



RSL
NSW

Pittwater RSL sub-Branch Newsletter



July 2024 - Number 44

Pittwater RSL sub-Branch

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The next Newsletter will be
published in October 2024.

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President's Report

Vale **Ted Blackwood OAM**. With great sadness I have to inform you that our dear Affiliate Member, Ted, passed away after a short illness on Thursday 20 June 2024. Our condolences go to his daughter Carol and his son Mark, and their families. See page 5 for Ted's profile.

The **Victory Tree** (above) which was situated on the corner Akuna Lane and Pittwater Road (previously the site of Mona Vale Methodist Church) was totally removed due to Root Rot disease. A trunk of the tree was appropriated by David James (ex-Mayor of Pittwater Council) in order to create a memorial. Sub-Branch members, Kate and Bernie O'Neill appropriated some small branches of the Victory Tree which is now on display in the Memorabilia section inside the Pittwater RSL Club.

82nd Anniversary Defence of Sydney Commemorative Service. On 07 June 2024, Colonel John Platt, CSC (Retd) Chairman of the Australia Remembers Northern Beaches and North Shore Committee, and Patron James Griffin MP, conducted this Service at North Head.

Guest speaker was General The Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC (MIL) CVO MC (Retd), Former Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. Sir Peter gave a stirring and thought provoking speech on today's defence climate.

See page 2 for a complete transcript of Sir Peter's speech, courtesy of Dale Cohen, Northern Beaches Advocate.



Mayor Sue Heins with Deborah at Defence of Sydney

Due to inclement weather, the service took place inside the 'hangar'. Sub-Branch members who attended were Sandra and Darren Crabb, Joan and Bob Wood, Inese and Michael Carrodus, Roberta Conroy OAM, Rory Amon MP, Michael Mannington OAM and Dale Cohen. Thank you both to Michael and Dale for covering this event, as funding has been withdrawn from the Premier's department which usually funds this event. I was privileged to lay a wreath on behalf of our sub-Branch.

Congratulations to our two WW2 Veteran Centenarians - **Gwen Sneesby** and **Peter Icely**! They both celebrated their 100th birthdays in June. See page 4.

On Monday 24 June, I conducted the RSL Tribute for WW2 Navy Veteran, S/8245, Aubrey Clarence Thompson, Beryl Clarke's brother-in-law. Even though Aubrey was not a member of Pittwater sub-Branch, we will always take care of our veterans by providing the RSL Tribute.



Lest We Forget
Regards,

Deborah

Deborah Carter
President

Cosgrove's Wake-up Call



Col. John Platt CSC and Sir Peter Cosgrove AK CVO MC (Retd)

Former Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and top soldier Sir Peter Cosgrove has issued a stark warning to Australia.

General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK CVO MC (Retd) was the keynote speaker at the annual Defence of Sydney commemoration at North Head, Manly, on Friday 07 June when he gave a stunning warning of the lack of preparedness of Australia's armed forces to defend Australia against 'real and highly potent' threats.

The commemorative service marks the 82nd anniversary (31 May 1942) of the Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour. 19 Australian and two British sailors aboard HMAS Kuttabul and six Japanese submariners aboard three submarines lost their lives in the night-time attack, which brought the war to Sydney.

Normally held outdoors at the Defence of Sydney Monument atop North Head, poor weather forced this year's service to be held inside one of the large artillery hangars used by the former School of Artillery at the site.

Sir Peter Cosgrove reminded the audience that Australia had long faced external threats, and established the context for the risks of modern day complacency to geostrategic reality.

"Imagine the first Australians standing on the foreshore, looking on with awe and foreboding, probably foreboding, at the sails of the First Fleet."

"Britain was concerned about the Pacific ambitions of the Russians in the first part of the nineteenth century. In December 1839, Sydneysiders were taken aback to discover that two American warships had calmly sailed into Sydney Harbour overnight."

"They were nonchalantly anchored within an easy cannon shot of Sydney town. If the citizenry were taken aback, you can imagine what the Royal Navy resident senior officer was feeling."

"We now know the ranking American officer of this small flotilla was uncomplimentary about the lack of vigilance and defensive accountability evidenced by all this," said Sir Peter.

"As the size, wealth, and significance of Sydney and its harbour grew, so did the concern and concerted action about its defence. Forts, gun placements, signal towers and barracks were the order of the day then, and in the ensuing decades."

"Even when the defences of Sydney Harbour and the nearby alternate landing sites were adequately defended by batteries of guns, there was still that sense of exposure to the predations of great and emerging powers, balanced by the notion that this part of the Commonwealth would be under the umbrella of the Royal Navy, supplemented by our own Royal Australian Navy," explained Sir Peter.

With representatives from the Consul General of the USA and Consul General of Japan in attendance with around 300 others at Friday morning's service, Sir Peter recounted the events of the Japanese attack on Sydney Harbour.

"The growing events of 1939 and thereafter, especially in our neck of the woods, shattered the sense of comfort and confidence in the hearts of our leaders, in the hearts of our people."

"The war had already come to Australia through the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia, the Dutch East Indies, and the Empire's predations into the Southwest Pacific."

"It had already come to Northern Australia, notably Darwin in February 1942 and Broome in March of that year. The waters off our east coast presented the deadly peril of submarine warfare."

"On 23 May [1942], a Japanese floatplane launched from a larger Japanese submarine off the coast for a reconnaissance mission within Sydney Harbour, to report back on the sorts of targets that might be found."

"This was followed up by what was probably a confirmatory reconnaissance mission by a floatplane from a different Japanese submarine."

"On the basis of this, three Japanese midget submarines launched from the mothership submarines to enter Sydney Harbour, and their job was to attack any large warships found," recounted Sir Peter.

"The three midget submarines entered the Harbour on the night of the 31st of May 1942. There were more than 20 US and Royal Australian Navy ships to be attacked."

"One of the submarines got caught up in a half completed anti-submarine boom net, and the crew scuttled the sub and perished. Another was detected and attacked by warships in the Harbour, and sunk before causing damage."

"But the third attempted to sink by torpedo the USS Chicago. It wasn't successful in that, but its torpedo hit the converted ferry HMAS Kuttabul, killing 21 naval ratings accommodated on that vessel."

"That submarine was able to leave Sydney Harbour, but its wreck was found off Sydney's Northern Beaches in 2006. While this was the only known incursion into Sydney Harbour, the Japanese submarine presence continued along our east coast for many months afterwards."

Sir Peter Cosgrove, Guest Speaker, Defence of Sydney, continued...

"All this occurred at a time when the Japanese threat was entitled to be seen by all Australians as a juggernaut. Notions of a comfortable, filial reliance on Britain, or even the United States, had largely vanished," said Sir Peter.

Without directly naming the emerging threats to Australian sovereignty, Sir Peter sounded a clear warning of modern day threats to national security. He also lamented the running down of the defence force's ability to defend Australia.

"Such experiences must always be a caution, instructive for those who follow. We spend this moment contemplating the contemporary challenges we must consider with wisdom and resolve.

"Back then, with Britain in a bitter struggle and constrained from more than nominal assistance to Australia, with the United States only at the start of its huge expansion of its armed forces and wartime industry, we were hoping for, and eventually receiving, the benefits of a sort of Pax Americana.

"That pre-eminence, which was realised, has dominated world affairs and especially the Indo-Pacific all the way from those dark and dangerous years, until recently.

"As a remote, peace-loving, like-minded and reliable nation, we have been a friend and an ally, and a beneficiary of that giant democracy, of Pax Americana.

"There's probably amongst this group today, nobody more partial and biased than me in declaring my vast affection for, and admiration of our men and women in the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force," said Sir Peter.

"But for understandable reasons, our governments and our military leaders have, over the last nearly 80-years, cut our cloth in numbers of uniformed men and women and the extent of the capabilities that they operate.

"We've cut our cloth to suit our needs. Simply, the confidence we had in the umbrella of the United States meant that the sorts of threats we encountered between 1941 and 1945 were inconceivable.

"These sorts of threats are sadly conceivable now. Not midget submarines into Sydney Harbour, or aerial bombardment from planes using island landing strips, but aggressive action against us in the cyber-world.

"Threats from missiles and the like, from a myriad of ways to affect our commerce. It might be in the ways that those Australians of the World War Two generation would struggle to comprehend, but real and highly potent nonetheless.

"I don't think for one moment that the predisposition of the United States to help us to act against such threats, to continue to value us as a partner and an ally and a friend, would be in any way diminished, but the odds of success [such as] 1942 to 1945 are different," said Sir Peter.

"So we have to do more. Those wonderful men and women who handed down the Anzac reputation through the way in which they defended Australia, and that wider population that cherish and stood behind those men and women in those dangerous days of the 1940s, have marvellous inheritors in uniform today.

"They are courageously committed, they are highly capable and they're perpetually ready to adapt to new skills, new ways to keep Australia safe. There's just not enough of them.

"As yet, there is not enough of a tsunami of new equipment and new weaponry for them. We must encourage and support our political leaders to play a vital part in this process of rapid adjustment to worrying times.

"Now, in this iconic place, at this time of reflection and reverence, there is no more appropriate time and place to say, we must work tirelessly and endlessly for peace and never stop doing so.

"We must also act wisely and energetically in case the peace we pray for cannot be maintained.

"Lest we forget," warned Sir Peter.



Bob Lunnon, President Forestville RSL sub-Branch and NBDC, Rory Amon MP, Deborah Carter



Images courtesy of Michael Mannington OAM Community Photography, Dale Cohen, Northern Beaches Advocate

Gwenyth Sneesby, sub - Branch Member

Sandra May



On Monday 17 June 2024, Gwen celebrated her 100th birthday with her daughter, Linda Lutze, and staff at the nursing home, Mona Vale House.

Rory Amon MP also attended to congratulate Gwen on her very special day, and to give her two special gifts.

One was a transcript of what he delivered in Parliament on 06 June 2024. Apart from relating her war service, his last paragraph was as follows: *"Gwen has spent her recent years volunteering for Meals on Wheels, as Activities Officer, at her retirement village and, no doubt, much more. What is striking about Gwen is how she lives her life and, to quote Gwen, her life motto is 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. Our world would certainly be a better place with more Gwenyth's! Thank you, Gwenyth."*

The other gift Rory presented was a card from King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

"Dear Mrs Gwenyth Sneesby,

My wife and I are so pleased to know that you are celebrating your one hundredth birthday on 17 June 2024. This brings our warmest congratulations and heartfelt good wishes on such a special occasion."

Flowers were from the sub-Branch.

Photos provided by Linda Lutze



GWENYTH SNEESBY - 17 June 1924
Service No. WR379
Women's Royal Australian Naval Service
- Leading Writer

Served: HMAS "Kuttabul"

1939-1945 War Medal
Australian Service Medal 1939 - 1945

I was born Gwenyth Forster in 1924. My Father was in the Royal Australian Navy during WW1, and was also seconded to the Royal Navy, travelling to the United Kingdom in a submarine, so the Navy was in my blood!

The recruiting office was in Loftus street, Circular Quay and I signed up there and went into the Navy. I was nearly eighteen. After basic training at HMAS Penguin, I spent the next three years at Bradleys Head Degaussing Range which had been constructed by United States Navy in 1942.

Degaussing was a vital element de-magnetising a ship's hull against magnetic mines. The Bradleys Head Range employed electronic devices laid on the harbour floor beneath the shipping lanes. As the ships crossed this range, the magnetism of their hulls was measured to ensure they were still fully protected prior to deploying on missions. If not, ships were turned back to conduct additional degaussing.

I was one of eight WRANS who operated the instruments used for the testing of the ship's Magnetic Field; essential for the Electrical Officers to calculate settings required to repel magnetic mines.

Fatefully, I happened to be off duty when my steam ferry, HMAS Kuttabul, was sunk while docked at Garden Island during the Japanese Midget Submarine attack on Sydney Harbour at 2:30AM on 01 June 1942.



Sub-Branch Member, Peter Icely, is also a WW2 veteran and was in the ARMY. Peter served in New Guinea and Borneo. Peter celebrated his 100th birthday on Wednesday 19 June 2024. We also sent Peter a birthday card to his nursing home in Turramurra.

Both Gwen Sneesby and Peter Icely received a lovely congratulations letter from RSL State President Mick Bainbridge, thanking them for their war service, and on the occasion of turning 100!

Dale Cohen's special article about Ted was in the NBA on Friday 21 June 2024. I have approval from Dale (an Affiliate Member of our sub-Branch) to repeat his article in our Newsletter. Sandra May

North Narrabeen community legend Ted Blackwood has passed away aged 93.

The Northern Beaches is today mourning the passing of local legend, Edward 'Ted' Melville Blackwood OAM. Born in December 1930, Mr Blackwood passed away yesterday (Thursday, 20 June 2024) at Northern Beaches Hospital after a short illness.



Mr Blackwood was a founding father of community sports on the Northern Beaches, through the Narrabeen Youth Club which he founded in 1965. At that time, the Narrabeen RSL held a meeting between soccer, cricket and basketball teams in Narrabeen and formed a consolidated club.

A clubhouse building was purchased for one dollar (\$1.00) from the Narrabeen RSL, and relocated to the corner of Jacksons Road, Warriewood, and Boondah Road. The building that stands there today bears his name, the Ted Blackwood Narrabeen Youth and Community Centre.

Mr Blackwood was awarded Life Membership of Manly Warringah Football Association (MWFA) in 2005. The Narrabeen Football Club, which he founded with the Narrabeen Youth Club in 1965, has an annual club achievement award named in his honour called the 'Ted Blackwood Award'. He is also an affiliate member of Pittwater RSL sub-Branch and a Life Member of Pittwater RSL Club at Mona Vale.

His service to community sports and the foundation of Narrabeen Youth Club saw him awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) on Australia Day in 1993, 'in recognition of service to youth as founder of the Narrabeen Youth and Community Centre', and a Centenary Medal on 01 January 2001 'for service to the foundation of the Warriewood Soccer Club and Narrabeen Youth Club'.

The Ted Blackwood Narrabeen Youth and Community Centre that stands next to the Boondah playing fields at Warriewood today was built by Warringah Council and officially opened on 25 May 1975. Almost half-a-century later, it continues to be used by an array of community groups and is maintained by Northern Beaches Council.

Renowned for his commitment to local sport and youth, Mr Blackwood was also actively involved with older residents through North Narrabeen charity MWP Care.

Speaking with the Northern Beaches Advocate in December last year at the MWP Care Christmas lunch (image above), Mr Blackwood quipped that he had 'graduated' from volunteer to client.

"Many years ago I used to drive and go on the trips, and I used to help with the cooking and things like that. I enjoyed it over the years. Now I have people coming to help me with a bit of work for me, maintenance and carpentry."

"I like the way things are run to the great bunch of people you know, and they've done a lot of great things. A day like today is excellent, it gets people together. You meet people you haven't seen for years," shared Mr Blackwood at the time.

Pittwater MP Rory Amon was saddened to learn of Mr Blackwood's passing yesterday, saying his life was one of service to the community.

"Ted epitomised service. His contribution to community and country was unparalleled. The naming of the Ted Blackwood Hall in his honour is a fitting tribute. Long may Ted's legacy be recognised," said Mr Amon.

Vale Edward 'Ted' Blackwood OAM.



July

- 07, 1942** **Horn Island Bombed.** Horn Island was bombed by Japanese aircraft nine times during the Second World War.
- 13, 1953** **HMAS Tobruk begins a two-week patrol of the northern part of Korea's east coast.** This was the Tobruk's last patrol before the war in Korea ended in late July 1953.
- 22, 1938** **Australian National War Memorial opened at Villers-Bretonneux, France.** Opening of the Australian National War Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France. This memorial lists the names of 11,000 Australian missing from the fighting around Villers-Bretonneux.

August

- 03, 1916** **Battle of Romani.** The Australian Light Horse was involved in the battle of Romani, Egypt. The battle signalled the end of the defence of the Suez Canal and the beginning of a bolder offensive strategy against the Turks in the Middle East.
- 08, 1915** **Lance Corporal L. Keysor, VC.** 1st Battalion, originally from London, was awarded the Victoria Cross at Lone Pine, Gallipoli.
- 09, 1945** **Nagasaki bombed.** Nagasaki was the second Japanese city to suffer an atomic attack. Japan surrendered shortly afterwards.

September

- 04, 1942** **Corporal J A French, VC.** Corporal J A French, 2/9th Battalion, originally from Toowoomba, Queensland, was awarded the Victoria Cross at Milne Bay, New Guinea. It was a posthumous award.
- 10, 1943** **Italy signs armistice with the Allies.** Prior to this the Italians had been fighting with the Germans. Despite the Italian surrender the Allies faced more than a year of difficult fighting against the Germans in Italy.
- 29, 1918** **Captain G H Wilkins awarded bar to Military Cross.** Captain G H Wilkins, official AIF photographer, rallies United States troops at the battle of the Hindenburg Line, while taking photographs. For this action he was awarded a bar to his Military Cross, becoming the only Australian official photographer to be decorated for bravery in the field.



Lieutenant Leonard Keysor VC



Corporal John Alexander French VC



Captain George Hubert Wilkins

VALE - LEST WE FORGET

With great sadness, we report the passing of
sub-Branch Affiliate Member,
and Service Member

Edward 'Ted' Melville Blackwood OAM
30 Dec 1930 - 20 Jun 2024

Aubrey Clarence Thompson
WW2 RAN S/8425
15 Jun 1925 - 11 Jun 2024
(Brother-in-law of Beryl Clarke)

The Battle of Romani 1916



Roberta Conroy OAM - sub-Branch Affiliate Member



To say that Roberta was 'tickled pink' to receive an OAM, would be an understatement!

The OAM Investiture took place at Government House on 21 May 2024, at 2:00PM, and was presented by Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC.

In Roberta's words: "It was truly a wonderful experience, high praise to our NSW Governor and team for the smooth running of such an event.

I loved the ceremony, celebratory atmosphere, all the interesting people, heritage, professionalism, courtesy, afternoon tea, Government House buildings and grounds, everything!"

Click on this link, and select the 21 May 2024, 2:00PM session. To view Roberta's 1.5 minutes acceptance, fast forward to approximately 38 minutes. <https://livestream.com/blive/investitureceremony2024/videos/245826320>

Kylie Adams-Collier



Kylie Adams-Collier is an award-winning vocalist.

Kylie's Grandfather lost his life on the ship Montevideo Maru at the hands of the Japanese.

Kylie was a guest vocalist at our ANZAC Day Dawn Service on Tuesday 25 April 2023.

This is a collage of photographs of the Silent World's Montevideo Maru Medallion that Kylie received on 27 November 2023.

Some descendants were invited by the Silent World Foundation to a special commemorative dinner to mark the finding of the wreck of the Japanese Ship, Montevideo Maru, in memory of the 1053 lives lost on 01 July 1942. The 979 Australians lost represented the greatest ever loss of life at sea in Australia's history.

The commemoration was held in the Aircraft Hall at the Australian War Memorial and was attended by many descendants, dignitaries and the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese.

Ray Martin hosted the evening which included a short documentary film of the Silent World foundation 's discovery of the Montevideo Maru, produced by Max Uechritz.



July - August - September



JULY

Christopher Bedwell	07
Shane Fender	07
Don Tierney	08
Andrew Thomson-Ko	09
Dorothy Clark	20
Jim Colbeck	21
Deborah Carter	23
John Kaye	25
Rory Amon, MP	25

AUGUST

Sam Steel	05
Walter Nicholls	14
Brian Heal	16
Geoffrey Jones	16
Kim Brownlie	26
Bernard O'Neill	27

SEPTEMBER

Cliff Gravenor	02
Michael Mannington OAM	16
Darren Crabb	17
Robert Crowe	18
Roberta Conroy OAM	22
Brian Strawbridge	25

General

Mission

Providing for the well-being, care, compensation and commemoration of all Service personnel, especially those who paid the supreme sacrifice.

We engage with the general community promoting the patriotic spirit of ANZAC, providing information on our activities, and encouraging membership of, and interaction with, the sub-Branch and their families.

Welfare

Our Welfare and Membership Officer can assist you with enquiries regarding war pensions, obtaining service records, membership eligibility and any other queries you may have.

Please contact Deborah Carter on 8401 0785, or email pittwaterrslsubbranch@gmail.com

RSL Tribute

If you know of any Commonwealth service member, regardless of RSL affiliation, the sub-Branch can arrange an RSL Tribute.

50 Year Certificate

If you have been a sub-Branch Member, continuously of any Branch, for longer than 50 years, please contact Deborah Carter as soon as possible. Thank you.

Cyber Crime: Report to 1800 595 160.

Or call Snr Constable Matt Cain at Dee Why Police Station, 02 9971 3399.

Helpful website links and telephone numbers:

If you are feeling stressed and need someone to talk to, we highly recommend:

<https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/suicide-intervention> 1800 011 046 (24/7)

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> 1300 224 636 (24/7)

<https://www.womensresiliencecentre.com.au> 1300 895 991

General links:

RSL NSW: <https://www.rslnsw.org.au>

The new RSL NSW Member Portal is Live! <https://rslnsw.org.au/member-portal/>

Australian War Memorial: <https://www.awm.gov.au>

Vet Affairs News: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom>

Scamwatch: <https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/report-a-scam>

ON THE HORIZON July August September 2024

Until future notice, all monthly General Meetings will be held in The Distillery, Pittwater RSL Club

Sun 07 Jul	10:30 am	General Meeting	The Distillery
Sun 04 Aug	10:30 am	General Meeting	The Distillery
Sun 11 Aug	11:00 am	Vietnam Veterans Day (Northern)	
Sun 01 Sep	10:30 am	General Meeting	The Distillery

Executive Committee and sub-Branch Office

Deborah Carter	President, Welfare Officer	0414 470 913
Terry Jones	Vice President	0466 892 771
Sandra May	Secretary, Newsletter Editor	0417 944 244
Bob Wood	Treasurer	0409 712 349
Joan Wood	Assistant Treasurer	0407 931 987

Support Team

Inese Carrodus	Office Assistant	0449 525 316
Kate O'Neill	Office Assistant	0415 967 530

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