



Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch Newsletter



January 2022 - Number 28

Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch

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Current Membership: 105

The next Newsletter will be published in April 2022



Thank You, Deborah

On behalf of all Pittwater Sub-Branch members, we thank you for your dedication to our Club as President during a challenging year.

Sandra and Darren

President's Report

We had a memorable Remembrance Day 2021, and were so fortunate not to be in lockdown again. This year's theme was "Endurance, stories of Australians in war time captivity."

We were pleased to have Mona Vale Public School in attendance, despite them coming out of lockdown only that week. Remembrance Day 2021 was well supported by the Sub-Branch. See page 2 for a list of our guests.

The Police also exemplify endurance. They face trauma and tragedy every day with strength and dedication. We thank them for their service.

Thank you also to the Pittwater RSL Club Ltd for their support.

One new addition to Remembrance Day 2021 was the laying of the Purple Poppy Wreath for Purple Poppy Day. A beautiful wreath was made by Kate O'Neill. Her husband, Vietnam Veteran (US Navy) Bernie O'Neill, laid the wreath.

I attended State Congress via Zoom on Monday 06 December and Tuesday 07 December 2021.

On Tuesday 07 December, Bob Wood and I, with our partners, attended the Northern Beaches District Council Christmas Dinner at Palm Beach.

On Wednesday 08 December, the Club Ltd celebrated 60 years since the opening of Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch. The Club invited members to attend a complimentary lunch to mark the occasion. The Sub-Branch paid for the drinks for members who attended on Wednesday.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge Beryl Clarke's attendance on 08 December, as Beryl was one of the original fundraisers, and this is why the Pittwater RSL Club stands on this site today.

This year's Christmas lunch was under a different format due to the four months of lockdown. We did not have our usual celebrations or invited guests, but we did enjoy camaraderie in the Glasshouse Grill with a delicious meal paid for by the Sub-Branch. Please see page 3 for photos.

RSL NSW decided not to charge members for renewals, hence all members have been renewed for 2022 for free.

Due to the extended lockdown, your Sub-Branch decided to pay the \$3.00 Club annual renewal. Please note, it is the Club's policy that you do NOT have multiple renewals if you are a Sub-Branch member. Those who have already paid for multiple renewals, this will be the last time this is allowed. This is a Club policy.

Club Cards are available for collection from the Pittwater RSL reception until 11 January. From 12 January they will only be in the Sub-Branch office.

Purple Poppy Day - Thursday 24 February is Australia's official war animal day. This will be our fourth Commemorative Service for 2022. We have involved local schools, and our new plaque has arrived to commemorate Purple Poppy Day, and is now in place on the Upper Cenotaph.

It is long overdue, but we have now organised for the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns to be added to the Upper Cenotaph. Northern Memorials Pty Ltd have been contracted to attend to this very important addition in January 2022. As the Upper Cenotaph is aging badly, I hope to obtain a DVA memorial grant to upgrade this very special Cenotaph.

RSL NSW has changed how applicants apply to join the Sub-Branch. There are Service Membership and Affiliate Membership applications on RSL NSW's website, bypassing the traditional application method by going through the Sub-Branch first.

Welcome to four new members: Service Member Andy Perry; Affiliate Members, Kim Brownlie, Roberta Conroy and Coral May.

I hope you had a very Merry Christmas. Best wishes for a safe 2022, and don't forget your booster shot!



Lest We Forget
Regards,

Deborah Carter

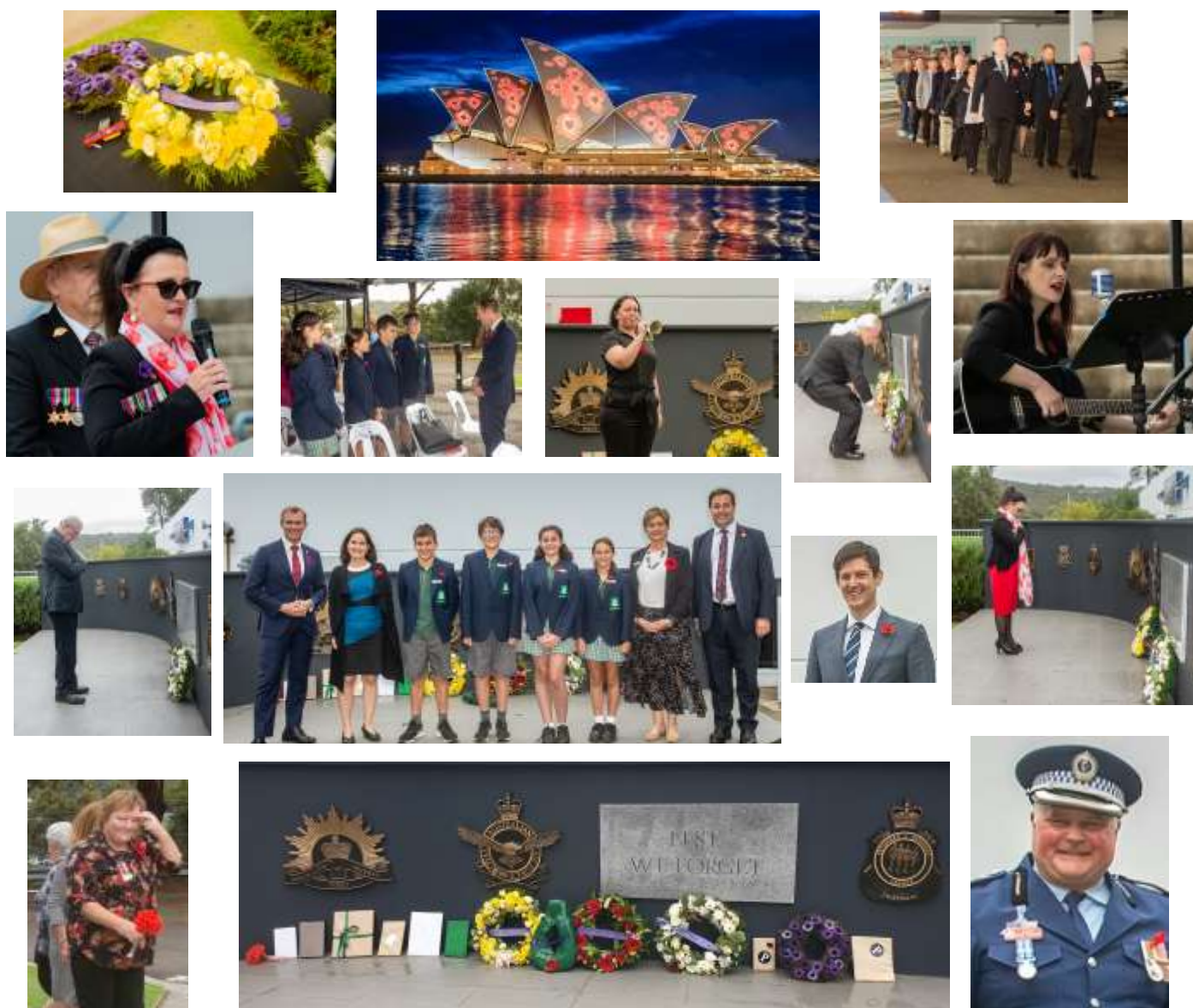
Deborah Carter
President

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Remembrance Day ~ 11 November 2021

The Sub-Branch Remembrance Day Service was a much quieter event this year. Apart from many Members, our guests were Brian Sargeson, The Hon. Rob Stokes, MP Member for Pittwater, Mr Jason Falinski, MP Member for Mackellar, Mr Rory Amon, Northern Beaches Council, Chief Inspector David Richards, Northern Beaches Area Command, Bernie O'Neill, Julie Emerson, Jason Manning, Peter Lion, Sue Brandenburg, Merle Tait and Mona Vale Public School, Students and Teachers.

The theme this year was "Endurance, stories of Australians in war time captivity." Deborah Carter gave a very moving account of Brigadier Arthur Varley (see below) who was born in Sydney 1893 and enlisted in the AIF in 1915. Deborah also spoke about our Sub-Branch Member, Walter Williams OAM who is now 99 years (see January 2021 Newsletter).



Photographs by Michael Mannington and Sandra May-Crabb

This year's theme for **Remembrance Day 2021** was "Endurance, stories of Australians in war time captivity."

Brigadier Arthur Varley was born in Sydney 1893 and enlisted in the AIF in 1915. After being posted to the 45th Battalion, Arthur arrived in France in 1916, and in August took part in the fighting in Pozieres. He was soon promoted to Lieutenant and the following year was awarded the Military Cross for his actions at Messines in Belgium.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Arthur now 47, was asked to re-enlist. Arthur took command of 2/18th Battalion which was sent to Malaya. In January 1942, he was promoted to Brigadier and given command of the 22nd Infantry Brigade. With the fall of Singapore in February 1942, Arthur and his men were marched to the Changi prisoner of war camp. Arthur was given command of "A Force" a working party of 9,000 men.

They left Changi in May 1942 to construct the Burma Thai Railway.

On the completion of the Burma Thai Railway, the Japanese shipped the healthiest men to Japan to work in their factories.

On 12 September 1944, in convoy, the Rakuyo Maru and Kachidoki Maru ships were torpedoed and sunk in the waters of the South China Seas. Sadly, Brigadier Arthur perished in these waters, along with 1,559 allied soldiers.

Fortunately, Walter Williams survived this atrocity.





Christmas Lunch 2021



Because of Covid lockdown, we didn't have our regular meetings in July, August, September and October. Pittwater Club Limited did not trade during this period, so your Executive decided not to receive our monthly funds.

We therefore thought it prudent to scale down our Members Christmas lunch this year. So a less formal lunch was held in the Club's Glasshouse Grill immediately following our 12 December meeting. We didn't have our usual live entertainment from Company B either. This year your Sub-Branch paid for lunch for everyone who attended, which was just for Members and visitors who regularly attend our monthly meetings. *Photos by Sandra.*



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

January - February - March

Sandra May-Crabb



Julie Emerson	09 Jan
Tom Wear	12 Jan
Harry Crampton	13 Jan
Rainer Noble	13 Jan
Inese Carrodus	14 Jan
Jack Snowden	14 Jan
Rob Stokes, MP	17 Jan
Gerry Faramus	20 Jan
Ron Douglas	21 Jan
Wayne Broun	23 Jan
David Onslow	25 Jan

Frank Best	03 Feb
John Sturzaker	08 Feb
Konrad Gebels	10 Feb
Rowland Waller	10 Feb
John Ward	14 Feb
Donald Newport	18 Feb
Kosta Coric	19 Feb
Barry Taylor	21 Feb
Gary Everitt	23 Feb
Michael Carrodus	27 Feb

John Parnell	02 Mar
Rodger Williams	05 Mar
Brian Leary	06 Mar
Ross Wagland	09 Mar
Theo Chere	11 Mar
Pamela Ward	14 Mar
Coral May	20 Mar
Alan Crow	25 Mar



Kate and Bernie O'Neill presented Deborah with a handmade crocheted Purple Poppy wreath for future Sub-Branch commemorative services

23 Oct 2021



The Dickin Medal was awarded 54 times between 1943 and 1949, to 32 pigeons, 18 dogs, 3 horses, and a ship's cat, to acknowledge actions of gallantry or devotion during the Second World War and subsequent conflicts.

The awarding of the medal was revived in 2000. In December 2007, 12 former recipients buried at the PDSA Animal Cemetery in Ilford, Essex, were afforded full military honours at the conclusion of a National Lottery-aided project to restore the cemetery.

As of October 2018, the Dickin Medal has been awarded 71 times, plus one honorary award made in 2014 to all the animals who served in the First World War. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dickin_Medal



Simon - Able Seacat

(c. 1947 – 28 November 1949, aged 2 years) was a ship's cat who served on the Royal Navy sloop-of-war HMS *Amethyst*. In 1949, during the Yangtze Incident, he received the PDSA's Dickin Medal after surviving injuries from a cannon shell, raising morale, and killing off a rat infestation during his service.

Origin: Simon was found wandering the dockyards of Hong Kong in March 1948 by 17 year old Ordinary seaman George Hickinbottom, a member of the crew of the British frigate HMS *Amethyst* stationed in the city in the late 1940s. At this stage, it is thought Simon was approximately a year old, and was very undernourished and unwell. Hickinbottom smuggled the cat aboard ship, and Simon soon ingratiated himself with the crew and officers, particularly because he was adept at catching and killing rats on the lower decks. Simon rapidly gained a reputation for cheekiness, leaving presents of dead rats in sailors' beds, and sleeping in the captain's cap.

The crew viewed Simon as a lucky mascot, and when the ship's commander changed later in 1948, the outgoing Ian Griffiths left the cat for his successor, Lieutenant Commander Bernard Skinner, who took an immediate liking to the friendly animal. However, Skinner's first mission in command of the *Amethyst* was to travel up the Yangtze River to Nanjing to replace the duty ship there, HMS *Consort*. Halfway up the river the ship became embroiled in the *Amethyst* Incident, when a Chinese PLA field gun battery opened fire on the frigate. One of the first rounds tore through the captain's cabin, seriously wounding Simon. Lieutenant Commander Skinner died of his

wounds soon after the attack.

Recovery: The badly wounded cat crawled on deck, and was rushed to the medical bay, where the ship's surviving medical staff cleaned his burns, and removed four pieces of shrapnel, but he was not expected to last the night. He managed to survive, however, and after a period of recovery, returned to his former duties in spite of the indifference he faced from the new captain Lieutenant Commander John Kerans. While anchored in the river, the ship had become overrun with rats, and Simon took on the task of removing them with vigour, as well as raising the morale of the sailors.

Following the ship's escape from the Yangtze, Simon became an instant celebrity, lauded in British and world news, and presented with the "Animal Victoria Cross", the Dickin Medal; as of 2020, Simon is the only cat to win the award. He was also awarded a Blue Cross medal, the *Amethyst* campaign medal, and the fanciful rank of 'Able Seacat' (cf. Able seaman) after disposing of a particularly vicious rat known as "Mao Tse-tung" (cf. Mao Tse-tung). Thousands of letters were written to him, so many that one Lt. Stewart Hett was appointed "cat officer" to deal with Simon's post.

At every port *Amethyst* stopped at on its route home, Simon was presented with honour, and a special welcome was made for him at Plymouth in November when the ship returned. Simon was, however, like all animals entering the UK, subject to quarantine regulations, and was immediately sent to an animal centre in Surrey.

Death: Whilst in quarantine, Simon contracted a virus and, despite the attentions of medical staff and thousands of well-wishers, died on 28 November 1949 from a complication of the viral infection caused by his war wounds. Hundreds, including the entire crew of HMS *Amethyst*, attended his funeral at the PDSA Ilford Animal Cemetery in east London.

Simon's gravestone reads:

IN
MEMORY OF
"SIMON"
SERVED IN
H.M.S. AMETHYST
MAY 1948 – NOVEMBER 1949
AWARDED DICKIN MEDAL
AUGUST 1949
DIED 28TH NOVEMBER 1949.
THROUGHOUT THE YANGTSE INCIDENT
HIS BEHAVIOUR WAS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER



January

08, 1916

Evacuation of Helles. British and French landings at Helles on 25 April 1915, had failed to secure their objectives, leading to a lengthy stalemate on the southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

09, 1966

1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in Operation Crimp. The operation became the scene of a major action against a Viet Cong tunnel complex.

13, 1900

Prieska, South Africa. New South Welshmen attacked at Prieska by Boers.

February

01, 1943

Last Australian forces sail for home from the Middle East. Japan's entry into the war forced the Australian Government to decline British requests to concentrate on the war in North Africa and Europe. Australia began to 'look to America' for support and concentrated the bulk of her forces against the Japanese.

14, 1900

Relief of Kimberley. The relief of Kimberley, Orange Free State, South Africa, was a major operation undertaken to break the Boer siege of the town. 500 Australians of the Queensland Mounted Infantry, New South Wales Mounted Rifles and New South Wales Lancers were involved in the breaking of the siege as part of the cavalry division commanded by Lieutenant-General John French.

21, 1966

Australian and British aircraft bomb Kluang, Malaya. The raid was staged against the jungle base of the 7th Independent Platoon, Malayan Races Liberation Army in Central Johore and was carried out by Lincolns of No. 1 Squadron RAAF and Canberras of No. 12 Squadron RAF. It wiped out the camp and was regarded as the most successful of the 4,000 sorties flown by the Australians in Malaya.

March

04, 1942

HMAS Yarra sunk south of Java. Yarra was escorting a convoy of three ships from the fighting in the Netherlands East Indies to Java to Fremantle when they were attacked by three Japanese heavy cruisers and two destroyers. All four ships were sunk and only 13 of Yarra's 151 crew survived.

14, 1942

Horn Island bombed. Japanese bomb Horn Island, Torres Strait. Horn Island, in the Torres Strait, was the main tactical base for Allied air operations in the Torres Strait. The island was subject to nine Japanese air raids during the Second World War.

31, 1921

Formation of the Australian Air Force. In Australia negotiations between Army, Navy and Defence officials from 1917 to 1921 resulted in the Australian Air Force being formed on 31 March 1921, with approval to use the 'Royal' prefix granted on 13 August 1921.



Executive Committee and Support Team for 2021

Sandra May-Crabb

I would like to highlight the fact that your Sub-Branch Executive Committee and Support Team worked many hours throughout the year. We are committed to the welfare of our Sub-Branch Members, and making sure our Club runs smoothly.

Despite the Covid lockdown from 26 June until 11 October this year, your Executive Committee and Support Team still managed to work a total of 1,983 hours. Thank you to all involved for unselfishly volunteering your time in support of the Sub-Branch.

As you know, our office is staffed every Monday, as a minimum. Co-ordinating a Sub-Branch is much more than organising regular meetings with drinks and lunch, Commemorative Services throughout the year, and our Christmas lunch. A huge amount of administration happens behind the scenes, and this is a requirement of RSL NSW Headquarters.

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.

50 Year Certificate

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

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 send an email to: pittwaterrslsubbranch@gmail.com

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

VALE - 2021 LEST WE FORGET

Norman Townsend - 12 January 2021

John Gordon - 25 January 2021

Thomas Betts - 10 February 2021

Bobby Squire - 12 March 2021

Herbert "Bert" Brownlie - 30 July 2021



We Would Like Your Profile

Many members have already provided their profiles. If you didn't get around to providing your career profile last year, then there's always 2022! 300+ words about your career would make your Editor very happy! Please email your copy to Sandra. smay44@bigpond.net.au Thank you.

Some helpful website links...

If you are feeling stressed during this time of year, and need someone to talk to, we highly recommend:

<https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/suicide-intervention>

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

<https://www.ruok.org.au/>

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

Previous Newsletters are available to view online at <https://www.pittwaterrsl.com.au/sub-branch>

On The Horizon January - February - March



January		No Meeting	
Sunday 13 February	10:30	Meeting	Meeting Place
Thursday 24 February	11:00	Purple Poppy Day Service	Lower Cenotaph
Sunday 13 March	10:30	Meeting	Meeting Place
Sunday 13 March	11:00	Sub-Branch AGM. Voting is required	Meeting Place

Executive Committee - Contact Numbers

Deborah Carter	President	0414 470 913
Michael Carrodus	Senior Vice President	0414 669 190
Terry Jones	Vice President	0466 892 771
Graeme Lee	Secretary	0490 014 693
Bob Wood	Treasurer	0409 712 349



Support Team

Sandra May-Crabb	Newsletter Editor, Office Manager	0417 944 244
Inese Carrodus	Office Assistant	0449 525 316