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News

Edition 2 ~ April 2014



Geoff Evans, from Reservist to Combat Veteran





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The Australian Commando Association (NSW)'s membership consists of Servicemen who have served with Independent Companies, Commando Squadrons, "M" and "Z" Special units and Special Forces during and since the Second World War

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed within this publication are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Editor, Publisher, Committee Members or Members of our Association. We welcome any input as long as it is not offensive or abusive but if any member has a problem with a printed article we would like to be informed in order that the author may be contacted. We do encourage your opinion.

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Deadline for next edition: WEDNESDAY 18TH JUNE 2014

Next edition out in time for Reserve Forces Day.
All news on members and interesting articles accepted.
(Subject to editors' approval.)

Barry G





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President's Report

Well, by your comments the first of our new editions was well received by all.

Some people actually sent in news from around the "traps".

The article written by Geoff Evans, a former Reservist from 1st Commando Regiment is a "must read". It was previously published in the Reveille, but is a powerful recant of his Combat service and I recommend it to all members of the Commando Family.

Geoff, among others, is still suffering from his journey from Reservist to Combat Duty.

I remember a former SOCAUST saying to troops "be careful what you wish for" when they were volunteering for duty overseas.

The groups that Geoff is involved with also deserve our support, donations and support to "Soldier On" and like groups is recommended.

We have included a number of suggestions for family outings that you may want to participate in and we would also like to have further suggestion for the future.

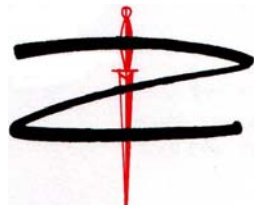
Anzac Day is our next big get together and I look forward to seeing some of the "old and bold" mixing with our newest Veterans at the Commando Seat.

See you on the 25th April.



Barry Grant

President and joint editor



ANZAC DAY SERVICES

MOSMAN DAWN SERVICE

0530 hours

Held at parade ground of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust precinct
at Georges Heights

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0815 hours form up

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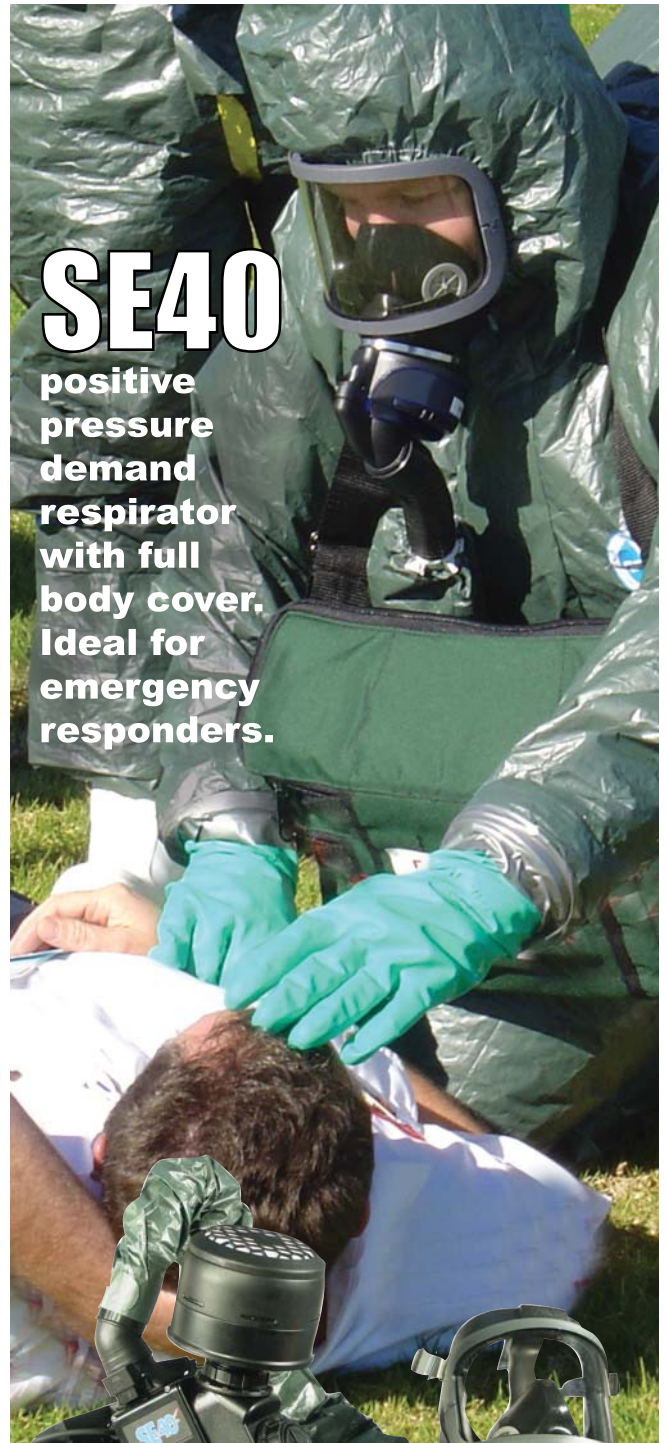
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The Geoffrey Evans Story

Geoffrey Evans is a wounded ambassador for Soldier On. He first served overseas as a reservist in 2001, when he was posted to East Timor for six months. He now looks back on that period and recognises the first symptoms of PTSD – returning with a heightened sense of paranoia, on his first night home he barricaded his door. He returned to East Timor in 2006, with the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG). Deployment to the war in Afghanistan with the rank of corporal was to follow two years later. Here is his story:



In 2008, for the first time since WWII, they mobilised my Reserve Unit and sent us to war. The Army didn't publicise it; they didn't have to tell anyone because we were Special Forces. The only difference between us and the full time Commando Unit is that the regular unit would spend about three to five months in pre-deployment training. We took eight.

How quickly I discovered that there is a world of difference between being trained and being experienced. Training will tell you not to walk on roads or tracks, but only experience will help you when there is nothing but tracks and roads to move on. We were thrown into the deep end. It was often up to the team leaders to choose the route, and we walked it out front. Where are the bombs you know are there? Many times in those first weeks I would literally grit my teeth, straining to detect disturbances in the earth through the green haze of my night vision goggles, while I led my team down into the villages in the dead of night to conduct raids on the Taliban.

We were conducting successive missions, night after night, with very little rest during the day. Typically we would drive our vehicles out into the desert, circle the wagons, and then walk (about 6km across rock covered mountain) to a target compound. We would aim to get there at around 2 or 3 in the morning, raid the target, then try to get back to our vehicles as the sun was coming up. Get in our vehicles, drive away somewhere else, park, try and sleep for a few hours and then at about 12 or 1 in the afternoon a new target pack would come in and we'd do it all again the next night.

On the night of 27 November 2008, after five nights in a row, we were on a fairly typical mission to kill or capture a known bomb maker in the Mirabad Valley, north-east of Tarin

Kowt. That night was very rushed. Our intelligence staff had trouble locating the target, and had us driving back and forth across the desert until midnight. Orders were rushed; the four team commanders and the platoon commander hashed out a quick plan in the back of a Bushmaster under a red penlight.

I remember being struck by what a dark night it was. I was walking down a ridge line where I could see the line of the Company walking ahead of me as we moved toward the target, and I saw a huge explosion accompanied by "boom" in front. Just for a second I thought, we're under mortar fire, and then as I watched the shape of the blast develop, I thought, no, that's an IED; someone has stepped on an IED. Clods of dirt rained down around me.

There was no panic, no rush. Like clockwork the engineers at the front of the column came back and cleared around us all with mine detectors. I was fine. There was a guy 30 metres in front of me who was a metre away from a bomb. The next morning we would find three more IEDs that we had all walked past in the night.

One of our men had stepped on a 20kg IED rigged to a pressure plate, killing him instantly. The blast had blown off both of his legs and one arm as well as doing awful damage to the rest of his body. He was unrecognisable. His body armour looked as though someone had neatly cut through the shoulder straps with scissors. Behind him was Captain (now Major) Bronson Horan, had been blown through the air by the blast and suffered a broken neck. Despite his terrible and lasting injuries, he continued to stay at his post and command the Company. In any other army that would have earned him a medal, Major Horan is the finest combat officer I have ever known, and now runs the Soldier On

Reintegration Centre in Adelaide.

Once the engineers had cleared a path we went down and put the body on a stretcher. We started walking out of there. I was carrying the stretcher on the downward side of the slope as we walked back along the top of the ridgeline, when we suddenly slipped out down the hill. We both dropped at the same time and the dead soldier fell on top of me. I could feel his face against my face, and it was warm. I remember thinking (it was perhaps minus 20 degrees), how can his face still be warm? I never thought for a second that he was alive; there was no way he could be. As always when anything went wrong our CSM -WO2 A, despite being wounded in the blast himself, was there and he said, "Fellas, just calm down." We calmed down.

Shortly after that someone walked up to me and said, "Geoff, can you nav us back to the VDO (vehicle drop off)." Remember that when we stepped off on the raid we were in such a hurry that I hadn't even looked at the map. I didn't know where we were, let alone how to get us back through a minefield to the VDO. "Yep, no worries."

I quickly figured a route out of there. I took us straight down the side of the hill and onto the worst possible route. I knew there would be no IEDs on the side of the hill and in the rough and rocky areas. The guys struggled on through the night with the stretcher. It was the hardest night of my life.

One of the engineers clearing the route in front of me couldn't walk in a straight line, it was the fourth time he'd been blown up, and he kept drifting to the left. Occasionally I had to hold him, drag him back over to where I needed him and say, "I need you to go straight up here [the hill]." I had four guys carrying a stretcher; if one of them stepped on a mine it



would kill the lot. I had to push him. Those engineers had continued on from the previous rotation and were already burnt out, but they saved us many times on that night and others. I cannot praise them highly enough.

We'd had to leave part of the platoon at the incident site until the morning. We went back to meet them as soon as the sun came up. Eventually we left and drove back to Tarin Kowt. I was completely exhausted, but strangely unable to connect with the emotion I wanted to feel. I kept thinking, I wish I could cry and just, let it all out. But I couldn't. I was tired – numb. It was our first combat death.

When we got back to Tarin Kowt it was after midnight. Exhausted, I rang my wife. She was busy with the kids and other banalities of life, and I remember thinking, I don't know how to even begin to tell you what I've just been through. So I didn't. She was lucky she hadn't been watching the television. What happened to many wives and families is that the news flashed: "Member of Special Operations Task Group Killed In Action." Remember we are a small group, so they were straight on the phone to each other: "Have you heard who it is? Have you heard anything? Who is it?" It was a terrible burden for them to bear so early in our tour.

I remember at the time being angry at how little it meant to suffer a casualty; nothing stopped. We didn't skip a beat. I don't know what I was expecting; we had a funeral and it was a good send-off. I'm glad we did that, but by the morning after we were back into mission planning.

We changed after that death. Partly it was the realisation that we were in a ruthless life and death struggle, but also because we continued to conduct many more missions, and we got better. We became clinical and efficient.

There is an area in Afghanistan called the Baluchi Valley, where Australia has taken many of its casualties. Back in 2008 a young and aggressive Taliban commander had taken charge of operations in the area. The Dutch drove through there with 20 armoured vehicles and he ambushed them. One of their snipers was killed. The situation was so bad the Dutch refused to go back there.

The decision was taken to send SOTG, dismounted, to target the Taliban commander.

The plan was that we would drive to the patrol base at the start of the Baluchi Valley looking like the Mentoring Task Force. We didn't take our outrider bikes, we stayed in the vehicles, covered our beards and wore normal uniforms as we drove to the patrol base. We got there at about 7pm. I remember that night being very tired. The plan called for us to step off straight away, walk into the Baluchi Valley, raid the Commander's house and then stay there and fight. But the weather closed in, we lost our drone support and Aero Medical Evacuation. The mission was postponed until the next night. I found a shipping container and slept.

The next morning I moved my swag out into the sun on top of an embankment that dropped away to the wall of the base. At about 1pm I was lying on my swag listening to my iPod when my platoon commander walked over. He stopped at the base of the slope: "Hey, Geoff, I've got to talk to you about tonight." I got up, but just as I started to walk towards him, there was a big bang, which sounded like a sledge hammer hitting metal. I knew it was enemy fire.

Instinctively I started to run down the slope, but movement caught my attention out of the corner of my eye. As I turned I saw my friend, Private S, rolling lifelessly down the embankment. As he came to a stop I was looking at his face, I could tell he was already dead. Our medic, dived on top of him yelling, "Get my med kit!" I grabbed it, dropped to my knees and started frantically tearing open wound dressings. It was only then that I realised Private S had been hit in the left shoulder blade region of his back (with a 107mm rocket). The missile exited his right lower chest and half his chest was missing. I started stuffing the dressings into him; as always WO 2 A, appeared from nowhere to help. When I looked at our Private L, our medic, his hands were inside the darkened bloody that was once Private S's chest, blood pooled and congealed on the ground at our knees. We kept stuffing in dressings, and then Pte L looked at me and said: "Just stop. My hands go all the way through; he's dead."

I stood up and walked back to my team: "He's dead, fellas." They just looked at me and nodded blankly: "Yeah, we know." I looked down at myself: I had sticky blood and other gore on my hands and uniform. We'd only been about a metre apart when he was hit and much of it had sprayed on to me. I have read about the stench of death many times, but it wasn't until that moment that I experienced it for myself; it hung over us like a pall. And that is when I knew we had changed. All of the intense emotion and feelings that should have been there just weren't. We were numb, we had been blooded.

The concept of blooding is well known in war. It happens because the expression of grief or fear on the battlefield will endanger your life. So you suppress all of your feelings, you push them down, put a lid on them, and feel nothing. It allows you to kill, and it allows you to have your friends killed, and still get on with the job. The problem is that later in life all the powerful emotions and feelings that were associated with those incidents are still there, and they want to come out. That's when veterans turn to drinking, drugs, work (as in workaholic), or whatever it takes to hold the lid on. The fear is that to let even one emotion out, is to be overwhelmed by them all. That's what PTSD is – one half of it anyway.

A helicopter came in to get our fallen mate. We formed lines either side of his stretcher, and after a brief service, his Team-mates carried him to a Bushmaster which drove him to the waiting chopper. Someone had found an Australian flag to cover his body bag. It was a poignant touch.

I looked at Pte L; he was covered in blood. I said to him, "Mate, you've got to go and wash your clothes." Being a patrol base there were washing machines there. "I don't care about blood," he shrugged. "I know, but it's not for you. It's for everybody else." By this time it was 5 or 6 o'clock at night, and we were due to step off on the mission as soon as it was dark, around 7pm. I remember the OC came around asking, "What do you want to do?" To a man we said, "We want to go and get these guys." We wanted to inflict the heaviest price possible for the loss of our friends.



As soon as it got dark we infiltrated by foot into the Baluchi Valley. We raided the Taliban Commander's house and although he wasn't there we captured two foreigners, who had been sent there to train the Taliban on how to fire rockets. Once the Commander's compound was clear, the plan was to stay and occupy his house. This would draw him into battle where he would be targeted. As soon as the sun came up, the new OC, a brilliant combat officer, Major W, walked around to inspect our position. Overlooking our position was a small hill about 100 meters away. If the Taliban were to occupy it they would be able to fire directly into our compound. Major W said: "I need a team up there right now; who's ready?" So up we went to defend the hill.

There were six of us, plus an engineer to clear the top of the hill of IEDs. On top of that hill was an old trench the Mujahedeen had used to ambush the Russians; no doubt the Taliban used it too. By 0900 we had been watching women and children stream out of the village for two hours, an obvious combat indicator. Recognising that we were exposed and likely to be under fire I had asked for another team to bring up an 84mm rocket launcher. Delayed by the need to fortify their own position, they finally arrived at the back of the hill at around 0930. I stopped them there by radio; we had found a likely IED on the hill earlier and I needed to lead them across the top to be safe.

I got out of the trench and walked over the top of the hill to meet them. It was then, standing crouched but in the open, that the Taliban opened up on us. I had always thought that a bullet fired at you made a crack-thump sound as it passed. But I now know that when they are really close you can actually feel the round pushing the air as it flies by your head. I turned and ran back to the trench. As I jumped in I turned and looked up to see an RPG round fly over my head and into my line of sight. It detonated in the air (airburst) a hundred metres beyond. I would find out later that it exploded above a family that had stayed in their compound, wounding nine women and children.

Heavily pinned down and

receiving fire from three sides and without the rocket launcher, I had little option but to call in mortar fire from our mortar section stationed back at the patrol base. The main enemy machinegun position was 504 metres away, according to my laser range finder. I began a process known as "adjusting", where by the mortars drop one bomb at a time and I call in corrections over the radio until we are on the target. We listened to the Taliban communications constantly. When that first mortar round landed they got on the radio saying, "They're trying to mortar us but they're miles away."

I called the first correction and the round landed about 100 metres from where I wanted it to. The next thing I hear is the Taliban saying, "They're getting closer." I made a double correction and then the next round landed right on the top of the hill. This time the Taliban reported, "They're very close to us now but they haven't hit us yet." I made my final adjustment and called "Fire for effect", which saw 20 mortar rounds obliterate the hill. The machine gun fire from that position stopped immediately and we were never fired on from that position again.

The fighting continued all day. At one stage we had Apache gunships doing gun runs around us, we had F16s dropping air strikes one after the other, our snipers engaged multiple insurgents, there were several more mortar missions. Small arms crackled all day. At around midday a British Sea King helicopter brought us a critical ammunition resupply. It took 17 hits and crash landed on the tip of the runway back at Tarin Kowt. The cable to the tail rotor was shot through and hanging by one strand. The pilot was awarded the Flying Cross. It went on like that all day and the next, though with far less intensity the second day due to Taliban attrition. The purpose of the mission was to target the Taliban Commander; he was killed on the second day.

We went back and held a very sombre ramp ceremony for our fallen comrade.

With his death my wife really started to feel the strain. It was a real war, people were dying and I was in the thick of it. After the media

reported another SOTG KIA we remained on the mission for the next four days; we couldn't get back to tell anybody we were alright. Wives and families were really struggling.

Our third last mission was into a place we called Death Valley. Only Special Forces could go in there and only at night. It was called Death Valley because the Taliban would place IEDs around their own compounds in that area. Normally they wouldn't do that because of the risk of blowing up their neighbours. The Taliban were very strong in that area and would stand and fight anyone caught there during daylight. We raided their target compound looking for a bomb maker but he wasn't there. Subsequent intelligence led us to the compound next door.

We would learn later that the insurgent had heard us in the neighbouring compound. He grabbed his gun and barricaded himself in a room to wait for us. The Team coming down the left hand side of the compound came to the door and started to make entry on the room. Lance Corporal W, who had come around the right side of the compound and stopped at the window to the room, was looking through when he saw the insurgent walk up to the back of the door and raise his AK74 to shoot through the door. L/Cpl W shot him three times through the window, twice in the arm and once in the side, but instead of dying, the insurgent spun and fired a big burst of AK fire through the window. L/Cpl W, who was hit in the face with flying masonry dropped to the ground. We all thought he was dead.

Rounds from the insurgents' fire were splashing down at the only entrance or exit to the compound. With nowhere to go and no other choice, the next operator moved to cover the window. Another team member moved up inside him and grenaded the room. It was a surprisingly muffled thud. To everyone's surprise, the grenade was answered by a long burst of fire. Another grenade was thrown in. There was no more shooting. After a while entry was made on the room. Unbeknown to anyone, there were 12 women and children in the room with the insurgent: four already dead, two



dying and all wounded. Everyone handled it well, calm and methodical, but deep down we were all thinking, Oh My God!

It's a well-known tactic of the Taliban. Unfortunately, we didn't know they were in there. I remember a friend hurrying past me carrying a baby wrapped up in a blanket. I could see a blood smear on its cheek. We stayed there until we had put the wounded on a helicopter and we walked out into the desert. As we arrived back at our vehicles in the desert a vicious dust storm blew up, and I kept thinking, the Gods are angry with us. We couldn't go anywhere in that, so we stayed there exhausted, unable to sleep, in shock. Two missions after that, we were home.

I came home and started on a permanent welcome home party. I was jacked up all the time. Everything seemed trivial to me. I couldn't listen to the radio. My wife would ask me to do the dishes, and I would just stand there looking at them, it all seemed so unimportant. I wasn't at that stage having trouble dealing with the bad stuff that I had been through. I was addicted to the high of combat. I could not come down, which is the other half of PTSD. Eventually my wife took me to WVCS to have "couples counselling". She left, I stayed for 18 months. The first time I told the story of my first combat experience to my counsellor, he threw down his pen and said, "Geoff, I used to counsel heroin addicts, and you sound exactly like a junkie who's just had his first hit." It was true – I was hooked on the adrenaline.

It wasn't until I met the families of our fallen friends that I started to struggle with what happened. One of the mothers had suffered such bad anxiety when her son went to East Timor in 2006, that he didn't tell her he went to Afghanistan. The first that poor woman knew that he was in Afghanistan was when someone knocked on her door to tell her that her son was dead.

It started with nightmares and flashbacks. I suffered anxiety and depression and started drinking again. It was my wonderful wife who dragged me out of it and sent me

back to WVCS. Once I started and was able to see I had a problem, I was prepared to do whatever was required in counselling. It was a process of talking through things and trying to calm down. I learned to talk about events without reliving them. I really am one of the few lucky ones. I had a strong wife who forced me to get help and I recovered. There are thousands of young men and women out there right now with war caused mental wounds, they are suffering, and no one is helping them.

By the time 2010 came about and my unit was redeploying to Afghanistan I did not want to go. But every single one of my friends was the same, they were married, they had jobs, they had kids. I could not let them go and face the danger alone. It wasn't easy on Lisa either. She definitely didn't want me to go, and she became very anxious. In November 2010, I deployed back to Afghanistan.

I was about six weeks into my second tour when we were returning from a patrol in the Charmasten Valley. I was working as a mentor to an Afghan militia. I would live with, train and lead in combat up to 20 militiamen. Often there was just me and one other Aussie. I was sitting on the roof of the Bushmaster when we drove over an IED. The blast gave me a traumatic brain injury, and damaged my back, among other damage. When I came home I couldn't read any better than my seven year old. I had trouble writing my own name. I would lose my car, it wasn't a case of: "what level did I leave it on?" Rather: "how did I get here?" I live in constant pain and still experience the effects of Traumatic Brain Injury.

I was medevac'd to Kandahar Hospital. One of the problems with a brain injury is that you don't know how bad you are. I would walk in to the doctors and say, "I'm fine, can I go back to work now please," but by 10am I wouldn't know where I was anymore. Somehow I managed to convince them to send me back to Tarin Kowt, not back to Australia. Then I managed to convince them to put me back on operations, until such time as they realised I had no idea where I was or what I was doing.

Because I was working with only one other Aussie, and that guy would

change from time to time it took a while to identify. I was what was called the lead mentor and I would be assigned someone to protect me while I mentored the Afghans. So there wasn't a lot of visual on what I was doing. I was able to continue for a long time. I put my hand up once I realised I was a liability to everybody, but it took me a long time. I was genuinely unaware of how bad I was.

I came back and it was a very long process. The Army gave me almost three years to recover and it took all of that. I was working with an occupational therapist at the Ryde Brain Injury Centre for a long time. I don't retain information the way I used to, and I can't compute complex numbers any more. I did a lot of rehabilitation, at the end of it the Army (to their credit), said they may be able to find me a job counting paper clips somewhere (figuratively speaking). Eventually I accepted that I was never going to be a Commando again; I was never going to be a firefighter again. Once I did that, and with a lot of help from Defence Care and Soldier On, I was able to move on.

I would definitely be an alcoholic if it wasn't for my wife. It has been really tough on her and our kids. All PTSD sufferers can have a real negative effect on their family, and I was no exception. When you suppress your emotions, the only one you can feel is anger, and I know in the past I was very hard to live with. But they are resilient and I am better. I believe I am living proof that you can recover from mental wounds if you get the right treatment.

My story is not unusual. It is a very common story. The sort of events I have talked about is a normal day over there. The only unusual part of my story is that I was lucky to get good treatment and good family support. Most of the young Diggers out there now are in their early 20s and they don't have that support. Nobody is helping them.

This article was recently printed in the RSL Reveille. As the author, Geoff has given us permission to reprint in the "Commando News" for the benefit of our members who may not be RSL members. Editor ■



From the Prolific Pen of Harry Bell



Friday 13th December: Black Friday? No fear. In fact on this day I received the best Christmas present I could have asked for. Thank you, Santa! **Janet and Max Drummond** (2/6, 2/9) came to town! It was great to see the Old Bulldog (remember how everyone had a nickname, often from a book, a comic-strip character, hair colour etc: Bulldog Drummond, Speed Gordon – or “Flash” Gordon if you were a Southern Stater – Buck Rogers, “Judy” Garland, Bluey, Curly, Lofty, Tubby, Porky, Joe – Palooka – Killer?) Max was not the oldest soldier in our troop (that was **Allan Russell**, see below) but he was one of only two with Jungle experience. The other was **Danny Thorne** also a 6th Company man, sent over to show the Canungra Cannibals the ropes – and top soldiers they both were. Max is battling a recalcitrant pacemaker (and I don’t mean Janet) as well as absence of foot and lower leg from one side and three toes from the other. He walks leaning heavily on a stick and needs a supporting arm over rough ground. Add pain from the phantom limb, necessitating frequent analgesics and there is plenty of cause for complaint; but never a whinge does one hear. And the mind is still sharp – after all, he has only just turned 90! – and the wit keen. Do they still make ‘em like that? I hope so.

Actually, there are quite a few uncomplaining blokes around. **Don Newport** (2/11) is one. He is in fairly constant pain from the broken screw in his previously fractured femur, walks with a frame and spends most of his time bashing his spine (because he has to, not because he wants to). His younger daughter, **Chris**, who used to care for him, developed lung cancer and the roles were reversed. Sadly, Chris died, unexpectedly, on 8.1.14, aged 50, after a very full life. She was a skier of Olympic standard and in the top flight of restaurant-management. As one might be expected, Don is shattered. As for himself, however, he reckons that he is “not bad, generally”. He reads a lot, but tries to keep from “popping pills.” Our sympathy to Don and his surviving daughter.

Ian Seale (2/7) is another. Still battling the dreadful myositis and still bed bound, he is keeping that formidable mind razor-sharp and reading a lot. Recites at length from Wordsworth et al, rather like Rumpole - Sees a bit of **Keith Johnston** (2/10) and **Con Bell** (2/7). Mel and a carer look after him at home in Donvale, Vic.

Since writing the above, I have had a phone call from Ian. It seems that **John Ellice-Flint** had told him of my impending laminectomy and he was ringing to enquire after me and to wish me well. How can he be worried about somebody else’s relatively minor problems?

Ossie Pomroy (2/10), still at the Domaine Nursing Home, Coffs Harbour, is not making any progress. He reckons that he is “near the end of the road” (he can’t

walk and is nearly blind) but insists: “I won’t throw in the sponge!”

It set me thinking about this Association and what it means. There are still a few blokes from the original Independent Companies – blokes like **Keith Stringfellow** (2/5 and Z), **Max Drummond** (2/6, 2/9) **Ted Byrne** (2/7) and others, who were up there when the AIF was being pushed around by the all-victorious Nips, air-support was non-existent and mates were being killed all round them. They could have been forgiven for forming themselves into an elite group and keeping the rest of us at a distance but instead they see themselves simply as members of the Commando Association and no different from any other man who volunteered to be a Commando, whether he trained at Foster or Canungra, whether he roughed it at Kaiapit or enjoyed being on the winning side at Aitape/Wewak or in Borneo. We are lucky to have one another.

Ted Punch (2/7) and **Ted MacMillan** (2/9) have both been troubled by inguinal hernias. MacMillan’s surgeon decided not to operate, on account of his great age (Mac’s, not the surgeon’s) but Punch’s man let ‘er rip, Punch being younger than MacMillan by 2½ months. Mac has been out with the chainsaw preparing for possible bushfires at Burra, having “learnt to live with it”, as Defendants’ medical witnesses like to say. **Barbara** says “he now knows what the Victorian ladies went through, wearing corsets”! But on the bright side, his oncologist has given him a clean sheet. Punch, who used to have to “cats’im wind” three times on the short walk from his unit to the communal mess-hut at his Retirement outfit, now does it in one go and wouldn’t blow out a candle. So ask not “where are the boys of the Old Brigade who fought with us side by side”: there are still a few of them with us!

Punch spent the holidays with family – **Annie’s** at Newcastle, his own at Gosford – while Mac and Barbara visited a grandson – along with innumerable children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren (he has thirteen of the latter category). Hogmanay, traditionally the most important part of the Scots holiday season, he spent quietly at Burra with Barbara, his chainsaw, a slice of shortbread and a bottle of Glenfiddich.

Don MacPherson (2/9) frightens the good folk of East Gippsland when he goes for his morning walks but they won’t let him near a tractor these days; he has done too much damage to himself. He relies for his son and daughter-in-law for transport. Says a change in the wind saved **Wy Yung** from recent bush fires.

Doris Clark, widow of **Jack** (“Bluey”, “Cunning as a Fox”, 2/9) is learning how to survive in an Adelaide retirement village. She is “keeping fit” but doesn’t think she’ll ever adapt to city life after living so long at Keith.



Charlie Vassarotti (2/9) was holidaying on the Gold Coast in August when a collapse from an internal haemorrhage laid him low. He has made a good recovery, though not as lively as usual. Still able to hang out the washing for **Pat** but glad of an excuse to knock off and take a phone call, hoping that the Siegfried Line won't be still there when he returns.

Now for some more really good news: **Maureen Williams**, widow of **Bill** ("Snowy", 2/9) has won her appeal and is now a War Widow with a Gold Card. The case may be of interest and I'm sure she won't mind my discussing it. Her application was originally refused on the ground that there was no reasonable hypothesis linking Bill's death with his War Service. The death certificate showed the cause of death as pneumonia, with the underlying cause as prostate cancer that was not war related. But the Appeal Tribunal found that there was another cause of the pneumonia; namely, immobilisation. This in turn was the result of a badly fractured femur sustained when he fell while trying to reach his wheelchair. He was already confined to the wheelchair by other cancers which, though not directly life-threatening, had been very painful, requiring multiple surgical processes. And those skin cancers had previously been accepted as service-related. So the skin cancers were a cause of death and his death WAS therefore related to his War Service - and a very painful death it had been. The DVA does a pretty good job, in my experience, so don't be afraid to appeal to the Tribunal.

Since writing the above, I have received from Maureen a beautiful crocheted rug and a copy of the autobiography of **Mark Donaldson V.C.** which she seems to have bought by accident. It seems that at the Christmas Lunch of the Karuah RSL sub-branch she was bidding - or thought she was bidding - for a bottle of Kentucky Bourbon but ended up with the book! Best stick to Scotch, Maureen.

Angie Olsen, widow of **Joe** (2/9) writes happily from Sunnybank but complains that when revisiting Joe's old home town (Cairns) she found it unrecognisable: "most tourists are mainland Chinese" and it is "totally built up"; Port Douglas likewise.

Keith Johnston (2/10), writing in Double Diamond, reports that **Ted** ("Duke") **Carlin** (2/10) led the Anzac Day March in Narromine in 2013, riding in a real, war-time (restored) Jeep. Dook's eyesight has deteriorated somewhat - but then remember **Nev Shorrock's** great ballad about his (allegedly) selective hearing?

Keith also reported that **Ron L'Estrange** (2/7) had broken a hip in a fall but was now in Rehab in Orange.

Double Diamond reports the death in Queensland, in November 013, of **Frank Doyle**, (Z Special), a former member of 2/9 Inf Bn and a "Rat of Tobruk". I can't give his Regimental Number, for he is not listed as an operative in G.B. Courtney's "Silent Feet" but he served as a "close-quarter combat instructor" and was described by **Lionel Aitken**, who wrote his Eulogy, as "a wonderful bloke."

I note that the Victorian Branch has a new president,

one "**Captain M**", who has taken over from **Dick Pelling**. Perhaps, now that we have (substantially) left Afghanistan, he will be able to preside under his rightful name. Captain M reported, inter alia, on the Tidal River Pilgrimage. Amongst those attending were **Ron Hamilton** (2/6), **Con Bell** (2/7), **Keith Johnston** (2/10), **Mark Miller** (2/7), (**Jim Burrowes** Coastwatcher, M Special) and **Fred King-Davies** (2/7).

7 Squadron have a good record for longevity and active participation in Association affairs. I was chatting to **Geoff Leyson** recently and he was able to rattle off the names of a dozen old mates whom he occasionally sees or hears news of: **Pat Dunshea**, **Ben Davies**, **Ted Byrne**, **Greg MacKenzie**, **Charlie Lonergan**, **Harry Nilsson**, **Rex Morley**, **Con Bell**, **Jack Johansen**, **Fred King-Davies**, **Ted Punch** and **George Christopherson**. There were a couple more, actually, but I can't read my writing - perhaps **Ian Seale** and **Cedric Permezel**.

Paula Hunting, widow of **Harry** (6 Div Cav and 2/10) sister of **Doug**, "**Sandy**" **Williams**, (6 Div Cav and 2/9) writes from Emerald in the Victorian bushfire zone. There is only one exit road from her place and that is a winding road through dense forest, but, she says: "I've escaped trouble over the 32 years we've been living here, so here's hoping for no trouble this time." Following knee surgery, Paula has had two years of dependence on appliances - walking frames, walking sticks etc - but is now walking without aids, though still a bit wobbly over rough and broken ground. Amongst irreplaceable treasures that she has had stored there in the bush, were War Diaries kept by her father in France, 1914-18 and by brother **Doug** in the Middle East - I guess he didn't trouble to keep one in New Guinea, where they were forbidden. Anyway, they are all now safely deposited in the Victorian State Library.

Nattley and **Rex Davidson** (2/9) report fit for duty at Glenorchy (Tas) while **Grace**, widow of **Michael** ("**Blue**") **Brodie** (2/9) is still going great guns at "Riverview", Taroon, Qld. Her four daughters and one son have presented her with a total of 13 grandchildren and two great grandchildren (so far) and most of them were coming home for Christmas. All of them are keen horsemen and horsewomen. One, **Edwina Keating**, with her husband, actually manages Riverview; son **John** lives at Condamine and also runs two other properties in South-west Queensland. Daughter **Marina** is a horse-trainer of international repute; another is a Vet and works on the vaccination of horses against the deadly Hendra disease. At least two daughters were Inter-state polo-cross players. Good old Mike would be proud of them. And just to prove that she is still sparking, Grace, when we spoke, was planning a trip to Darwin for a grandson's wedding, then back to the Gold Coast for a Pony Club conference.

Incidentally, Mike was badly wounded when he grabbed a grenade that somebody else had dropped, and threw it away. He should have got an MID, at least, but it wasn't "in the face of the enemy".

Spoke recently to **Beryl**, widow of **Harry Dean** (2/3



and 2/8). She is well, but heavily engaged in caring for her gravely ill brother. They spent Christmas with her daughter, 45k from Moree. I guess she found Tenterfield a bit chilly?

In the Xmas Edition of Cav News, I accidentally promoted **John Ellice-Flint** (2/10) to 2/9 Squadron. Despite feeling that this was a well-deserved compliment, I have expressed my regret to John who has graciously accepted the apology. (**Ossie Pomroy**, 2/10, has often assured me that I am an "Honorary Member of 2/10" and I don't mind at all – in fact, I'm quite chuffed!) John spent Christmas in Sydney, with son **Ross**, but has retreated to the Gold Coast where he is in training for Sydney on Anzac Day. He says he has thrown off the lung infection and that **Judy** is walking well on her two prosthetic hips.

Not responding so well to surgery, **Ted Workman** (2/10) still has the occasional tumble. He walks unaided inside the house, while taking care to keep close to something to hang onto, but doesn't venture far without his walking frame. Ted has shrunk from what used to be an above-average 5'10" to a diminutive 5'5", due to the shrinkage of the inter-vertebral discs in his thoracic spine. (Probably we all have shrunk without being aware of it.) He and **Don Newport** (2/11; see above) can share their woes on the telephone.

On 30.12.13 I had the pleasure of joining about 50 folks of assorted ages to celebrate the 90th anniversary of **Bryce Killen's** (2/8) birth. Bryce's "six or seven" minute response to the toast lasted some twenty-six minutes, but it was all good fun laced with reminiscences of Bougainville. Bryce has managed to fit a lot into those 90 years: soldier, rugby player, tennis player (still), wool-baron, cattle-king, helicopter-mogul, aspirational golfer and incorrigible litigant, to name but a few of his activities. However, he has not offered to emulate **Dolly Dolton** (2/9) and celebrate his 90th with a parachute jump.

His brother **Darrell Killen** (2/7) is a couple of years younger but is in very poor health at present. Like so many of our contemporaries, he has had a few nasty falls and is nursing a few fractures: ribs, shoulder, elbow. He has spent a long time in Canberra's Calvary Hospital, but was allowed out for Christmas.

Their distant cousin **Tom Killen** (6 Div Cav and 2/9) can just remember when he was 90; it seems so long ago! He signed his card simply "Tom" – but to make sure I knew which Tom it was, he added: "From Bardia to Wewak - and still with it."

Tom ("Lofty") Hollis (2/11) MID is not enjoying the best of health either, but does enjoy an occasional yarn. He has had a prostatectomy, suffers from sciatica and has had both acromioclavicular joints operated on. Balance seems to be the main problem these days – in a recent fall, he broke his nose and a wrist. The legacy of his time as a POW of the Chinese, or of his 12 years as a NSW Fireman?

Reg Davis (2/9) had to rush **Phyllis** off to hospital just before Xmas, after a mini-stroke, but had her home and well in time to celebrate. Poor old Reg came all the way

to the Combined Services RSL in Barrack Street for the monthly 6 Div Cav get-together, only to find that in December it had been scheduled for the second Tuesday instead of the first, and nobody had told him.

Annette, wife of **Allan Russell 2**, who is the son of **Allan Russell 1** ("Old Silver", 2/9) and the father of **Allan Russell 3**, writes happily from up Newcastle way. She says that Allan Junior (that's A.R. 3) has retired from surfing and only does it in his spare time, having a building business to run. Allan Senior (that's A.R. 2) is working with A.R. 3 (I suspect that that means "working for A.R.3) but plans to retire in June, when he will be 65. She sends me a photo of the family; A.R. 2, at 64, with walrus moustache, is already following the colour-scheme of A.R.1 – not for nothing did we call him "Old Silver". Clean shaven and erect, he was the oldest man in the Troop and the Regimental football X111; he ended the war as Squadron Sar'major, despite a near-fatal bout of blackwater fever (cerebral malaria.)

Faith Hammond (widow of **David** (2/10) spent Xmas with son **Tim** and his family at Orange. Tim is set to retire from his senior position with DuPont, the Chemical fertiliser giant, when he turns 60 later this year. One does begin to feel one's age when one's godsons start retiring. Incidentally, **John Ellice-Flint** once managed the medical practice of which David was a member.

Gwen Robinson writes from Daylesford to say that she and **Eric** (Robbie E, 2/9) are doing well in the big city. Robbie has just celebrated his 91st birthday and has allowed Gwen to take him to a JAPANESE restaurant for Xmas dinner! True, it was the only one open, but he must be softening up.

Eric Geldard (2/9) writes, after Christmas, from Miles (Q) a newsy note which shall repeat in full, formal and personal parts omitted: *During the year, I visited my old mate Ron Wells of Buddinna, Qld, and found both him and Mary well. Ron and I were together through Cowra, Bathurst, Greta and Canungra to NG, where he went to Karawop and I to Dagua.*

Vin and Pat Collett of Goondiwindi were in Miles in November and we had a very pleasant time together. Both well. [Ron Wells, is, I think, Wells R.G. QX61812, since Eric is QX62133 and the other Wells is Wells R.W.L. NX12827 – "Willie" Wells. Surprisingly, there are six Wells on the Nominal Roll of 2/6 Cav Regt. – nearly as many as there are Bells. Dagua was where Eric joined 9 Sqn; 2/10 was at Karawop. There is, on the other hand, only one Collett: VX110093. There were Colletts from Victoria who came to live at Wee Waa after the first war; one of them, Charlie, a Military Medallist from the trenches. Any relation? H.H.B.]

I agree with John Ellice-Flint (2/10) about the side effects of some tablets; 3 months to realise you have become a zombie – lethargic, no drive, unable to concentrate, no positive thoughts or actions, then 6 months to feeling normal again. I've done it twice; each time statins for cholesterol. No more, with 89 coming up in a few days I haven't time to fool around, so to hell with worrying about cholesterol.



I still live on my property and have my cattle to look after; mostly Santas with Angus bulls. Other than branding, I do most of the work myself. I am fortunate that my spare parts, by-passes, knee and hip all work well, and I feel quite able to march 300 metres as usual for Anzac Day in Miles. [Why not the branding, Eric? I can just see you wrestling some aggressive weaner to the ground!]

As you know, I still have and can still wear the Service Dress issued to me on arrival from New Guinea and am thinking seriously of putting it on next Anzac Day in Miles. How many at the well-attended service would have seen one of the local boys (only 4 left, out of 100) proudly wearing the uniform of the senior regiment of the 2nd A.I.F.?

What do you reckon? [Go for it, Eric! Reg Davis (2/9) can still wear his! H.H.B.]

Vale NX73768, Corporal D.L. ("Des") Foster (Z). Glancing, as is my custom, at the Sydney Morning Herald's "Timelines" page on 21.1.14, I noticed the dates: "1924-2013" so although not interested in talkback radio (his specialty), but calculating that he was of an age to have served, I read on. He was born on 14.1.24 and left Sydney High without completing the Leaving Certificate becoming a Cadet Reporter. In 1941 he enlisted (he must have put his age up) and, because of his typing and shorthand skills, was posted to some clerical job. Then he saw what his Eulogist described as "an obscure noticeboard" calling for applications for a job that "promised little more than rigorous training for an unspecified role that might never happen." He applied and was accepted for Z Special.

After training on Fraser Island, he finished up in Borneo, an S.R.D. Operative in "Samut" and "Magpie". After the war, he became well known as "a pioneer of talkback in the Sydney market." He was appointed A.M. in 2002 for his radio work, at 2GB and in the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters and on the public relations committee of Sydney Legacy.

"Samut and Magpie?? No, I didn't know either. But recourse to "Silent Feet," Colonel "Jumbo" Courtney's history of Z Special, reveals that Operation Samut began in March 1945 when a small party was dropped by parachute at Bareo, on the Kelabit Plateau in Sarawak, British North Borneo. The original purpose was to reconnoitre and to "assess the potential for recruiting agents and guerillas" but between April 29 and August 10, reinforcements were added so that by the end of hostilities, the party consisted of 23 officers and 59 ORs of mixed origin – Australian, British and Dutch - and it had organised large scale guerrilla operations as well as medical care and food distribution for the native inhabitants. They had trained over 1,000 guerillas and in each valley leading to their H.Q. and each main escape route from the coast, had established a guerilla band under the command of a white soldier. Their tactics left the Boys' Own Papers for dead. One little gambit was for a small "Blowpipe Patrol" of natives to set up an ambush, allowing the entire enemy patrol to pass. Then, with a noiseless blowpipe, they would

pick off the last man. By the time he was missed, he was in his death throes. The patrol would continue on its way and the process would be repeated. There is much more, but I can't quote the whole book. The following statistics may be of interest, though: Nips killed -1,486; Captured – 37.

Samut actually involved four stages and **Bill Chaffey** (2/5, Z) commanded Samut 4 at one stage. I don't know at what stage Des Foster was "inserted" but he was certainly part of Samut as well as of Operation "Magpie". He is included in a group shot of operatives contained in "Silent Feet"

Magpie 3 consisted of one AIF officer and six ORs, including Cpl Foster DL together with four Dutchmen. It left Morotai by sea on 10.6.1945 with the objectives of reconnoitring a number of islands, "extracting" a lugger from a village and "gathering intelligence within the area." They duly went ashore on Saoe Island and destroyed a partly-built wooden ship but were driven off by Japanese land forces and the op was eventually abandoned.

The Obituary was written by **Peter Foster** and mentions that Des had married **Beryl Beale** in 1947. However, it gives no detail as to surviving relatives. Des was an only child so Peter may be a son. I commend "Silent Feet" to anybody who wants to learn more about the activities of Z Special.

In December, **Maureen Williams** (widow of **Snowy**, 2/9) went to a Christmas Lunch at the Karuah RSL Sub-Branch. Thinking that she was bidding on a bottle of Bourbon (ugh! Why?) she found after an auction that she had bought "Crossroad", the autobiography of **Mark Donaldson V.C. SASR**. Generously, she sent it to me – I hope she had read it first. It is a most unusual book, as one would expect, for he is a most unusual man. The title derives, I think, from the crossroad in his life when he enlisted in 1 RAR. The blurb says that he had been "a rebellious child and teenager." That is an understatement. He was the quintessential juvenile delinquent, into drugs, alcohol and petty crime. He was lucky not to have gone to gaol. But he pulled through, with the help of family and friends and after some years of well-paid manual jobs, overseas adventures, surfing, snowboarding and the like, he decided to enlist. His father had been in Vietnam, his mother had been murdered. He had had some excuse for being dissatisfied with life. But from the moment of his enlistment, it was different. He became single-minded in his dedication to the new career and his determination to graduate to SAS.

We thought Canungra was reasonably tough; these blokes, to judge by Donaldson's description (and I don't reckon he would feel any need to exaggerate) would have tossed it off before breakfast and then asked for more. I would be interested to hear what the Foster lads say about it, for it sounds more like what they did, and then some. The regular infantry regard the SAS training course with some suspicion. A retired infantryman of my acquaintance tells me that he thought the emphasis on extreme physical fitness, with the consequent dropping-



out of lots of good soldiers – the attrition rate was very high – had only one real purpose: namely to instil in those who got through, the belief that they were the elite of the elite. Perhaps that was so; and it did have that effect – but to judge by Donaldson's accounts, it was a justified belief and paid off in the results achieved. It may have had the unintended effect, however, of breaking and humiliating some good men.

His accounts of engagements in Afghanistan, including the one in which he earned his VC (I say "earned" advisedly) are vivid and breathtaking. You have to hand it to the modern front-line soldier, be he SAS, Commando or Infanteer. But Mark himself comes across as one of those men who need conflict to bring out their best qualities. We have all known men who exulted in danger and the thrill of battle; speaking for myself, and judging from my few, brief moments of peril, I could never share those feelings. *"The excitement of going out on a job", he says, "is a feeling that will never leave me. In my life, I like to bring out the boy, the sense of adventure and the unknown. I think your excitement needs to come out no matter what it is you are doing. If you don't, then you just become a cranky, grumpy person."* This is reminiscent of **Peter Pinney** (2/3, 2/8) or **Bill ("Snowy") Williams** (2/9); and that is certainly not intended as a put-down. No doubt there were, and still are, many others.

I guess that's what distinguishes a VC winner from the common herd – though I doubt if it applies to all of them. For example, I would have thought that **Sir Roden Cutler** saw things a little differently. I am sure that our readers would appreciate some comments from other soldiers with modern-day experience. So, unless these lines are read only by the Old and Bold, can we have some feed-back?

I commend the book to you all. It is not a literary masterpiece but its content is unique. He does not acknowledge any "ghost writer". He gives "thanks to **Malcolm Knox** for his professionalism, understanding and friendship". There is a well-known writer of that name; if it is to him that Mark refers, he may have helped him with grammar or style. It is easy reading save for the frequent use of modern military terms and acronyms that are not always explained in the text – there is no glossary. It is published by Macmillan, in hard cover.

This seems an appropriate time for a word – or two – of praise for those responsible for the new Look Commando News. Mind you, I don't apologise for the old roneoed rag, produced first by **Tom Hungerford** and later by me. It was something we were proud of. But this glossy magazine with excellent illustrations is in a different league and I am sure we all join in congratulating both Editors on the transition. It is a fine publication and a credit to its editors. Long may it roll off the presses.

Without in any way retreating from that stand, may I query one article in the No 1 edition? On page 7 is an interesting (unattributed) article, headed *"The art of*

Passing the Port." It prescribes in detail the mechanics of DRINKING port – that is to say, the hand and arm movements – but, due to some oversight, it says not one word about PASSING it.

When the 29/46 Aust Inf Bn opened a Sergeants' mess in Rabaul in 1946, the 2IC, **Freddie Lomas** (2/7) contributed port and other spirits from the Officers' Mess. He attended the opening night and a thumping time was had. **Frank Rheinberger**, **Pat Hannon**, **Bill Justo** and I, all 2/9, found out how to concoct a Cavalry cocktail by pouring very slowly down the (in)side of a glass, half inch layers of crème de menthe, cherry brandy and Grand Marnier. Being of slightly different alcoholic contents (hence densities) they stayed distinct till skolloed to the strains of "Through mud, through blood, to the Green Fields beyond. Up the Cavalry!" Fred joined in happily; **Dave Hammond** (2/10) had left for London with the Victory Contingent, or he would have been a part of it too. But when it came to passing the port, while we all knew that, once opened, the bottle must not be allowed to touch the table, nobody was sure whether it should go clockwise or anti clockwise; that is, to the Chairman's right or to his left. Mr Vice being seated to his right, I fancy that we decided that it should go from left to right, but we didn't really know. So please, will the author of the aforesaid article finish the job and tell us how to pass the port?

Keith Johnston (2/10) has arrived safely home in Melbourne, courtesy of son **Neil**, after a long trip to Byron Bay and back. He supervised the wedding of a great niece and then visited **Reg Baxter** (2/10) in Lismore and **Ossie Pomroy** (2/10) in Coffs Harbour. Reg, though legless now, is in good form. Ossie is a bit emotional and nearly blind but still not tossing in the towel. Keith found the stress a bit much for him and doubts whether he will be able to make it to Sydney for Anzac Day. He will be disappointed to miss **John Ellice-Flint** (2/10) who plans a visit from Queensland,

I look forward to seeing you all on Anzac Day; I am hopeful of being able to march in step (if marching is still allowed) having had a laminectomy and a joint fixation at the L2/3 level on 3rd February. It is – and I am – doing well. Thanks **Ian Seale** and **John Ellice-Flint** for your kind enquiries. I am in a better position than **Ted Workman** (2/10) who is facing still more spinal surgery. His is at the opposite end to mine: the cervical spine – up near the brain! Happily it didn't keep him away from **Ken Buckler's** (2/10) 90th birthday. Congratulations, Ken.

The Open Championship for birthdays, however, goes to **Graham Dolton** (2/9) who kept his promise and did a parachute jump for his 90th! He landed safe and sound, in tandem with a strong young bloke who told him to tuck up his knees, and landed him as softly as a petal from blown roses on the grass! And he proved it by sending over a selfie (**Dolly** is the one with the least hair.

Harry Bell



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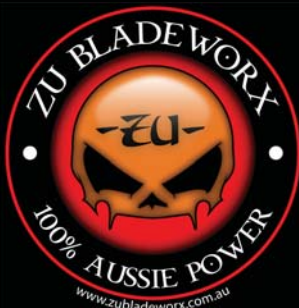
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PASSING THE PORT



Harry Bell questions "what is the tradition of passing the port.

Most of us have experienced the tradition at "Mess" dinners and some of us whether we were seated or worked in a mess serving.

Once a Vintage Port has been decanted and the moment has come to enjoy it, tradition dictates that the decanter should be placed on the table to the right of the host or hostess.

It should then be passed to the left, travelling round the table from guest to guest in a clockwise direction until it comes back to its starting point.

Although the tradition is most often observed when serving Vintage Port, it is also often followed with other Port styles.

There are many arcane and colourful explanations for the custom of passing the Port to the left.

One theory is that the custom arose from the need to keep one's sword arm free in case of trouble. It is sometimes said to have originated in the Royal Navy where the rule was 'Port to port', meaning that the decanter (most likely a ship's decanter) should be passed to the left. In the Royal Navy the Loyal Toast is traditionally drunk in Port and, in contrast to the other branches of the British armed forces, the officers remain seated.

However, the reason why the custom is followed today is quite simple. If the decanter keeps moving in the same direction, every guest has the opportunity to enjoy the wine and no-one is left out. The decanter travels clockwise because most people are right handed.

"VIPER" By ZU Bladeworx Australia

I recently was sent this knife for review by the Australian manufacturer.

Details are as follows:

Model	Viper
Steel	German A2 Tool Steel (Cryodur 2363)
Hardness	58 RC Double tempered
Edge	Custom polished by hand

The blade is 100% made in Australia and machined from 17 mm plate steel at Emu Plains, and coated in "Sniper Grey" Cerakote at Penrith.

The heat treatment is carried out at Moorebank. It comes with a sturdy Kydex sheath which has several attachment points to fit webbing or a belt.



The blade is very sturdy and would make an excellent survival knife.

Retail price is \$495.00 plus \$15.00 postage.

Of course there is a 25% discount for active and past Commandos.

ZU Bladeworx can be contacted on 0408 766 902 or info@zubladoworx.com.au



CPL CAMERON BAIRD VC MG

CITATION

For the most conspicuous acts of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimate self-sacrifice at Ghawchak village, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan as a Commando Team Commander in Special Operations Task Group on Operation SLIPPER.

Corporal Cameron Baird enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 2000, was discharged in 2004, and re-enlisted in 2006. In both periods of service, he was assigned to the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (Commando). His operational service includes Operations TANAGER, FALCONER, BAS-TILLE and five tours on Operation SLIPPER. He was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his service in Afghanistan in 2007-08.

On 22 June 2013, a Commando Platoon of the Special Operations Task Group, with partners from the Afghan National Security Forces, conducted a helicopter assault into Ghawchak village, Uruzgan Province, in order to attack an insurgent network deep within enemy-held territory. Shortly after insertion, Corporal Baird's team was engaged by small arms fire from several enemy positions. Corporal Baird quickly seized the initiative, leading his team to neutralise the positions, killing six enemy combatants and enabling the assault to continue.

Soon afterwards, an adjacent Special Operations Task Group team came under heavy enemy fire, resulting in its commander being seriously wounded. Without hesitation, Corporal Baird led his team to provide support. En route, he and his team were engaged by rifle and machine gun fire from prepared enemy positions. With complete disregard for his own safety, Corporal Baird charged towards the enemy positions, supported by his team. On nearing the positions, he and his team were engaged by additional enemy on their flank. Instinctively, Corporal Baird neutralised the new threat with grenades and rifle fire, enabling his team to close with the prepared position. With the prepared position now isolated, Corporal Baird manoeuvred and was engaged by enemy machine gun fire, the bullets striking the ground around him. Displaying great valour, he drew the fire, moved to cover, and suppressed the enemy machine gun position. This action enabled his team to close on the entrance to the prepared position, thus regaining the initiative.



On three separate occasions Corporal Baird charged an enemy-held building within the prepared compound. On the first occasion he charged the door to the building, followed by another team member. Despite being totally exposed and immediately engaged by enemy fire, Corporal Baird pushed forward while firing into the building. Now in the closest proximity to the enemy, he was forced to withdraw when his rifle ceased to function. On rectifying his rifle stoppage, and reallocating remaining ammunition within his team, Corporal Baird again advanced towards the door of the building, once

more under heavy fire. He engaged the enemy through the door but was unable to suppress the position and took cover to reload. For a third time, Corporal Baird selflessly drew enemy fire away from his team and assaulted the doorway. Enemy fire was seen to strike the ground and compound walls around Corporal Baird, before visibility was obscured by dust and smoke. In this third attempt, the enemy was neutralised and the advantage was regained, but Corporal Baird was killed in the effort.

Corporal Baird's acts of valour and self-sacrifice regained the initiative and preserved the lives of his team members. His actions were of the highest order and in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

BIOGRAPHY

Cameron Stewart Baird, VC, MG, was born in Burnie, Tasmania on 7 June 1981. In 1984, the Baird family moved to Gladstone Park, Victoria, where Cameron completed his primary and secondary education. He was a keen sportsman, particularly excelling at Australian Rules Football.

Corporal Baird enlisted in the Australian Army on 4 January 2000. After completing his initial employment training, he was in February 2000 posted to the 4th Battalion (Commando), The Royal Australian Regiment, now the 2nd Commando Regiment, based at Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney, New South Wales.

Corporal Baird deployed on seven operations. In April 2001, the-then Private Baird deployed on Operation TANAGER (Timor-Leste). In February 2003, he deployed for the first time on Operation SLIPPER



(Afghanistan), followed by Operation BASTILLE (Iraq) and Operation FALCONER (Iraq) in March 2003.

In July 2004, Private Baird resigned from the Australian Defence Force to pursue civilian employment. He returned to service in September 2006, where he was again posted to the 2nd Commando Regiment.

In February 2007, Private Baird was promoted to Lance Corporal. In July the same year, he deployed on Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan). He was subsequently awarded the Medal for Gallantry, "for gallantry in action during close quarters combat" during an engagement.

In October 2008, Lance Corporal Baird achieved the rank of Corporal, subsequently deploying on Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) in February 2009 and again in July 2011. On both deployments, Corporal Baird served as a Team Commander.

Corporal Baird again deployed on Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) with the Special Operations Task Group in February 2013. It was during this deployment that Corporal Baird was killed in action by small arms fire in an engagement with insurgents in the Khod Valley, Uruzgan province, Afghanistan on 22 June 2013.

For his actions in the Khod Valley, Corporal Baird has been posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia.

Corporal Baird is only the fourth recipient of the Victoria Cross for Australia and the first to be awarded posthumously. He is the 100th Australian to receive a Victoria Cross since the award was first created by Queen Victoria in 1856.

Corporal Baird is survived by his parents Doug and Kaye, and his brother Brendan.

Corporal Baird's parents will be invested with the award by Her Excellency the Governor-General of Australia at Government House, Canberra on 18 February 2014.

Corporal Baird has previously been awarded the following honours and awards:

- Medal for Gallantry,
- Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp East Timor, Clasp Iraq 2003, Clasp International Coalition Against Terrorism,
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal,
- Iraq Campaign Medal,
- Australian Service Medal with Clasp – Counter Terrorism / Special Recovery,
- Australian Defence Medal,
- United Nations Medal with Ribbon United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor,
- NATO non article 5 Medal with Clasp ISAF and Multiple Tour Indicator (3),
- Infantry Combat Badge, and
- Returned from Active Service Badge.

From: General the Duke of Wellington

To: The Secretary of State for War

In the Field

Spain 1810

My Lord,

If I attempted to answer the mass of futile correspondence that surrounds me, I should be deprived from all serious business of campaigning.

I must remind your Lordships, for the last time, that as long as I retain an independent position, I shall see that no officer under my command is debarred, by attending to the futile drivelling of mere quill-drivers in your Lordships office, from attending to his first duty which is, and always has been, so to train the private men under his command that they may without question beat any force opposed to them in the field.

I am, my Lord, your obedient servant

Wellington

Editor: *Sometimes in war and peace, only the date changes.*





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MEDAL (OAM) OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA IN THE GENERAL DIVISION

Mr David Peter POOL
4 Bulbine Street
Engadine NSW 2233

*For service to the community
and to emergency services.*

- Air Observer/Drop Master
NSW State Emergency Service, 1988 - 1998
Team Leader; Rescue Officer; Training Officer;
involved in hazardous air and sea searches
(mainly for aircraft); deployed to assist after
the destructive earthquake in Newcastle in
1989.
- Involved in designing harnesses and cutaway
system to be used from helicopters during the
Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, NSW Police,
and the design of numerous Defence
rappelling equipment.
- Instructor, Aviation Safety Training Centre,
Qantas, since 2007; Senior Adviser, Counter
Terrorism; Ground Engineer.
- Member, Australian Defence Force, 1988 -
2012; designed a rescue harness for use in
civilian rescue and military use

Awards/recognition include:

- Recognised for Bravery, Royal Humane
Society, 1995; following the rescue of four
youths in floodwaters.
- Australia Day
- Young Citizen Award, Sutherland Shire
Council, 1994.



On a sad note, Charlie Banks' wife Shirley passed away around September 2013. Our sincere sympathy is extended to Charlie and his family at this sad time.

George Marshman passed away on the 19th December, 2013. George Albert Marshman, NX78880, was born on the 7th November 1920 in England. He enlisted on the 16th December, 1941 and was discharged on the 8th May 1946, rank Trooper. Our thoughts and prayers are extended to his family at this time.

To the members and families of the 2/6 Independent Company 2/6 Commando Squadron. It is with regret that I can no longer continue to compile the 2/6 News, due to my failing eyesight. It has been a privilege to write the 2/6 News but it is becoming very difficult.

I hope the 2/6 News does not end here. If someone out there would like to carry it on, please contact the editors

If you would like to include something in future newsletters, please contact the editors.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the 2/6 News over the years, I hope you have enjoyed the articles. Thank you all for your friendship.

Judy Limby

Proud Purple Devil Daughter

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR WW2 MEMBERS

It has been noted that now the NSW Commando Association has amalgamated with the Australian Commando Association (NSW) there has been some confusion regarding the payment of subscriptions.

If you were a WWII member of the NSW Commando Association or the Widow of a WWII member then your subscription remains at \$10 per year.

The subscription should be sent to:

Australian Commando Association (NSW)
Inc
PO Box 1313
Sutherland NSW 1499

All cheques should be made payable to Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.

Subscriptions may also be deposited into the

Association's bank account by internet banking.

If you previously paid a subscription to the NSW Commando Association and are not a WWII member or widow of a WWII member and still wish to receive the Commando News, it is necessary for you to join the Australian Commando Association (NSW) as an Associate Member and the cost for that is \$30.00 per year with a \$25.00 joining fee.

I have been told that some WWII members sent in the full subscription cost of \$30 and it has been decided that the \$30 will cover 3 years subscription.

If you did send in the extra funds and wish to have a refund, please write to the Secretary and a refund will be arranged for you.

Barbara Pittaway



Commandos seek new information on the origins of the AAS



These stiletos, issued to Australian commando troops for fighting at close quarters, are used also as hunting knives for cleaning game caught or shot in wild country where other food supplies are unobtainable.

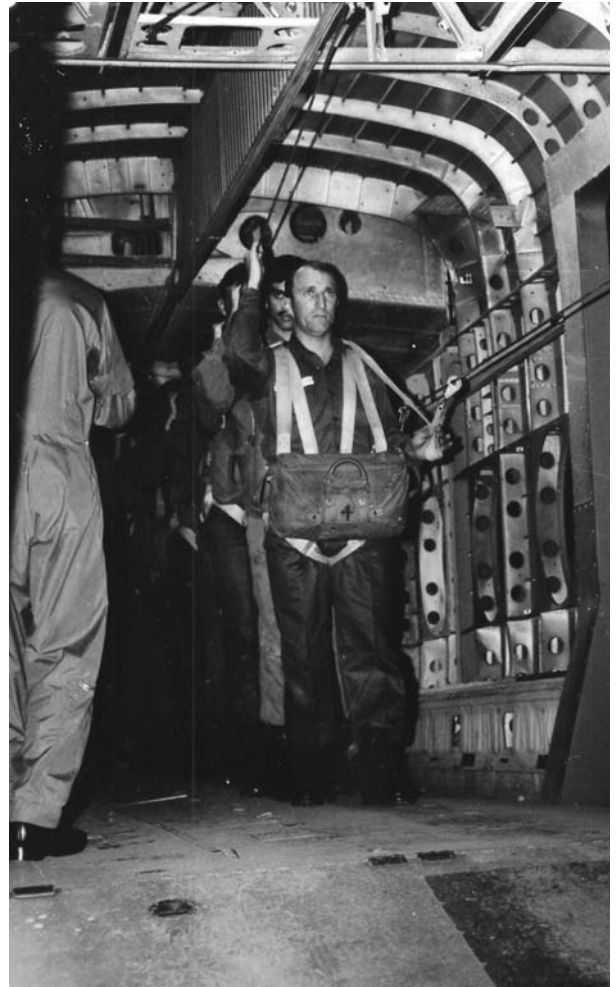
*Newly discovered photo of the AAS
The Courier Mail, Brisbane, Qld - 12 Mar 1943*

As part of the revival of the Australian Army Stiletto (AAS) into service this year further research is being done into its origins. We are interested in any first hand information that members may have about the knife. In particular we are seeking any written material, photographs or recollections. This information will be used as part of an article to be written for an upcoming edition of the Commando News. Information will also be used as part of a display at the Commando History and Research Centre.

Please direct any information to the Association President, Mr Barry Grant.

**A
blast FROM
the past**

**Army - 1 Cdo Coy
AFX Para Trng 1971**



A very trim Audie Voormeulen about to exit an aircraft on AFX in 1971, behind him is an equally trim Greg Melick.

Damien Parer ~ 2nd/3rd Independent Company WW2

They are making a movie on Damien Parer's biography who served with the 2nd/3rd Independent Company. And the producer would like to contact any member of the 2/3rd. This is particularly important to ex-members who may be named in the story.

The producer of the movie has also indicated the story will contain articles on the following and will feature:

MAJOR GEORGE WARFE

Lt JOCK ERSKINE

Lt JOHNNY LEWIN

CORPORAL "SCOTTY" McMILLAN

Lt RON "JUDY" GARLAND

We would like to hear from anyone who was in the 2/3rd

Please contact Neil McDonald ~ (02) 9489 4606



2 MINUTE SILENCE

Silence for one or two minutes is included in ANZAC and Remembrance Day ceremonies as a sign of respect and a time for reflection.

The idea for the two minute silence is said to have originated with Edward George Honey, a Melbourne journalist and First World War veteran who was living in London in 1919. He wrote a letter to the London Evening News in which he appealed for five minutes silence, to honour the sacrifice of those who had died during the war.

In October 1919, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, a South African, suggested a period of silence on Armistice Day (now commonly known as Remembrance Day) in all the countries of the empire. Throughout the war, whenever South African troops suffered heavy losses on the Western Front, a period of silence had been observed at noon in Cape Town.

Fitzpatrick's suggestion was presented to King George V, who readily agreed to the proposal. But after a trial with the Grenadier guards at Buckingham Palace, at which both Honey and Fitzpatrick were present, the period of silence was shortened to two minutes. It is unclear whether Honey and Fitzpatrick ever met or discussed ideas about the silence.

On 6 November 1919, the King sent a special message to the people of the

Commonwealth:

I believe that my people in every part of the Empire fervently wish to perpetuate the memory of that Great Deliverance, and of those who laid down their lives to achieve it.

The King requested that "a complete suspension of all our normal activities" be observed for two minutes at "the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" so that "in perfect stillness the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the Glorious Dead".

Two minutes silence was first observed in Australia on the first anniversary of the Armistice and continues to be observed on Remembrance Day, 11 November. Over the years, the two minute silence has also been incorporated into ANZAC Day and other commemorative ceremonies.

At league clubs around Australia, the remembrance silence has become part of the now nightly six o'clock (previously nine o'clock) ritual, when any light other than a memorial flame is dimmed, members stand in silence and then recite the Ode.

In recent times, one minute of silence has been observed at Australian commemorative events, such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies. The reason behind this change is largely unknown.

Morris Hurford

Just found out that Morris Hurford died two months ago.

During WW2 he was medically unfit for frontline posting and became personal assistant to LtCOL Holland at Airlie House. Stayed in Army post WW2 for rest of working life.

Became a teacher, was commissioned, and at one time was posted to a British school for service personnel in either Singapore or one of its near neighbours.

He is survived by his wife who is in residential aged care but is still fit enough to be picked up and taken to Z Special Unit lunches.

Perhaps the History Centre at Holsworthy would like the information.

Greg Tyerman, Adelaide



The History of the Broad Arrow

Perhaps one of the oldest symbols of Government and/or Ordnance is the mark of the 'Broad Arrow'.

The history of this mark and its origins are linked quite closely to the Ordnance Service of the United Kingdom, and of the Government Commissaries, Colonial Storekeepers, Military Stores Departments and Ordnance Stores Corps both in England and in the Colonies.

The mark of the broad arrow was also adopted by the Australian Army Ordnance Department at the beginning of this Century, and the mark is still used today by the Army to identify property belonging to the Department of Defence.

The earliest trace of the 'Broad Arrow' in connection with munitions occurred in 1553 when Sir Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange, was smuggling gunpowder into England. Writing from Antwerp to the Council he mentions:

'giving your Lordships to understand that I have this day received 36 barrels of gunpowder, part of the complement that was lent to the Regent, which I have shipped in the name of Mr Thomas Spacke of Lye, under this particular mark (^) in the margin, the weight thereof you shall receive by the ship, and for the rest as it can be made, so it shall be delivered with as much expedition as may be'

Again in the following year, writing from Seville, he refers to cases marked with a 'broad arrow'. This would seem to indicate that the brand was used even then by the Master of Ordnance, as would be natural seeing that he was the recognised custodian of munitions, the property of the Crown. But it was certainly not a universal Ordnance mark until later. A Royal Commission appointed in 1633 being directed to mark small-arms and armour with the letter '^ and a crown -

the hallmark of the Company of Armourers of London.

It is not until the accession of Charles II that a direct connection between the Office of Ordnance and the 'Broad Arrow' is established by the following document bearing the date 1687. '

'The buttings and boundaries of his Majesty's Tower ground called the old Artillery ground are as followeth..... Upon all which Boundary Houses his Majesty's Tower Mark, the Broad Arrow, by his late Majesty's special command hath, ever since the building thereupon, been set up'

At about this time the Broad Arrow was also carved into oak trees in the Forest of Dean, which were to be felled for building ships of war in the Royal dockyards. Next, in 1698, the symbol was legalised for the Royal Navy by Act of King William and Queen Mary. A heavy penalty being imposed for those in unlawful possession of Government stores so branded. A proclamation of the following year defines the marks to be placed on stores of war belonging to the Board of Ordnance.

The King's Cipher in whose reign they were made, and the Rose and Crown on the barrels, and sometimes the Broad Arrow, also the King's Cipher and the word Tower on the lock-sides of all of his Majesty's muskets, and only the Broad Arrow upon all other stores except cordage'

The last order on the subject worth quoting reads as follows:

'28th July 1806. The Board having been pleased to direct that in future all descriptions of Ordnance Stores should be marked with the broad arrow as soon as they shall have been received as fit for His Majesty's Service; all Storekeepers and Deputy Storekeepers and others are desired to cause this order to be accordingly attended to, in the Department under



These examples of the 'Broad Arrow' and the Ordnance Shield with the letters 'B' and 'O' representing the Board of Ordnance are found on two large black cast iron gunpowder kegs now displayed in the Army Museum at Bandiana. The two powder kegs were found in a sealed disused well under Victoria Barracks at Paddington during excavation work being carried out around 1958. The kegs were acquired by the 1st Ordnance Field Park at Holsworthy (later redesignated 1st Divisional Ordnance Coy and 1st Field Supply Company). The kegs were used by that unit as planter boxes for trees, but this caused them to crack and in 1967 they were acquired by 21st Supply Battalion and refurbished.



their direction, reporting to the Board in all cases when articles are received to which this mark cannot be applied'

From that day to this the broad arrow has been used to stamp or brand just about everything supplied by the Ordnance capable of bearing such a mark. It is not only a certificate that the article has been examined and found to be fit for the Service, but also serves to identify Government property in case of theft etc. When the stores are condemned for any further use, a second inverted broad arrow is superimposed above the first (thus \wedge), and the item can then be disposed of by the Department.

The Board of Ordnance provided for many Government departments besides the War Office and the Admiralty, including the settlements in Australia (then the various Colonies). When it was desired to clothe the convicts in such a matter as to identify the convict

in case of escape, the Ordnance simply daubed its Broad Arrow stamp all over the garments furnished. This practise of marking convict clothing with the broad arrow only ceased in some prisons about thirty years ago. This meant that what was originally a regal emblem also became a stigma of shame for those compelled to wear the convict clothing.

The symbol of the broad arrow is evident in many of the early Government buildings in Australia where the mark has been embossed in every brick used in the site. These bricks were usually handmade and the work of convict labour. A fine example of this practise is seen in the old Perth Town Hall.

The Broad Arrow is still in use in the Australian Army and the Department of Defence to identify Defence owned property, although it has now been embellished by adding two capital letter D's to the broad arrow and now appears as the symbol (DD).

A great story from WW II

"Using slave labour is never a good idea."

This story was published in an 'AF Village' monthly news publication. Elmer Bendiner was a navigator in a B-17 during WW II. He tells this story of a World War II bombing run over Kassel, Germany, and the unexpected result of a direct hit on their bomber's gas tanks:

'Our B-17, the Tondelayo, was barraged by flack from Nazi anti-aircraft guns. That was not unusual, but on this particular occasion our gas tanks were hit. Later, as I reflected on the miracle of a 20-millimetre shell piercing the fuel tank without touching off an explosion, our pilot, Bohn Fawkes, told me it was not quite that simple.

On the morning following the raid, Bohn had gone down to ask our crew chief for that shell as a souvenir of unbelievable luck. The crew chief told Bohn that not just one shell but 11 had been found in the gas tanks... 11 unexploded shells where only one was sufficient to blast us out of the sky. It was as if the sea had been parted for us. Even after 35 years, so awesome an event leaves me shaken, especially after I heard the rest of the story from Bohn.

"He was told that the shells had been sent to the armourers to be defused. The armourers told him that Intelligence had picked them up. They could not say



why at the time, but Bohn eventually sought out the answer.

"Apparently when the armourers opened each of those shell, they found no explosive charge. They were as clean as a whistle and just as harmless. Empty? Not all of them! One contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it was a scrawl in Czech. The Intelligence people scoured our base for a man who could read Czech. Eventually they found one to decipher the note. It set us marvelling. Translated, the note read: "This is all we can do for you now."

Source unknown



VALE

NX171965, Keith Hart (2/10) ~ November 2013

Ken Mawby ~ WW2 Chindits (*Sadly his wife Vera also passed away*)

Ray Irish ~ WW2 member of Z Special Unit



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JC FLEER AM DCM

The Pursuit of Excellence

Leading into the 21st Century a new complex and globalised security environment began to emerge. Whilst developing strategies to meet the demands of this new environment, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) revealed a void in its strategic capability. It was concluded that the ADF required a new highly trained and flexible unit, with the integral firepower and expertise to conduct special and offensive operations that were beyond the range and capability of other ADF elements. Thus, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCGS), Major General Hartley, issued DCGS Directive 37/96 on 17 December 1996 to raise a full-time commando unit within the Australian Regular Army. A small training team from the 1st Commando Regiment (Australian Army Reserve), were selected to carry out this Directive and began planning the transition of 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (4 RAR), from a light infantry battalion into 4 RAR Commando (4 RAR (Cdo)), a Special Forces Commando Regiment. The man chosen to command the training team and oversee this transition was Major Johannes (Hans) Cornelis Fleer, DCM. The following is an insight into Fleer's military career up until his premature death on 5 April 2013. What follows will reflect on just some of his many achievements, proving what many have said, that he was 'exceptionally well qualified' for the position. The overall intent however, is to produce the basis of a foundation myth for one of Australia's most decorated military units.

In a modest house on the Mornington Peninsular, Victoria, hangs a photograph of a Dutch toddler in his Sunday best playing with a wooden toy house. This photograph is all that remains of Hans Fleer's Dutch heritage, for after he arrived in Australia in August 1956 with his mother, Ann and his father John, this 6 year old boy was to become one of Australia's greatest patriots. Eventually settling in Adelaide, South Australia, Hans finished his schooling at Adelaide High School, however his education was yet to begin. Being post war emigrants he was raised in a placate environment, he was not permitted toy guns or to play soldier. Hans was also deprived of the fellowship that comes with a large family. This may be what drew Hans into service, longing for a sense of belonging and mateship, the kind you only find in the military. Hans enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on the 2 February 1966, at just 17 years of age. Too young to deploy to Vietnam, on completion of his recruit and Infantry Corps training, he marked time in the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. On 27 April 1968, Hans was finally of age, he transferred Battalions and within less than a month of his 19th Birthday he deployed to Vietnam with B Company, 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (4RAR/NZ), on 21 May 1968. The young soldier's potential was immediately recognised and by tours end he was promoted to Corporal and a Section Commander. Reflecting on his Companies performance



*Awarded the Sword of Honour
Officer Cadet School, Portsea VIC, 1972*

during their tour of Vietnam, the Officer Commanding B Company, William Reynolds MC, remarked:

NCO's [Non Commissioned Officer] have always been the backbone of the Army and B Company was no exception. They certainly proved themselves in our Company. Their attributes were many and varied. Most of them stepped up during their tour, including Cpl Hans Fleer.

This opinion of NCO's is one that Fleer would subscribe to throughout his career. Another philosophy he adhered to was that during times of war it was a soldier's duty to be at war. Thus, on completion of his tour with 4 RAR/NZ, Fleer extended his service in Vietnam. He served as an instructor with the 1st Australian Reinforcement Unit and as a Section Commander with A Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR). It was during his time with 6 RAR that Fleer was awarded one of the British Empires highest military honours for bravery.

On 28 February 1970, 6 RAR conducted Operation Gisborne. The mission was to contain and remove the advancing D445 Battalion who were operating along the Suoi Giau. By mid-afternoon, A Company, 6 RAR made contact with a well-entrenched enemy force. Fleer's platoon suffered twelve casualties, including the platoon commander. Assessing the situation Fleer directed covering fire and with complete disregard for his own safety, moved out to initiate the recovery of wounded men, and coordinated the withdrawal of the platoon. For his actions he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). The accompanying certificate reads; 'His own personal actions, in the face of a determined enemy, displayed a bravery of the highest order'. At the time this award was second only to the Victoria Cross, furthermore, 'The Distinguished Conduct Medal was one of the less frequently awarded Imperial gallantry medals made to the Australian Army'. James Cruickshank MBE served as Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) 6 RAR during this tour



and recalls that as an NCO Fleer's 'discharge of duty was exemplary'. His composure and calculated decision making during this event earned him the nickname, The Iceman.

Towards the end of his tour with 6 RAR a Selection Board from the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) conducted a recruitment drive. At the time Fleer was acting Platoon Sergeant. Not caring much for the positions administrative duties, he applied for the SASR. According to son Michael, Fleer sore the transition to the SASR as 'the next step' and a way of avoiding the "mundane" duties of a Senior NCO. Returning to Australia on 12 May 1970, Fleer wasted no time in pursuing his next goal of becoming a member of the SASR. By the end of that same year, he had successfully completed the SASR Selection Course and was posted to 2 Squadron. In recognition of his experience and unflappable professionalism Fleer was assigned the position of Patrol 2nd In Command (2IC) for their tour of Vietnam. Nine months to the day since returning from his second tour Fleer was back again, deploying with 2 Squadron on 12 February 1971. Yet, due to the parliamentary decision to withdraw Australia's commitment to Vietnam, he only served eight months with 2 Squadron. By tours end he was made a Patrol Commander. Although his tour was cut short Fleer states; 'I shall always look upon my time with Patrol 23 as the most satisfying and enjoyable period of my service life'. While his time with the SASR in Vietnam was short, his overall commitment to duty and service during the Vietnam War has become legendary.

For the better part of three years Fleer served in the Vietnam War. At times there were decisions made by some officers that Fleer did not completely agree with. As much as he loved the team environment, that fellowship experienced by those who had journeyed through something big together, he decided to become an officer. According to his wife, Helen, it was not because he was tired of being told what to do, 'he just thought he could do a better job', and as a consequence, better care for his mate's wellbeing. Fleer began training at Officer Cadet School Portsea (OCSP) in January 1972, only a few months following his tour with 2 Squadron. He excelled at Portsea, and upon graduation in December 1972 he was awarded *The Skill at Arms Prize*, for 'gaining the highest aggregate score in range practices'; *The Staff Prize*, an academic prize awarded for 'gaining the highest aggregate of marks'; the *Governor General's Medal*, 'awarded to the cadet graduating first in his class'; and the *Sword of Honour*, the school's most prestigious prize, 'awarded to the cadet showing exemplary conduct and outstanding performance of duty'. Many of his peers would not have had the same level of experience as him, nor would some of the staff. A lot of the training would have been familiar to him, however one could argue that for a man of his experience there would also have been many frustrations with both the training and opinions of directing staff. It would have taken a great deal of motivation and discipline to not only see the training through but to excel at the level he did. His achievements are a true testament to his character, and his desire to excel. However, Fleer did not leave Portsea with only a

commission and The Sword. It was during this time he met his wife, a civilian employee at Portsea. The two were married soon after his graduation.

Lieutenant Fleer had quite an interesting first posting, which saw him return to 6 RAR as a platoon commander. The Battalion was based in Singapore as part of 28 ANZUK Brigade, a combined battle group made up of Australian, New Zealand and British forces. With the mission to provide a presence in defence of neutral Malaysia and Singapore. Fleer and his new wife spent a year in Singapore returning to Australia on 18 December 1973 following Australia's withdrawal from the ANZUK commitment. The following year was spent at the Army's Infantry Centre in Singleton, NSW. In 1976 he was promoted to Captain and posted to the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), Townsville, QLD as a Company 2IC. It was here that Fleer met a young Lieutenant by the name of David Hurley whom is the current Chief of the Defence Force. Upon reflection of his time with Fleer, General Hurley recalls that: 'He was measured and unflappable by nature, a very professional soldier and officer, and a tremendous role model for junior officers'. Fleer returned to the SASR in 1978 where he spent the next four years occupying the positions of Squadron Operations Officer, Adjutant and Senior Instructor Reinforcement Wing. He was briefly posted Headquarters, 6th Brigade in 1983 before returning to the SASR in 1984, on promotion to Major, as Officer Commanding SASR Training Squadron. In 1987 he attended the Australian Command and Staff College, followed by a posting to Land Force Headquarters. In 1990 Fleer had decided to hang up his sandy beret, he discharged from



Presentation Ceremony
Honorary Colonel
2nd Commando Regiment
5 April 2012

the Regular Army and purchased a small farm. But the warrior in him could not completely let go. He remained involved with the Army as a part-time instructor with the 1st Commando Regiment (1 Cdo Regt) until 1996.

Major General Hartley's, issuing of DCGS Directive 37/96 on 17 December 1996 to raise a full-time commando unit within the Australian Regular Army saw the return of Flear to full-time service. Immediately recognising the magnitude of the task and humbled by his selection, Flear was enthusiastic about the challenge and confident he would succeed. Captian R, of 1 Cdo Reg, a member of the original training team states that 'He was very highly regarded and I could see why 1 Cdo Regt chose him to be in charge of the Commando Training Team, he gave it that credibility at the highest level'. Wife Helen, also recalls that 'he thought he could do it, as long as he got the right people around him'. Recognising this, Flear was meticulous in the selection of team members. The call for volunteers was put out among the part-time members of 1 Cdo Regt, Capt R recalls:

In 1996 we were told Major Flear was putting it together and he was already a legendary personality in 1 Cdo Regt and so that interested me even more. I thought if he was running it, it's going to be a great job to do.

Flear travelled to Melbourne and Sydney to personally interview each candidate, and ultimately had the final say as to who was to be his instructors. The training team came together and began the transition in early 1997. The transition had attracted a lot of attention from various aspects of the Army Command and as a result Flear felt that 'there was an indecent haste to commence training'. Continuing his desire to be involved and part of the group, Flear did not manage from a distance. 'He was always a constant presence, visiting the training... watching in the background with a stern look on his face and nobody would know what he was thinking'. The new Commando's had now been exposed to The Iceman. On 14 June 1999, his leadership and commitment to the transition and formation of 4 RAR (CDO) and the Commando Training Centre was formally recognised. Hans Flear was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia – Military Division, 'In recognition of service to the Australian Army in the selection and training of soldiers for the Army's Special Forces'. Vietnam patrol commander and lifelong friend, Graham Brammer OAM, finds the award deserving and states; 'He had a way of drawing the best out of his subordinates and always made underachievers feel like they were capable of more'. But Flear did not accept accolades well, he would rather compile a list of colleagues he felt more deserving than receive an award of any kind. Martin Hamilton-Smith reflects that; 'He avoided recognition of any kind where possible and his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia was an honour he accepted with reluctance'.

Some of the soldiers and officers from the initial transition in 1997 are now senior members 2 Cdo Regt. In order to pay tribute to the continual influence Flear had on the Regiment, he was bestowed with one final honour. On 5 April 2012, in recognition of his exemplary service and contribution to the Regiment, he was made the first

Honorary Colonel of 2 Cdo Regt. Flear had officially grown 'from a brave young South Australian soldier into a father figure in Australian Special Forces'. Hans Flear passed away on 5 April, 2013 after a brief battle with cancer. He is survived by wife Helen, son Michael, daughter Melanie, and the men and women of 2 Cdo Regt, SASR and Special Operations Command. At his funeral long term friend Rick O'Haire had this parting statement; 'Hans was the bloke you wanted by your side on a cold, dark, windy night. We will never see his likes again'.

It can be argued that "failure" was never a course of action for Hans Flear. He strove to excel, in fact motivated by a fear failing, not himself, but those he cared for and who trusted him to get the job done. He was a high achiever, yet he did not pursue accolades, he resented them. He avoided the spotlight, yet constantly found himself center stage. For Flear the pursuit of excellence was not about being the best, it was about being your best, for the sake of those you care for and who depend on you. Today, "The Pursuit of Excellence" is almost doctrinal among the members of 2 Cdo Regt. A lecture theatre inside the Regiment's barracks has been named *The Hans Flear Centre*.

The Australian Defence Force's current regular Commando capability was raised on 1 February 1997 in the form of 4RAR (Cdo). Re-named 2 Commando Regiment in 2009, the Regiment has continued to develop, constantly striving to better individual skills and unit capability. This continual pursuit of excellence is an ideology forged into Regiment culture through the guidance of Hans Flear in those early days. The Regiment first became operational in Iraq, during April, 2003. Since then it has been awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry and the Meritorious Unit Citation for its actions in Afghanistan. There has also been thirty-two Commendations for Distinguished Service, twenty-five Distinguished Service Medals, nine Distinguished Service Crosses, nine Conspicuous Service Medals, three Conspicuous Service Crosses, nineteen Commendations for Gallantry, twelve Medals for Gallantry, and three Stars of Gallantry awarded to members from the Regiment for their actions in Afghanistan. These actions are testament to the legacy of Johannes Cornelis Flear AM DCM.



Johannes Cornelis Flear AM DCM

A quiet achiever, stoic friend, valiant soldier, loving father and husband, and good mate

Martin Hamilton-Smith MP

Leading into the 21st Century a new complex and globalised security environment began to emerge. Whilst developing strategies to meet the demands of this new environment, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) revealed a void in its strategic capability. It was concluded that the ADF required a new highly trained and flexible unit, with the integral firepower and expertise to conduct special and offensive operations that were beyond the range and capability of other ADF elements. Thus, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCGS), Major General Hartley, issued DCGS Directive 37/96 on 17 December 1996 to raise a full-time commando unit within the Australian Regular Army. A small training team from the 1st Commando Regiment (Australian Army Reserve), were selected to carry out this Directive and began planning the transition of 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (4 RAR), from a light infantry battalion into 4 RAR Commando (4 RAR[Cdo]), a Special Forces Commando Regiment. The man chosen to command the training team and oversee this transition was Major Johannes (Hans) Cornelis Flear DCM. The following are just some of the career highlight and achievements of man who is said to have been a father figure within Australian Special Forces.



Infantry Centre, Ingleburn NSW, Sept 1966

1966: Flear enlists in the Australian Regular Army aged only 17 years. Too young to deploy to Vietnam, he marks time in the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

On 27 April **1968**, finally of age, Flear transferred Battalions. Within less than a month of his 19th birthday he deployed to Vietnam with B Company, 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (4 RAR/NZ), on 21 May 1968. The young soldier's potential was immediately recognised and by tour's end he was promoted to Corporal and to the position of Section Commander.

'NCO's have always been the backbone of the Army and B Company was no exception. They

certainly proved themselves in our Company. Their attributes were many and varied. Most of them stepped up during their tour, including Cpl Hans Flear.' – William Reynolds MC, Officer Commanding B Coy. 4 RAR/NZ 1968-69.



On completion of his tour with 4 RAR/NZ, Flear extended his service in Vietnam. He served as an instructor with the 1st Australian Reinforcement Unit and as a Section Commander with A Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR). It was during this time with 6 RAR that Flear was awarded one of the British Empire's highest military honours for bravery.



On 28 February **1970** during Operation Gisborne, A Coy 6 RAR made contact with a well entrenched enemy force. Flear's platoon suffered 12 casualties. Including the platoon commander. Assessing the situation Flear directed covering fire and with complete disregard for his own safety, moved out to initiate the recovery of wounded men, and coordinated the withdrawal of the platoon. For his actions he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The accompanying certificate read: *"His own personal actions, in the face of a determined enemy, displayed a bravery of the highest order."*

Returning to Australia on 12 May 1970, Flear wasted no time in pursuing his next goal of becoming a member of the SASR. By the end of that same year, he had successfully completed the SASR Selection Course and was posted to 2 Squadron in recognition of his experiences and unflappable professionalism Flear was assigned the position of Patrol 2nd in Command (2IC) for their tour of Vietnam. Nine months to the day since returning from his second tour Flear was back again deploying with 2 Squadron on 12 February **1971**. Yet, due to the parliamentary decision to withdraw Australia's commitment to Vietnam, he only served eight months with 2 Squadron. By tour's end he was made a Patrol Commander.





Patrol 23 ~ Vietnam, 1971

"I shall always look upon my time with Patrol 23 as the most satisfying and enjoyable period of my service life." – JC FLEER AM DCM.

For the better part of three years Fleer served in the Vietnam War. At times there were decisions made by some officers that Fleer did not completely agree with. As much as he loved the team environment, that fellowship experienced by those who had journeyed through something big together, he decided to become an officer. Fleer began training at officer Cadet School Portsea (OCSP) in January 1972, only a few months following his tour with 2 Squadron. He excelled at Portsea, and upon graduation in December 1972 he was awarded *The Skill at Arms Prize*, for gaining the highest aggregate score in range practices; *The Staff Prize*, an academic prize awarded for gaining the highest aggregate of marks; the *Governor General's Medal*, awarded to the cadet graduating first in his class; and the *Sword of Honour*, the school's most prestigious prize, awarded to the cadet showing exemplary conduct and outstanding performance of duty.

Lieutenant Fleer returned to 6 RAR as a platoon commander on 23 January 1973. The Battalion was based in Singapore as part of 28 ANZUK Brigade, a combined battle group made up of Australian, New Zealand and British forces. With the mission to provide a presence in defence of neutral Malaysia and Singapore. He returned to Australia on 18 December 1973



D Coy. 6RAR inspected by Cmd 26 Bde ~ Singapore, 1973



Patrol 23 ~ Vietnam 2011

following Australia's withdrawal from the ANZUK commitment. The following year was spent at the Army's Infantry centre in Singleton, NSW.

In 1976 he was promoted to Captain and posted to the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, as a Company 2IC. It was here that Fleer met a young Lieutenant by the name of David Hurley who recalls.

"He was measured and unflappable by nature, a very professional soldier and officer, and a tremendous role model for junior officers." – General David Hurley AC DSC, Chief of the Defence Force



Staff College visit to Puckapunyal ~ VIC, 1987

Fleer returned to the SASR in 1978 where he spent the next four years occupying the positions of Squadron Operations Officer, Adjutant and Senior Instructor Reinforcement Wing. He was briefly posted Headquarters, 6th Brigade in 1983 before returning to the SASR in 1984, on promotion to Major, as Officer Commanding SASR Training Squadron. In 1987 he attended the Australian Command and Staff College, followed by a posting to Land Force Headquarters. In 1990 Fleer had decided to hang up his sandy beret, he discharged from the Regular Army and purchased a small farm. But the warrior in him could not completely let go. He remained involved with the Army as a part-time instructor with the Major General Hartley's issuing of DCGS Directive 37/96 on 17 December 1996 to raise as full time commando unit within the Australian Regular Army saw the return of Fleer to full time



service. Immediately recognising the magnitude of the task and humbled by his selection, Fler was enthusiastic about the challenge and confident he would succeed. Already a legend among the Australian Special Forces community, Fler gave the project the creditability it required to succeed. He travelled between Melbourne and Sydney personally interviewing potential candidates for his Commando Training Team as he felt it paramount to have the right people for this extraordinary task.

The transition began in early **1997** and Fler was a constant presence. He would visit much of the training, watching in the background with a stern look on his face not to give anything away. Admired by his instructors and respected by the candidates Fler proved to be pivotal to the task.

'He had a way of drawing the best out of his subordinates and always made underachievers feel like they were capable of more.' ~ Graham Brammeier OAM



On 14 June **1999**, his leadership and commitment to the transition and formation of 4 RAR (CDO) and the Commando Training Centre was formally recognised. Hans Fler was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia - Military Division.

'In recognition of service to the Australian Army in the selection of training of soldiers for the Army's Special Forces.'



He served in East Timor from 1 January - 8 July **2002** as a Special Operations Liaison officer (SOLO). Frustrated by the desk bound nature of a SOLO, Fler commandeered a Land Rover and drove himself around the Area of Operations liaising.

In order to pay tribute to the continual influence Fler had on 2 Cdo Regt, he was bestowed with one final honour. On April **2012**, in recognition of his exemplary service and contribution to the Regiment, he was made the first Honorary Colonel of 2 Cdo Regt.

'Hans grew from a brave young South Australian soldier into a father figure in Australian Special Forces, ~ Martin Hamilton-Smith MP, Commanding Officer 1 Cdo Reg 1991-92

It is apparent that "failure" was never a course of action for Hans Fler. He stroved to excel, in fact



*A moment of reflection.
Commando History and Research Centre*

motivated by a few failing, not himself, but those he cared for and who trusted him to get into the job done. He was a high achiever, yet he did not pursue accolades, he resented them. He avoided the spotlight, yet constantly found himself centre stage. For Fler the pursuit of excellence was not about being the best, it was about being your best for the sake of those you care for and who depend on you. Today, "The Pursuit of Excellence" is almost doctrinal among the members of 2 Cdo Regt.

Hans Fler passed away on 5 April **2013**. He is survived by wife Helen, son Michael, daughter Melanie and the men and women of Special Operations Command,

A lecture theatre within Tobruk Lines, home of 2 Cdo Regt, was officially named *The Hans Fler Centre* on 15 October 2013.

The Australian Defence Force's current regular Commando capability was raised on 1 February 1997 in the fom of 4RAR (Cdo). Renamed 2 Commando Regiment in 2009, the Regiment has continued to develop constantly striving to better individual skills and unit capability. This continual pursuit of excellence is an ideology forged into Regiment culture through the guidance of Hans Fler in those early days. The Regiment first became operational in Iraq, during April, 2003. Since then it has been awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry and the Meritorious Unit Citation for its actions in Afghanistan. There has also been nine Distinguished Service Crosses, twenty-five Distinguished Service Medals, twelve Medals for Gallantry, and three Stars of Gallantry awarded to members from the Regiment for their actions in Afghanistan. These actions are testament to the legacy of Johannes Cornelis Fler AM DCM.

A Great Irish Text Message

Paddy texts his wife...
*"Mary, I'm just having one more pint with the lads.
 If I'm not home in 20 minutes, read this message again."*



COMMANDO COMMEMORATION DAY

Canungra Queensland

On a bright sunny Sunday on 23 March at 1055 hrs, aside the memorial wall and flagstaff, ACAQ Pipe Major Ian Millard summoned the gathering attendance to the lush garden setting as a prelude to the 69th annual Commando Commemoration Day at Canungra. Affixed to the memorial wall were the relocated plaques of our forefathers and brothers who passed thru Land Warfare Centre (LWC) on their way to foreign fields. Sadly many paid the ultimate sacrifice on operations and many more have gone on their last patrol since.

Among the gathering were 1 & 2 Company former members; ASASAQ & AATTV representatives plus our first time guests, Royal Marine Commandos led by Cleve Whitworth, their Qld President.

LWC Chaplain, Don Parker (the PADRE), once again officiated over the Service with the Opening Prayer, Closing Prayer and Blessing whilst LTCOL Shaun O'Leary current CO of LWCOTW once again gave the Introduction and Welcome on behalf of the Commandant LWC, COL Evans. LTCOL O'Leary was a former senior officer with 4 RAR (CDO)/2 CDO Regt. During his introduction he touched on Cameron Baird VC and his association with him in his early days before moving on to describe the training matrix and outcomes and service of the Australian Commando and which impressed our RM Commando guests measurably! Suffice to say the Green Beret is still bloody hard to gain but easy to lose!

President Keith Long delivered the main address which this year focused on three events. The first was the catalyst for the original Commemoration and dwelt on the WWII Japanese landing at Kavieng, New Ireland and first time contact with No.1 Independent Company where our thinly dispersed and deployed sections covering vital assets were over run and forced to withdraw into the island interior where some became M special unit coast watchers whilst the bulk were embarked on the INDUNA STAR only to be captured by a Japanese destroyer. Embarked on the MONTI-VIDEO MARU and transiting to Japan for slave labour, the ship was sunk by a US Submarine with all POW trapped below deck. The submarine was unaware of the ship's human cargo.

The second theme dwelt on OPERATION COPPER, part of the WWII REAPER series, as this is prominent at this moment with the discovery of the remains of two Z Special Unit operators in an old Japanese medical waste dump on Kairiru Island off Wewak on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea. This outcome was achieved thru the forensic search conducted by the Unrecovered War Dead Section and great work by our member Major John Thurgar. The remains of Spencer Walklate and Ron Eagleton will now be interred in Lae



One of the official speakers was LTCOL Shaun O'Leary seen on the right, QLD President, Keith Long is to the right of the flag pole.

War Cemetery Papua New Guinea with full military honours. Of the 8 operators, only one survived, Sapper Mick Dennis, who exacted a heavy toll on Japanese HMG emplacements and soldiers was awarded the Military Medal for his actions and achievements.

In the last theme, the President recalled the recent loss of comrades, particularly among special forces operators in Afghanistan, then recounted the actions and conduct of Cameron Baird VC which led firstly to the Medal for Gallantry and then the Victoria Cross where he gave his life clearing an insurgent compound in a village called Ghawchak in the Khod Valley of Oruzgan Province.

In closing, the President paid tribute to all comrades no longer with us remembering our brothers who served also in post WWII special forces and active deployments crossing Korea, Malayan Emergency, Sarawak, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and other foreign fields. Included in this was recognition of the services and sacrifice of Navy, Air Force and medical personnel plus our Allies who shared and continue to share the journey of our brothers-in-arms. But in particular the president expressed special recognition of the widows, wives, families and communities torn by grievous loss and who endured and continue to endure.

Wreaths were laid by LTCOL O'Leary (LWC), President for ACAQ, Don Astill OAM (2/8) for WWII Commandos and George Buckingham (FELO) for Z & M Special Units; Cleve Whitworth (RMAQ) for Royal Marine Commandos.

The congregation was then piped to the Sgt's Mess for a convivial lunch and dispersal.

Their names liveth for evermore.

Keith Long
President ACA QLD



MISSING SOLDIER TRADITION

Maybe an American tradition, but the sentiments are universal.



THE FALLEN SOLDIERS' TABLE/THE FALLEN COMRADE TABLE.

Anyone who has had the opportunity to attend a military ball or other kind of military type events has probably noticed a single empty table in a place of honour at the event. This table represents those comrades who have died in service, or have not yet returned. The white table tradition stems from the 1970's Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, the River Rats of Vietnam and grew in popularity after Vietnam was over.

Each individual piece on this table has its own meaning.

The table is round to symbolize everlasting concern for those comrades that are missing or have fallen.

The white tablecloth symbolizes the purity of their motives when answering the call of duty.

A single place setting represents the desire to be able to once again dine with the fallen or missing in action.

A slice of lemon on the bread plate is a reminder of the bitter fate of those who will never return.

A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears endured by the families of those who have fallen or who have not returned.

A vase containing a single red rose reminds us of the blood sacrificed, the life of each of the missing, and the loved ones and friends who miss them.

The vase is tied with a red ribbon symbolizing the continued determination to remember our fallen, account for our missing.

The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope which lives on in one's heart.

A black ribbon on the candle reminds us of the fallen who will not be returning home.

The Bible represents the strength gained through faith to sustain those lost and to find peace.

The glass is inverted to symbolize that the fallen or missing are unable to share the evening toast.

The chair is empty, leaning against the table symbolizing that they are missing or that they are not with us.

A faded picture is also known to be added to the table symbolizing that they are missed, but remembered by their families.

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN SO LONG AS THERE IS ONE LEFT IN WHOM YOUR MEMORY REMAINS.

Amen



A FEW NEW EVENTS COMING UP

Members,

We have been looking at some venues for "get togethers" and have the following suggestions for you:

Lithgow Small Arms Museum Wednesday 17th May

(Weekend timetables –trains few and far between.)

Train leaves Central 8.18am arrives at Lithgow 11.05am, either walk or take taxi to the museum (approximately 20 min walk).

People need to bring a cut lunch. Cost is \$7 with concession card for entry.

If I know as early as possible I can try to arrange a guide.

Intend to depart Lithgow Rail at 5.34pm – arrive Central 8.22pm, but if people want to go earlier could leave Lithgow Rail 3.26pm to arrive 6.14pm at Central.

The Lancer Barracks Museum Parramatta Sunday 29th June

Activity planned is only a short walk from Parramatta Station, approximately 11am.

Museum is open from 10am-4pm every Sunday. Concession ticket to enter museum is \$5 per person. Some people may want to come by train, and the museum is located at 2 Smith Street, Parramatta. The Rivercat ferry should leave Circular Quay 9.01am and arrive at Charles Street Parramatta Wharf at 10.30am. There is a free shuttle bus running 7 days per week, approximately every 10-15 mins from the wharf to

Parramatta Station. Lunch could be brought or bought. Pension concession tickets also cover Rivercat Ferry trip.

I will not know about whether the tides are OK for full trip until closer to the date. When low tides affect the operation of the ferry they have shuttle buses connecting also free.

Fort Scratchley Newcastle Saturday 30th August

Open 6 days a week-closed Tuesdays.

There is a train departing Central Platform 9 at 8.15am that arrives in Newcastle 11.03am. It is a 15-20 min walk to arrive at the gates of Fort Scratchley. PET ticket is OK to use to Newcastle, so concession fare is only \$2.50. It is advisable to take lunch, although there are restaurants handy even the Railway Kiosk they are expensive.

Fare to visit the tunnels and site is \$8 per person, much more for a family group.

Trains for Sydney leave 3.23pm – arrive Central 6.10pm or alternatively for Sydney 4.33pm arrive Central 7.10pm.

If interested in any of these "low key" events please contact Ted Hartley ~ ted.hartley1948@hotmail.com or phone 0408 647 237.

The Darcy Hassett Story

Darcy Hassett joined 1 Commando Company in 1967.

He served as a PTE, CPL, SGT, and 2nd Lieutenant and discharged in 1974 as 1st Lieutenant.

At his 80th birthday party last year some of our legends turned up to wish him well.

He now lives at Ballina on the North Coast and is currently being treated for bone cancer in Lismore.

Visitors to the North Coast are welcome, he tells me.

Back Row: Terry Cleary, Ken Curran, Bill Urquhardt, Bob Harrison, Fred Death (hiding) Darcy, Chris Gregory and Bob Mason.

Front Row: George Sodbinow and Jim Pullin.





AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC

EVENTS CALENDAR FOR 2014

- APRIL 25 (Friday)** **ANZAC DAY COMMANDO SEAT - MARTIN PLACE**
Form up 0800 hours service starts 0830 hours
FORM UP FOR MAIN PARADE TO BE ADVISED
- MAY 17 (Saturday)** **CARNARVON GOLF CLUB LUNCH**
Nottingham Road, LIDCOMBE (plenty of parking)
Lidcombe Railway Station 5 minutes away
Pick up is available
1200 hours for 1230 hours
Two course luncheon \$40.00 per head (Some wine included)
Families always welcome
- JUNE 15 (Sunday)** **COMMANDO CHURCH SERVICE**
1100 hours
The historic Garrison Church, The Rocks
All Special Forces families are welcome
- JULY 6 (Sunday)** **RESERVE FORCES DAY**
More info to follow as received
- SEPTEMBER 26 (Friday)** **JAYWICK DINNER (venue TBA)**
- OCTOBER 18 (Saturday)** **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATION**
To be held at "Simpson VC Club" Randwick ~ 1030 hours
- NOVEMBER 11 (Tuesday)** **REMEMBRANCE DAY AT DARLING HARBOUR**
SERVICE HELD AT THE "KRAIT"
Service starts 1030 hours
- NOVEMBER (TBA)** **ASSOCIATION XMAS DINNER**
CARNARVON GOLF CLUB
Families always welcome
1830 hours for 1900 hours

Please direct your enquiries to our Secretary, Kevin Mahony

Home: (02) 9644 8794 or Mobile: 0425 279 111 or Email: kevin.mahony1@bigpond.com





**AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION -
NEW SOUTH WALES INC.**

Incorporated New South Wales:

Patrons: Brig W.H. "Mac" Grant OAM RFD
Brig Keith Stringfellow RFD ED



The Secretary
PO Box 1313
SUTHERLAND NSW 1499
Telephone (02) 9644 8794
0425 279 111
E-mail - starlightcdo@gmail.com

"COMMANDO FOR LIFE"

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

<u>SURNAME</u>		<u>RANK & GIVEN NAMES</u>	
<u>DATE OF BIRTH</u> / /		<u>REGIMENTAL NUMBER or PM KEYS</u>	
<u>ADDRESS</u> (For Correspondence)			<u>Post code</u>
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>	(Home) ()	(Business) ()	
	(Mobile) ()	(E-mail)@	

NEW MEMBERS TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION

<u>UNIT DETAILS</u>	<u>ENLISTMENT DATE</u>	<u>DISCHARGED/CURRENT</u>
Nominated by	Signature	Verifying Unit e.g Commando Unit
Seconded by	Signature	Position/contact details e.g RXO
Date / /	Signature of applicant	Signature of verifying officer

By signing this application you agree to be bound by the constitution of the Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.

**Financial year 1st January to 31st December – Annual fee \$30.00 + \$25.00 joining fee for new members
Annual fee subject to review by committee.**

**Banking details. Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
Police Bank BSB 815 000 Account number 41117**



COMMANDO FOR LIFE
Australian Commando Association New South Wales Inc.

“Q” Store Order Form

Name:
Address:
Contact Phone:
Email Address:

Price list effective from November 2013

ITEM FOR SALE	POST	QTY	PRICE	\$\$\$
Association Green Jacket pocket (For new jackets)	\$ 3.00		\$ 80.00	
Association Green Jacket pocket (Replacement pocket)	\$ 3.00		\$ 15.00	
Association Green Jacket, complete with pocket			\$ 350.00	
Badge - Cloth - Commando Parachute	\$ 3.00		\$ 6.00	
Badge - Beret (New Design)	\$ 3.00		\$ 15.00	
Badge - car window decal - Free with any purchase			Free	
Badge – Lapel – 1 st Commando Regiment	\$ 3.00		\$ 10.00	
Badge - Lapel - Australian Commando Association	\$ 3.00		\$ 10.00	
Badge – Lapel - Para Wings	\$ 3.00		\$ 10.00	
Badge - Name (Optional - years of service/nickname)			\$ 20.00	
*Beret - Green (Qualified members only) Size required - see below	\$10.00		\$ 32.00	
Book 'Strike Swiftly' "The Australian Commando Story"	\$18.00		\$ 70.00	
Caps - Black – Australian Commando Association	\$10.00		\$ 20.00	
Coasters - set of 6 - Gold anodised aluminium	\$10.00		\$ 25.00	
Coasters - single	\$3.00		\$ 25.00	
Plaque - 1 st Commando Regiment	\$15.00		\$ 50.00	
Record of Service Plaque - Timber finish (18x22cm) An order form will be sent to you	\$18.00		\$ 65.00	
Shirt – (Grey with Australian Commando Assn logo)	\$10.00		\$ 48.00	
Shirt – Polo (Grey with Australian Commando Assn logo)	\$10.00		\$ 40.00	
Tie - 1 st Commando Regiment	\$10.00		\$ 20.00	

Total \$

Send cheques/money orders payable to Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc
 The Treasurer, Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
 PO Box 1313, SUTHERLAND NSW 1499, AUSTRALIA

Internet banking details (Australia)

Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
 Police Bank: BSB: 815 000 Account No.: 41117 – Quote your name and Subs/Qstore etc.

Internet banking details (Overseas)

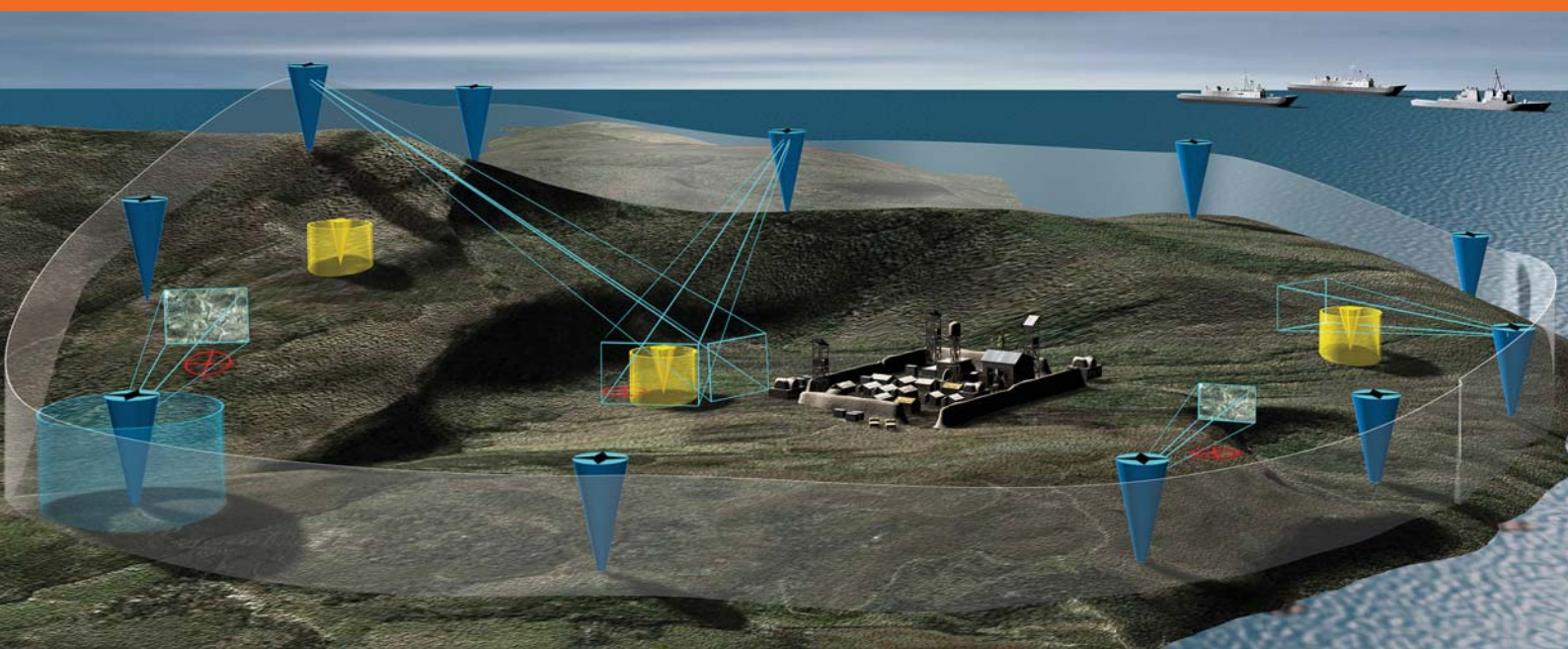
Account with institution/swift code – ANZBAU3M
 BSB: 012010 / Account Number: 777000675
 Beneficiary customer – **Police Bank**
 Details of payment – **Account Number 41117, Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.,**
Quote name and subs/Q store etc.

Your order will be processed by Norm WOOD, Quartermaster, (02)9029-7230 or 0419-484-541 or newood@ozemail.com.au

*Nominate Size (beret measurement around head cm)



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call Police Recruiting on **(08) 9301 9607**

Step >>>
Forward