



Pittwater RSL sub-Branch Newsletter



April 2025 - Number 47

Pittwater RSL sub-Branch

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The next Newsletter will be
published in July 2025.



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Daylight saving ends

On Sunday 6 April at 3:00
am (AEDT) - clocks **go
back** one hour to 2:00
am (AEST)

President's Report

Purple Poppy Day

We conducted our Service on Monday
24 February 2025, which was a
wonderful day.

See our report and images on pages 2, 3
and 4.



Our AGM meeting in March was a
success, and thanks to Bob Lunnon,
President of NBDC, for bringing us up to
date with what is happening in the NBDC.

OUR ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Our ANZAC Day Dawn service will be held
at the Lower Cenotaph or in the under-
cover car park, depending on the weather.

- ◆ Please be seated no later than
05:20am.
- ◆ Marchers form up at 5:10am. Suits and
medals to be worn.
- ◆ Breakfast in the Glasshouse after our
service.

AVALON ANZAC DAY SERVICE

We have been invited to attend the 11:00
am Avalon march. If you can attend,
please be outside the Avalon Public
School by 10:40am. I will be attending the
march and Service.

PRE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Thank you to Shane Fender for agreeing to
be the Guest Speaker at Pittwater High
School on Monday 07 April.

I will be attending the Pittwater House
Service on Friday 11 April at 09:30am.
Later that day, at 12 noon, Beryl Clarke
and I will attend the Mona Vale Public
School, as their guest speakers.

I will attend the RSL LifeCare on
Wednesday 23 April at 09:40am. There
will also be a parade and refreshments
served.

Other news:

Brian Frost is the new Community
Services Manager at RSL NSW, which
includes the Sport and Recreation
programme. Jen Reynolds from Sport and
Recreation has resigned. Brian is looking
for a new coordinator. At a future meeting,
Brian would like to present to us his new
role.

Bob Lunnon has requested that Stuart
Hablethwaite, Welfare Officer at Forestville
RSL sub-Branch, and I, conduct a
workshop to educate Welfare Officers on
how to conduct an RSL Tribute at funerals.

On behalf of Bob Lunnon, I attended
Harbord Diggers AGM on Sunday 23
March, and addressed the meeting on a
few points:

1. RSL ANZAC Village for the Renewal
Project was held on 19 March from 6pm –
8pm concentrating on veterans'
stakeholders. The Narrabeen RSL Village
was first built over 80 years ago and is due
for a major redevelopment. Currently, the
ratio of current veterans to community
residents is 30% veterans and 70% non-
veterans. (I personally think this ratio is not
good enough.)

2. The Veteran Expo Exhibition on
Tuesday 25 March, 9:30am to 2:30pm.
(I notified everyone by email prior to the
March meeting).

3. I discussed the importance of combining
Commemorative Services across the
Northern Beaches District Council.

At this AGM meeting it was agreed by all
that the ratio of Veterans at the War
Veterans Village was totally inadequate,
and also more affordable accommodation
was vital for veterans.

I am proud to say our sub-Branch will be
placing flags on our veterans graves at
Mona Vale Cemetery on Thursday 17 April
for ANZAC Day.



Lest We Forget
Regards,

Deborah Carter

Deborah Carter
President

Purple Poppy Day Service - Monday 24 February 2025

We held our fourth Purple Poppy Day service on Monday 24 February at 11:00am. Each time, the School of Military Engineering at Holsworthy Barracks have provided Dog Handlers and their canine companions who are part of the Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) section. They are military dogs and have their own Service No. We thank them for their service and ongoing support.

This year, our special guests were SGT Ian Moss and Cpl Sean McGucick and their service dogs, Daisy and Kipper. SGT Moss was our guest speaker.

Also attending were sub-Branch members, VIPs, Students and Teachers from four local schools.

Leigh Arnold, President, Pittwater RSL Club; Jason Manning, CEO, Pittwater RSL Club; The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop AO, Patron; Dr Sophie Scamps, MP, Member for Mackellar; Jacqui Scruby, Member for Pittwater; Mayor Sue Heins, Northern Beaches Council; John Fairless, President, Collaroy RSL sub-Branch; Garry Maurer, President, Narrabeen RSL sub-Branch; and Barry Andrews, President, Sydney Northern Beaches; National Servicemen sub-Branch.

49 Students and Teachers attended from: Mona Vale Public School; Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School; Pittwater High School and Mater Maria Catholic College.

Thank you to SQNLDR Dr Anna Williams, Vocalist, Dr Harriet Channon, Bugler, and our photographers Michael Mannington OAM, Dale Cohen, and Maryann Heffernan.

Please Note: Deborah is not 106 years old! Deborah accidentally placed her grandfather's WW2 medals on the wrong side!



"On 24 February 2019, Federal Minister Scott Buchholz announced that this day would be set aside every year to commemorate and honour the animals that continue to fight for the sovereignty of our great country."

Australia joined many other countries in the world in marking the War Animal Day. We are all being encouraged to wear a purple poppy in recognition of the deeds and sacrifice our four legged and feathered diggers have made, and continue to make serving alongside our troops.

*The announcement came at the backdrop of another yet great milestone that saw the opening of the first international war animal memorial. The memorial is located near the French town of Pozieres, which was a central battlefield for WW1." **They had no choice.***

SGT Ian Moss, Guest Speaker



Good morning Ladies and gentlemen, I am SGT Ian Moss, and with me today is CPL Sean McGucick, and our service dogs, Daisy and Kipper, from the School of Military Engineering at Holsworthy Barracks,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak today and share what Purple Poppy Day means to me as an Explosive Detection Dog handler.

We're here today to remember a special type of Australian Soldier. One who has fought in every conflict where Australian forces have been present. They have worked tirelessly, providing not just capability but companionship. Often, even if they made it through the war, they were unable to return home. We're here of course to remember the service of military working animals.

Australia has deployed horses, mules, donkeys, camels, pigeons, cats and dogs along with its human soldiers.

These animals were used for their incredible ability to tackle tasks that were difficult or impossible for a human to undertake. Often animals were selected for tasks that utilised their natural abilities and physical traits such as the camels in the Imperial Camel corps who were used to carry supplies and equipment long distances in arid terrain; or the pigeon with their incredibly strong homing instinct who were used to carry vital information between positions.

It is estimated that approximately 400,000 horses have left Australia's shores to serve in various wars, with only one ever making the return trip home. The Cavalry charge at Beersheba by the 4th Australian Light Horse is remembered as the last great Cavalry charge of the First World War. During the Second World War the North Australian Observer Unit was tasked to watch for invaders in the North, using horses to move through the tough terrain of the outback. Many years later their successor, NORFORCE proved to be the last mounted unit in the Australian Army, ending in 2008.

It is unknown how many mules and donkeys have served with the Australian Army as records were not accurately kept. Most famous of these was Simpson and his donkey. Simpson landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula on April 25 1915 with the 3rd Field Ambulance. He and his donkeys became a familiar sight to the Anzacs. In the words of General Monash 'Private Simpson and his little beast earned the admiration of everyone at the upper end of the valley. They worked all day and night throughout the whole period since the landing and the help rendered to the wounded was invaluable. Simpson knew no fear and moved unconcernedly amid shrapnel and rifle fire, steadily carrying out his self-imposed task day by day.

As equipment and technology has progressed and the way we fight wars has changed the need for animals in conflict has all but disappeared. While planes, helicopters

and trucks have replaced the horse, camel, mules and donkeys with radios replacing the pigeon. But there's one animal whose loyalty, courage and willingness to work is yet to be matched by a modern solution, I'm referring of course to the Military Working Dog.

The world of canine capabilities in support of national defence has been evolving in Australia since the early 1950s; however Military Working Dogs have been proving their worth since 1914 at the outbreak of war on the western front. It is estimated that approximately 50,000 dogs were used by all combatants in WW1.

Post WW1 and leading into WW2 the use of dogs in military applications increased worldwide with the US alone deploying over 10,000 trained Military Working Dogs.

In more recent times Australia has deployed tracker dogs to Malaya and tracker and mine dogs to Vietnam. After making the switch from the ground scenting mine dog to the air scenting Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) in 1981 the training of which was heavily influenced by the conflict in Northern Ireland. EDDs saw success in Somalia, Bougainville and East Timor before they really came into their own in Afghanistan.

Through the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts our Military Working Dogs proved their worth time and time again but none more so than Kuga. Serving with the SASR, he received the Dickin medal for his actions in Afghanistan, the Dickin medal is the equivalent to the Victoria Cross. He was the first Australian animal to receive this award since World War Two. Whilst on patrol he discovered an insurgent positioned set to ambush Australian Forces. He charged forward, diverting attention from the soldiers. Once the insurgents fled, Kuga managed to make it back to his handler, despite being shot five times and suffering from shrapnel wounds.

We all know that animals play a vital role whilst deployed; however, they've played an equally important role at home, helping our veterans living with trauma.

All of these animals, and many more, have earned the right to be called Australian Soldiers. From beasts of burden carrying equipment to dogs searching for IED's and caches, they have served beside their human counterparts in every conflict that we have been involved in. Recently, several memorials and awards have been dedicated to Australia's war animals. This includes the Canine Operational Service Medal, recognising Military working Dogs service overseas and toady; the National Day for War Animals.

However, one of the most powerful monuments to animals is located in London. It has two inscriptions. The first reads 'This monument is dedicated to all the animals that served and died alongside British and Allied forces in wars and campaigns throughout time'.

The second inscription simply says 'They had no choice.'



Purple Poppy Day - Monday 24 February 2025



They had no choice

- April**
- 01, 1921** **First AIF disbanded.** During the four years of the First World War the First AIF gained a reputation for military prowess that remains very much in the consciousness of Australians to the present day.
- 11, 1970** **HMAS Vendetta returns to Sydney.** HMAS Vendetta was the only one of three Australian Daring class destroyers to serve on the gunline in Vietnamese waters. The ship served one tour.
- 23, 1918** **Ostend and Zeebrugge, Belgium, raided.** Eleven volunteers from HMAS Australia took part in a raid that aimed to prevent the Germans using these Belgian ports as a bases for their submarines.
- May**
- 03, 1917** **Second attack on Bullecourt.** Operations against the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt were aimed at protecting the British flank during operations at Arras. After a disastrous first attempt, a second involving the 2nd Australian Division was made. That attack succeeded, at a cost of about 7,000 allied casualties.
- 06, 1917** **Corporal G.J. Howell, VC.** Corporal G.J. Howell, 1st Battalion, originally of Enfield, NSW, is awarded the Victoria Cross near Bullecourt.
- 14, 1943** **Centaur sunk.** The hospital ship Centaur was sunk by a Japanese submarine off the south Queensland coast. Only 64 of the 333 on board survived.
- June**
- 07, 1968** **Australian Prime Minister visits Vietnam.** Prime Minister Gorton begins two-day visit to Vietnam against a background of both a growing Australian military commitment to the war and steadily increasing, though not yet overwhelming, domestic opposition.
- 13, 1941** **Battle for Jezzine, Lebanon.** The battle was one of several hard fought actions in the five-week-long campaign by the allies against Vichy French forces in Syria and Lebanon.
- 19/6 - 06/7, 1941** **Lieutenant A.R. Cutler, VC.** Lieutenant Roden Cutler, 2/5th Field Regiment, 7th Division, originally of Manly, New South Wales, was awarded the Victoria Cross for a series of actions at Merdjayoun and in the Damour area, Lebanon.

ADF Personnel Profile - Pilot Officer Rawdon Hume Middleton, Service No. 402745

Sandra



Rawdon Hume Middleton was born on 22 July 1916 at Waverly in Sydney, a great-nephew of the explorer, Hamilton Hume. His family moved to the western districts of New South Wales when he was young and he attended school in Dubbo, becoming a keen sportsman and later finding work as a jackeroo.

He enlisted in the RAAF on 14 October 1940 under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Having

learnt to fly at Narromine, New South Wales, Middleton was sent to Canada to continue his instruction. He reached Britain in September 1941 and was promoted to Flight Sergeant in December that year. In February 1942 Middleton was posted to 149 Squadron, Royal Air Force, and began his operational career. His first operational flights, to the Ruhr, were as second pilot in Stirling bombers but by July he had become first pilot. His first operation as captain of an aircraft was to Düsseldorf.

On 28 November 1942 he took off on his 29th operation, to the Fiat works in Turin, Italy. Middleton's aircraft was struck by flak over the target, one shell exploded in the cockpit wounding Middleton in the face and destroying his right eye. The same shell also wounded the second pilot and wireless operator. Middleton lost consciousness and the aircraft dived to just 800 feet before the second pilot brought it under control. They were hit by more flak as they tried to escape the target.

When Middleton regained consciousness he began the long and gruelling flight back over the Alps towards England, knowing that his damaged aircraft had insufficient fuel to complete the journey. The crew

discussed the possibility of abandoning the aircraft or trying to land in northern France but Middleton decided to head for England where his crew would have the chance to bail out. As they approached the French coast the Stirling was again hit by flak but flew on. Now over the English coast with only five minutes of fuel left Middleton ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft. Five men left the stricken plane, and two remained on board to help Middleton before attempting to parachute to safety, although unfortunately both were drowned. The Stirling then crashed into the sea, killing Middleton. He was only one operation away from completing his first tour on bombers.

Middleton's bravery was recorded in the English press and earned him the admiration of the British public and a posthumous Victoria Cross. His body washed ashore at Dover on 1 February 1943 and he was buried in the churchyard of St. John's, Beck's Row, Suffolk, with full military honours.

Image and profile obtained from Australian War Memorial

The Hume Highway is named in honour of the explorer, Hamilton Hume, who, along with William Hovell, led the first European expedition to travel overland from Sydney to Port Phillip in 1824.

When Deborah realised I had decided Captain Middleton was to be highlighted in this Newsletter, she couldn't believe the coincidence.

Captain Middleton's cousin is Brian Smith, who was a member of the Pittwater RSL Club about 2019.

General Information

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, 0414 470 913 or email pittwaterrslsubbranch@gmail.com

RSL Funeral Tribute: If you know of any service member, regardless of RSL affiliation, our sub-Branch will provide a Tribute for Commonwealth Nations and our Allies.

50 Year Certificate: If you have been a sub-Branch Member, continuously of any Branch, for longer than 50 years, please contact Deborah Carter.

Cyber Crime: Report to 1800 595 160. Or call Snr Constable Matt Cain at Dee Why Police Station, 02 9971 3399.

Previous Newsletters: Many can be viewed on our web page on the Pittwater RSL Club's website. [Sub-Branch Newsletters](#); scroll to bottom.

Helpful website links and telephone numbers: If you are feeling stressed and need someone to talk to, we recommend:

[Open Arms](#) - 1800 011 046 (24/7)

[Beyond Blue](#) - 1300 224 636 (24/7)

[Women's Resilience Centre](#) - 1300 895 991

General links: [RSL NSW](#) - Member Portal is Live! [Australian War Memorial](#); [Vet Affairs News](#); [Scamwatch](#)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

APRIL

Lavinia Waller	02
Todd Vail	03
Sandra May-Crabb	04
David Schwebel	05
Frances Watkins	08
Keith Calvert	11
Gaye Kaye	12
Joan Wood	15
Kate O'Neill	16
John Chambers	21
Noala De Silva	30
Emma Woods	30

MAY

Raymond Cicolini	11
Kerry Poha	16
Sue Everitt	21
Leigh Arnold	25
Mark Cooper	28
Derek Savage	29

JUNE

Leslie Beers	02
John Cicolini	03
Graeme Keats	05
Jeff Brown	06
Lindsay Jordan	09
Terry Jones	11
Matthew Hill	13
Gwenyth Sneesby	17
Graeme Lee	17
Beryl Clarke	21

Welcome to our new sub-Branch members

Mark Cooper
Service Member, Army

Jenny Oliphant
Affiliate Member

Wayne Simmons
Service Member, Navy

ON THE HORIZON April - June 2025 (Subject to change)

Sunday 06 April	10:30 am	General Meeting	Mainsail Room
Friday 25 April	05:30 am	ANZAC Day Service	Lower Cenotaph
Friday 25 April	11:00 am	Avalon Community March	Dunbar Park, Avalon
Sunday 04 May	10:30 am	General Meeting	Mainsail Room
TBC	TBC	Pittwater RSL Club AGM	Auditorium
Sunday 01 June	10:30 am	General Meeting	Mainsail Room



Executive Committee and Support

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

Support

Inese Carrodus	Office Assistant	0449 525 316
Joan Wood	Assistant Treasurer	0407 931 987

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If urgent, please call any member of the Executive.