



# War Veterans Village [Narrabeen] RSL Sub-Branch

Through an active membership we keep the ANZAC spirit alive and growing

## JULY NEWSLETTER 2015

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Sub-Branch Office Hours Monday and Thursday 9am – noon Phone 8978 4266

**“By the time a person is wise enough to watch their step, they are too old to go anywhere”**

### The President's Message

#### New Sub-Branch Office.

The Sub-branch office has now been relocated to the smaller office adjacent to the old Sub-branch office. Hours of business are still the same. Monday & Thursday 9am - 12 noon.



Our next monthly General Meeting is scheduled for the 9 July 2015 at 9.30am. There will be finger food served after the meeting along with Tea & Coffee. Attendance at the last two meetings has been low so mark the date in your diary. Come along and join in the camaraderie.



The first tanks from the regiment's C Squadron arrived in Vietnam in February 1968. The squadron initially comprised two troops, each of four tanks, and two tanks of the squadron headquarters, as well as two dozer tanks and two bridge layer tanks. A third troop was created by placing the two headquarters' tanks together with the two dozer tanks. This number constituted only half of the squadron and it was not until August the rest of the squadron, with another two dozer and two bridge layer tanks, arrived from Australia. This brought the squadron up to its full strength of 26 tanks.

Before coming to Vietnam the Centurions received a number of modifications: a large external fuel tank was fitted on the back of each vehicle to increase its range; the main gun system was upgraded; a ranging machine-gun was fitted; and an infra-red illumination system was also installed for improved night vision. However, once operations began the external fuel tank was found to be potentially hazardous - if hit by a shell or bullet they could explode. The modifications continued "in country" once the squadron began operating in Vietnam: The tank's side skirts were removed, as they became clogged with mud and scrub, the track guards were replaced with heavy gauge steel plate; and storage racks were welded to the back of the turret so ammunition and other equipment, such as an additional radio to allow communication between tank and infantry soldiers, could be carried.

For the next three years, until 1971, the 1st Armoured Regiment's tanks worked closely with

the Australian infantry and the armoured personnel carriers (APCs) of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, on operations throughout Phuoc Tuy and Bien Hoa provinces. The Centurions provided fire support for infantry patrols, were used to directly attack enemy positions, and helped defend Task Force's perimeter at Nui Dat.

The tanks played a significant role during the battles of Coral-Balmoral in May 1968, when the VC made determined attacks against the Australian fire support bases and their presence proved decisive. At one point during the battle an infantry company was pinned down very close to enemy bunkers. APCs were able to extract some of the troops but were unable to reach one platoon. The two Centurions were sent forward and rolled through the heavy jungle, reaching the Australians and the VC bunkers. The Centurion crew fired everything they had: canister, solid shot and high explosive shells, and machine-guns. Each shell cleared more jungle and opened up further targets. The platoon was able to be withdrawn, and with APCs providing machine-gun support as well, the tanks destroyed a series of bunkers.

George Main  
President

### Chaplain's Comment

#### “One Night Upon The Sea!” Mark 4: 35 - 41

In 1975 I was a young sailor in *HMAS Duchess*, a Daring Class Destroyer, similar to *HMAS Vampire* which is currently in Darling Harbour. On this particular trip we were returning to Australia from New Zealand and we just happened to get caught in the backend of a cyclone!

For three days we were 'lost', in as much as due to the weather we could not gain a fix on our position (no GPS/Sat Nav in those days!!). The ship was tossed about; if we were in the forward section, we stayed there; if aft - there we stayed. Yes, for more than three days were at the mercy of the sea, wind and rain. The ship pitched and yawed (that is sailor talk for rocked and rolled). We did not have a lot of control except to keep driving the ship into the waves.

This was my first real experience of rough seas and what amazes me still is how little concern I had for either my personal safety or that of my fellow shipmates. The worst that happened was that we lost a couple of life rafts overboard as they were ripped from their mountings by the strength of the waves coming over the ship and one sailor broke an arm falling out of bed!

While we might say 'ignorance is bliss', I think it was more a case of having faith in my ship and those who were controlling it.

PTO >>

The calmness provided during this whole period was not of the sea but of the mind and heart. I took my cue from those around me; their actions, their reassurance that all would be OK.

Our lesson for today is found in verse 40. Regardless of the storms that we might have or may face, I know who can still it. If it is a storm of suffering; He can ease your pain. If it is a storm of sorrow, He can comfort your soul. If it is a storm of sin, He can deliver you and set you free. Do you need to hear Jesus say "Peace, be still" to your storm? If you do, bring it to Him and watch Him work.

Bob Durbin  
Chaplain

### VICTORIA CROSS

As we commemorate the Centenary of ANZAC we think of those who "*Went with song to the battle*". History tells us that almost all came back significantly changed men, of whom 68 were award the Victoria Cross. Below is an extract from the Australian War Memorial Website. While not up-to-date, it does give a good history of the award itself.



The Victoria Cross was instituted by Queen Victoria's Royal warrant in 1856, and the first examples were presented by her in June 1857. These first 62 awards were retrospective, for gallant actions by sailors and soldiers during the Crimean War of 1854-56.

Throughout its life, the Cross has been manufactured by Hancocks and Co, Jewellers of London. Famously, they are made using bronze taken from guns captured from the Russians in the Crimea. These guns appear to originally be of Chinese origin, and had previously been captured by Russian forces. To date, 1,357 Victoria Crosses have been awarded, the most recent being to Private Johnson Beharry, of the 1st Battalion, Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (2005).

The Victoria Cross for Australia replaces the Victoria Cross in the Australian Honours and Awards system. It was instituted in 1991, and the first award was made on 16 February 2009, to Trooper Mark Donaldson, Special Air Service Regiment, for gallantry in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan, on 2 September 2008. The reason for the change to the historic medal was to allow Australians to remain eligible for what is widely considered to be the world's most prestigious gallantry award. Since the VC, a British imperial medal, was not compatible with the new Australian system of honours and awards, Queen Elizabeth II agreed to a new award; 'The Victoria Cross for Australia'. The medal itself is completely unchanged, and is in fact a Victoria Cross in everything but name. It is still manufactured by Hancocks, and each award is individually approved by Her Majesty the Queen.

Under a similar system, the Victoria Cross of Canada was created in 1993 and the Victoria Cross for New Zealand in 1999. The only other example of these Commonwealth awards so far was made to Corporal Willie Apiata, of the New Zealand SAS, in July 2007. This award was also for gallantry in Afghanistan, in 2004.

It should be noted that the recent awards of the Victoria Cross to Australia and the Victoria Cross to New Zealand are NOT considered by the British Government to be awards of the Victoria Cross. They are awards unique to the countries concerned. Australians, however, will consider Trooper Donaldson's award to be the latest in a long line which stretches back to Captain (later Sir) Neville Howse in South Africa in 1900.

**Update, 21 January 2011:** Recent research has confirmed that while the recent awards of the Victoria Cross to Australia and the Victoria Cross to New Zealand are not British imperial awards, being unique to the Commonwealth countries concerned, they ARE still considered Victoria Crosses in the proud tradition of the award.

### Dates to Remember

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July Committee Meeting 11.00am  
(Amy Taylor Room)

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July General Meeting  
9.30am (Montgomery Centre)

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 'Christmas in July' at Balgowlah RSL Memorial Club - ticket holders meet on Colooli Road in front of Gallipoli Building at 11am. Bus will return leaving the Club at 2.00pm.

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August Committee Meeting 11.00am  
(Venue to be advised)

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August General Meeting  
9.30am (Montgomery Centre)

### Who's Who - Name Tags

Please wear your name tag to all Meetings  
(If you need a name tag please drop the Secretary a note, or email and request one.)

### Membership

Life Member	= 2
Life Subscribers	=12
Service Members	=62
Associate Members (belonging to other sub-Branches	=44
Affiliate Members	=21
Our strength at 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2014	Total=141

### Observations on Growing Older

There's always a lot to be thankful for if you take time to look for it. For example how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt