



War Veterans Village (Narrabeen) RSL Sub-Branch

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2014

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"No one ever injured their eyesight by looking on the bright side"

The President's Message Poppy Day Appeal



Our recent Poppy Day Appeal raised \$6484.00. This year's appeal has surpassed all previous years. Well done to all concerned and a special thank you to our "Angels" for their assistance in preparing the trays for Poppy Day and later acquitting the monies on the return of the trays. Our sub -Branch will receive \$3242.00 for our efforts with the balance of monies to The Returned & Services League's Welfare and Benevolent Institution.

RSL Appeals NSW will continue to conduct two major appeals every year seeking donations from the general public to allow the continued support of serving and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. The monies donated are divided as needed to several areas with RSL - DefenceCare, RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund (AFOF), RSL Operation Care and other RSL of Australia (NSW Branch) authorised charities and funds.

The funds donated to RSL Appeals NSW through both the ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day Appeals are a significant contributor to the work of The League in NSW.

Last General Meeting for 2014

Our last General Meeting for this year will be held on the 11th December, in the Montgomery Centre. Our guest speaker is Tamara Harding who will brief the meeting on the Pittwater Friends of Soibada, Timor Leste. There will also be presentations to some of our Sub-Branch members.

2015

The first meeting for 2015 will be on the 12th February 2015, 9.30 am in the Montgomery Centre.

Reminder



Christmas Luncheon Wednesday 17th December 2014 Lone Pine Look Out, 12 - 12.30pm. Bookings essential. Tickets are still available; cost is \$50.00 per person. Our Angels are taking care of the planning and by all accounts it will be a cracker!



Waterview Restaurant at Berowra Waters, will be holding a **Saint Patrick's Day** function on the 17th March 2015. Tickets are \$60.00 per person, which includes the coach to and from the venue, lunch and entertainment. Envelopes to purchase your ticket will be available at the 11th December meeting.

I wish you and yours all the best for the upcoming season. May you have a healthy and safe festive season. I look forward to catching up with you in the New Year.

George Main
President

Chaplain's Corner

The true meaning of Christmas is love. John 3:16 - 17 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this incredible act of love.

The real Christmas story is the story of God's-becoming a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. Why did God do such a thing? Because He loves us! Why was Christmas necessary? Because we needed a Saviour! Why does God love us so much? Because He is love itself (1 John 4:8). Why do we celebrate Christmas each year? Out of gratitude for what God did for us, we remember His birth by giving each other gifts, worshipping Him, and being especially conscious of the poor and less fortunate.

The true meaning of Christmas is love. Perhaps this year you might be able to share God's love with someone who may not have anyone to share Christmas with. A friend of mine says that they always have a spare seat at their table. This Christmas, will you have a spare seat at your table? May God's blessings be upon you always. Merry Christmas.

Bob Durbin
Chaplain

Laughter is Great Medicine

Overheard in Parliament: "How long has he been speaking?" - "About half an hour." - "What's he talking about?" - "He hasn't said."



Note: Sub-Branch office closed from Tuesday 23rd December 2014 re-opens on Monday 5th January 2015

The Battle of FROMELLES 1916

The Outcome of the Attack, Why the Attack failed and Ninety-Eight years on.

'continued from last months article by your Editor'

While **the outcome of the attack** was decided within an hour of commencement of the assault, it took the commanders of both divisions some time to appreciate the real situation. Major General MacKenzie of the 6^{1st}, however was able to review his division's position a little earlier. Less than half an hour after the attack he became aware that his troops had not achieved the anticipated result. The crucial left attack had also faltered. The reports received by the Australian commander, Lieutenant General Sir James McKay were much more positive. The 14th Brigade was 150 meters past the old German front line and digging in, while the 8th Brigade occupied a similar position.

The Germans had acquired a reputation as able exponents of the art of the counter-attack. They had been defending an established position for some time. Their telephone lines were deeply buried and less vulnerable to destruction. Their artillery had every part of their own front line registered and ranged. The German troops, who had occupied that section for months, were intimately acquainted with the pattern of trenches and shelters. Finally having watched the build-up and the assault, they knew the enemy they were facing. Using a combination of bombers and machine-guns, German junior officers organised defences that pinned the attackers in set localities while others manoeuvred onto the flanks and to the rear of the attackers. The fighting became more complex and confused as the Germans penetrated more deeply into the gap between the forward elements and the old German front line.

The Allied commanders gathered to review the position and bleak news, from all sectors, convinced them to abandon any plans for renewing the attack. Finally the order to retire was given. It took eight runners to get the message across the inferno that was No Man's Land. The withdrawal began. With insufficient men to hold the blocks in the trenches, the defenders eventually withdrew into No Man's Land and back to their original trenches. The battle was over.

Could the attack at Fromelles have succeeded?

Why the attack failed. The causes of the failure of the Battle of Fromelles were complex and numerous. The haste in preparation in not allowing sufficient time for reconnaissance or logistic build-up, the failure of the intelligence system in gaining only partial understanding of enemy defences and misidentifying objects in the enemy lines as objectives for the attack, and most importantly, the failure of the artillery to fulfil it's mission. The weather also played a part in the failure. Rain turned the ditches into obstacles and the soil into mud. The dampness caused the artillery fuses to be prone to failure.

The Sugarloaf was the key to the success of the battle. It dominated both approach lines and its presence enabled the Germans to control No Man's Land. It should have never been the boundary line between two divisions. This was the biggest mistake. The battle was lost.

Continued next column

Ninety-Eight Years On. The possibility that the remains of Australian soldiers might lie in an area (Pheasant Wood), just outside the small northern French village of Fromelles, was suggested to the Australian Army by a school teacher from Victoria, Lambis Englezo, in 2001. After a Army panel hearing convened to hear Englezo's case they invited him to conduct more research. The first archaeological examination of the site occurred in 2007. The first digging of the site began on Monday 26 May 2008. After two days the first remains were discovered.

Oxford Archaeology won the tender for the full excavation and between, 5 May and 30 September 2009, meticulously recovered 250 men and associated artefacts. Throughout January and February 2010, all the remains recovered, with a single exception*, were reinterred into a new cemetery. Each body was given an individual military burial by serving members of the Australian Army. The 1st Battalion, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, and the 4th Battalion, The Rifles.

*On a cold Saturday, 30 January 2010, a burial party comprising soldiers from both Britain and Australia reburied with full military honours the remains of a soldier killed during the Battle of Fromelles.

Efforts to identify the remains using a range of historical, archaeological and scientific techniques (DNA samples) commenced once recovery started. This resulted in the naming of 94 Australian soldiers and the identification of a further 111 as Australian. The identification and naming of soldiers continues and on 26 May this year a further 20 names of previously unidentified Australian soldiers was announced by the Assistant Minister for Defence, The Hon Stuart Robert MP. The number now identified total 144.

This concludes the articles by your editor in the last three monthly Newsletters. Information was taken from Roger Lee's book "The Battle of Fromelles" 1916. Number 8 in the Australian Army Campaign Series. It is recommended reading.

Dates to Remember

Monday 8th December, Committee Meeting
11.00am (**sub-Branch Office - Gallipoli**)

Thursday 11th December, General Meeting
9.30am (Montgomery Centre) Guest Speaker
- Tamara Harding from Pittwater Friends of Soibada.
Join us as Special Presentations are made to some of our members for their efforts over the past year.

Wednesday 17th December - Sub-Branch Christmas Luncheon. Lone Pine Lookout, Gallipoli.
12noon for 12.30pm. Remember to bring your receipt / entry ticket with you, so they can be put in the barrel for the Lucky Door Prize.
Envelopes available at the sub-Branch Office and at the 11th December, General Meeting, for your ticket purchase. \$50.00 per person.

There is **no General Meeting in January**. Our first meeting will be **Thursday 12th February 2015 at 9.30am (Montgomery Centre)**.

Monday 9th February, Committee Meeting
11.00am (**sub-Branch Office - Gallipoli**)

Membership

Our strength at 25th November 2014 totals **146**