combat controller, let alone had one with us in the field. Air assets in their air-to-ground role in direct close support of ground troops used to be controlled primarily by Army artillery or mortar fire controllers. Such is the rate of change that entirely

new capabilities have developed and with them, the requirement to have the technical personnel to optimally control to assist the manoeuvre commander on the ground, right down some times, to patrol level.

The book is a marvellous read, bringing to us the capabilities and intricacies of how today's air assets, both our own and coalition aircraft including drones, can be harnessed to generate a multiplier effect in ground battles. Quantum advances in Casualty Evacuation Support and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles also occurred in the time that Knight served, and he acquired the skills to control them while embedded with special forces in Afghanistan in particular. Combined with the control of kinetic fires effects (bombs, missiles, aerial cannon) delivered by aircraft, these enhanced capabilities were applied and honed, and in his case, in a special forces' environment. Much of it is mind-boggling to read.

Overall, Knight takes us through his service career with the typical vigour expected of the perspective of a young serviceman wanting to experience war. Such is the desire of many young people, especially males. A deployment to Iraq as an Air Defence Guard and all of those associated experiences are followed by involvement in the Aceh tsunami disaster working within the RAAF response component. Not entirely satisfied with routine life in the RAAF and seeking more action, he takes leave to seek more excitement (and money?) back in Iraq working as a security contractor. He achieves this working for a British and then an American civilian company followed by similar work in the Malaccan Strait on anti-piracy duties. Having taken extended leave from RAAF to do that, he realises the risks and perhaps has satisfied his immediate desires for action in that environment. He resumes full time service in 2008 in the RAAF and after extensive training deploys to Afghanistan in a new role termed 'Combat Controller'.

It is this part of the book that better reflects the book title. This perhaps is the section that provides most readers (I would think) with the details of what this new employment category is about and the impact it now has on ground operations and the use of offensive air support today. The narrative and descriptions of both the technical control of the air assets are eye-opening and most informative, noting these capabilities continue to evolve with operational experience as well as technological



development. Knight deployed with sub-units of 2nd Commando Regiment to Afghanistan and due to the specific aggressive nature of their employment and immense resources they were able to call upon, found himself in the range of close engagements he describes during which he got plenty of opportunities to ply his specialty.

At times the book reads like a 'Boys' Own' adventure. Having Commanding Officers who '... pulled some strings for me,' a most accommodating wife who is quoted to say '... you need to head back overseas...' and a range of other cavalier experiences in training and interaction with senior NCOs and officers that most of us have probably never seen or experienced are possibly reflective of an exuberant and passionate storyteller writing for a particular audience. The full package is certainly most entertaining, especially the praise of fellow troops engaging in various forms of mischief as part of their dealing with Service life.

The layout of the book including the imagery, makes for an easy read, even with the evolving terminology which is explained well. Towards the end, as the author reaches instructor rank and duties, he provides an account of how the experiences acquired during Coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are now being built upon by both American and Australian Air Forces to this day. It might only be imagined what is coming next in terms of lethal firepower from the air, and the speed with which it might be harnessed.

Notwithstanding the author's occasional comments about most military histories being written by officers - implying such might be selective and less interesting/descriptive of the individual experience - it is pleasing to see a broadening of documented experiences from an enlisted person/Other Rank viewpoint. To have publications like this for the reading world to learn of experiences at all levels is a good thing; at least we now know what a person of such a background wants to say in their own language. Especially one that is so recent.

The number of enlisted (Other Ranks) personnel taking to the pen after the twentieth century wars, and particularly so soon after coming home from their deployments is generally agreed to have been admirable, but if anything else, under-utilised as a source of field operator perspective. One remains hopeful that a higher rate of such writers will add to the literature as time goes on. In this manner, the reading public might better learn more quickly from those who deployed what it was like, particularly in the context of stories such as this one.

**Reviewer: Lt Col Russell Linwood, ASM (Retd)**

## Military humour



## Important Dates

December 1, 1942 – HMAS *Armidale* sunk by Japanese aircraft near Timor.

December 1, 1951 – Air battle over Sunchon, North Korea involving 12 Meteors of 77 Squadron. Afterwards the role of the squadron was changed from air interception to ground attack.

December 2, 1914 – First Australian military aircraft despatched to war. It was the Mesopotamian Half Flight, fighting in what is now Iraq.

December 3, 1915 – Siege of Kut begins in Mesopotamia. It was surrendered to the Turks in April 1916.

December 3, 1914 – First AIF disembarked in Egypt to initially protect the vital Suez Canal.

December 3, 1954 – No. 77 Squadron returns from Korea.

December 4, 1990 – Royal Australian Navy involvement in the Persian Gulf approved. Eight RAN ships served.

December 5, 1939 – First official RAAF operation of the Second World War with 10 Squadron part of RAF Coastal Command operations against U-boat in the battle of the Atlantic.

December 5, 1950 – Evacuation of Chinnampo, Korea involving Australian ships *Bataan* and *Warramunga*.

December 6, 1951 – HMAS *Sydney* begins its second patrol off Korea.

December 7, 1915 – Evacuation of ANZAC forces from Gallipoli begins.

December 7-8, 1941 – Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

December 8, 1941 – Japan invades Malaya and Thailand.

December 8, 1941 – Australia at war with Japan costing 17,000 Australian lives.

December 9, 1917 – Jerusalem occupied by the Desert Mounted Corps.

December 9, 1942 – Australians occupy Gona, New Guinea.

December 9, 1997 - Death of Ted Matthews, the last survivor of those who landed at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915.

December 10, 1941 – HM ships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* sunk by Japanese torpedo bombers off Malaya. The sinkings heralded the significance of air power in the Pacific war.

December 11, 1941 – Germany and Italy declare war on the USA.

December 11, 1952 – Operation Fauna in Korea when the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, RAR began operations against Chinese troops near Hill 355.

December 12, 1917 – HMAS *Australia* damaged in a collision with battle cruiser HMS *Repulse*.

December 13, 1915 – Light Horse fight at Um Rakham against pro-Turkish Arabs.

December 14, 1941 – Japanese forces land at Penang, Malaya and the Allies were forced to evacuate.

December 15, 1900 – Australia's first Governor General, the Earl of Hopetoun arrives in Sydney aboard HMS *Royal Arthur*.

December 15, 1944 – Battle of the Bulge as the Germans launch their final offensive of WWII in the west.

December 17, 1967 – HMAS *Perth* under fire off Dong Hoi, Vietnam.

December 18, 1944 – “Arty Hill”, Bougainville captured by the Queensland 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

December 19, 1951 – HMAS *Sydney* completes a tour of operations off Korea's west coast disrupting enemy rail supply routes.

December 20, 1915 – Last Australian troops evacuated from Gallipoli.

December 20, 1917 – Second conscription referendum held in Australia and was again defeated.

December 21, 1916 – Light Horse capture El Arish, one of the first steps in the Allied advance on Palestine.

December 22, 1941 – First US troops arrive in Australia.

December 23, 1916 – Battle of Magdhaba in northern Sinai.

December 24, 1941 – Benghazi recaptured. It changed hands five times.

December 26, 1941 – Japanese forces capture Hong Kong after a three-week siege.

December 27, 1941 – Prime Minister Curtin announces that “Australia looks to America”.

December 27, 1940 – 7<sup>th</sup> Division capture “The Pimple” Shaggy Ridge, New Guinea after a four-month battle.

December 28, 1940 – 6<sup>th</sup> Division in first action near Bardia at an Italian frontier fortress.

December 29, 1860 – Australian sailors from Colonial warship *Victoria*, in action at Matarikoriko, New Zealand. The first overseas military operation by an Australian unit.

December 30, 1944 – Australians of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion occupy the vital vantage point of Pearl Ridge, Bougainville.

December 31, 1914 – The second convoy of the first AIF departs Albany. Many on board landed at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915.

December 31, 1967 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, RAR, arrives in South Vietnam on HMAS *Sydney*.

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

President	Russell Paten
Vice President	Glenn Lyons
Honorary Secretary	Jim Nuttall
Honorary Treasurer	Kelly Lyons
Committee Members	Scott Meares, David Geck, Wuzzy Alford

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>IMPORTANT EVENTS</u></b> <b><u>AND DATE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-Monthly Meeting</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>FELLOWS of MHPA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Meyers (Deceased)</li> <li>• Anthony Staunton</li> <li>• Donald Wright</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>NEW MEMBERS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mike Styles</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>VALE</u></b></p>
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## MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

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