



# Royal Australian Navy Band Association Magazine

Winter/Spring 2019

[www.ranbandassoc.net](http://www.ranbandassoc.net)



*A Magazine for Association members and serving Band members of the RAN*



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**Vice President:**

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**Treasurer:**

Ralph Daines

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## Full of Optimism (I Think) !

The months have passed so quickly since our last mag it's hard to remember what has happened with our association. It is pleasing though that we can report none of our fellow members have passed away, which is a good thing. The first part of 2019 was filled with reports of another who had left us.

The Veterans Band has ventured to Ipoh, Malaysia again for a successful tour and the full report is inside the mag. Some of our state reps have sent through reports but it seems to be the case when it is not the reunion year there is not a lot happening.

Calls from members regarding subs tells me they are well and looking forward to 2020 in Tasmania though there is always a mention of the weather that they will have to endure. We will bring you up to date with the progress of the reunion inside.

I always have the dilemma of what to put on the front cover and this edition is no exception. I can fill it with an image of Malaysia or I could be nostalgic as the Moon landing was celebrated a few weeks ago and I distinctly remember sitting in front of a TV in the loft at the school of music with other JR's and teachers and watching that memorable day. Where were you? But as you can see I went current and appropriate.

Subs are due and it is pleasing to see the responses to the invoices going out, But, there is still a number of members who are non financial from the 2018/19 who have to date ignored the current request. I will contact them again in hope that they want to continue to be part of the association.

Enjoy the read.

Regards,

Errol.

Editor.



Though Bill had a couple of down days on the tour he rose to the occasion when it counted, representing our association. The photo is of the IPOH memorial service held on Saturday the 14th of June, 2019.

There is not a lot to report on from the secretary's desk this month; however, I thought I might touch on a couple of subjects that may be of interest to our members.

In my Qld reps report I did briefly mention mental health. Mental health is just as important as physical health. There has been a lot of discussion in the veteran's community lately about the alarming high rates of suicide within the veteran's community. DVA has taken this issue very seriously and has introduced a range of initiatives to address mental health amongst veterans.

Firstly, DVA recognises that mental health issues are not solely linked to overseas service. All veterans with at least one day continuous full time service (CFTS) and their immediate family members are entitled to free confidential mental health support services for life through "Open Arms — Veterans & Families Counselling". For help, information or to check eligibility for the Open Arms — Veterans & Families Counselling contact them on 1800 011 046 or visit Open Arms — Veterans & Families Counselling.

A few members may be able to relate to the problems I have been experiencing since changing from my ADSL 2 phone internet to the new NBN broadband internet. It has been nearly 4 months since I changed over and it has been a disaster from the start with up to 200 drop outs during one day. I am connected to the HFC (the old foxtel cable) network. I have had no less than 6 technician visits and made numerous complaints to the telecommunication ombudsman. As a last resort I switched from Optus to Telstra who offer a smart generation 2 modem that has a built in mobile sim card.

Now, whenever I have a drop out it switches over to the mobile network. The down side is it does not provide fixed phone connectivity. I apologise to anyone who has been trying to contact me by either email or fixed phone as I have now changed email address and fixed phone number. If you need to contact me other than by my currently unreliable service please use my mobile number: 0409 722 844 or my trusty yahoo mail account: [navy\\_muso@yahoo.com](mailto:navy_muso@yahoo.com) (please don't add this to any bulk email lists). My strong recommendation is stay with ADSL 2 plus unless you can go over to NBN fibre optic.

By the time this goes to print Len Nurse will be recuperating from some pioneering surgery. He has a very rare condition whereby he has developed a small hole in his spine at the base of his skull. The result being that brain fluid has been leaking into his spine causing muscle weak-

ness in his hands. This condition is triggered by the pressure of playing a wind instrument and was only identified using one of the most advanced MRI systems in the world located at Monash University in Melbourne. If you feel that you need to find out more on the condition please give Len a ring and I am sure he would be more than happy to give you more information.

Lastly, my spies tell me that the planning for the reunion is going well and I look forward to any updates in this addition of our magazine.

Until next time all the best for your health and well being.

John Lennon, Secretary RAN Band Association

## RANBA | TREASURERS REPORT

As the assistant to the Treasurer I'm happy to advise you of our current situation regarding finances of the association. We finished 2018/19 with a positive result and with the invoices going out for the new financial year we look forward to a good growth to our funds.

A detailed summary will appear in the next magazine after the executive meets to accept the reports for publication. With the trip to Ipoh the Veterans Band funds were used to cover incidentals and various costs not covered by our sponsors. Funds were returned after the trip and Donations were paid into the Veterans account.

Again our biggest cost is the production to the magazine and it's distribution and we did see a rise in production cost where postage was stable. Other areas were our Web

site yearly costs for website support and Domain name subs, though not huge they eat into our funds in proportion to our income.

We have members that have not paid their 2018/19 dues and I will attempt to contact them and convince them to remain part of our association.

I continue to look forward to receiving payments over the coming weeks and statements will be sent out just before our Christmas edition of the magazine.

For Now

Errol Hatch

Assistant to the Treasurer.



**Greetings fellow Members**

Once again, I am a very proud President after another overseas performance of our Veterans Band in Malaysia in June. I have copied two emails which show we are always in the eye of the public and when we receive a pat on the back, I am happy to share with all.

G'day Admiral,

The veteran's band were an absolutely first class addition to the Warrior's Association of Malaysia commemoration service in Ipoh this morning. They are representing our Service in the highest traditions as you would expect and supporting a number of memorial events. I made a short video but regret it is too long to get through the firewall.

Yours Aye,

Chris Watson. *(LCDMR Chris Watson RAN is an Instructor at the Royal Malaysian Navy Tactical Centre)*

**UNCLASSIFIED**

Cheers Chris, they are indeed a great Band of men and women who proudly represent our Navy – I wish I could play an instrument and join their ranks in a couple of years time !!

Best wishes,  
CN

**Vice Admiral Mike Noonan, AO, RAN** Chief of Navy

**Today I am sending a Tambourine to Chief of Navy to make him ready when he retires and joins us.**

The Veterans Band never have the same players each time we venture out, but on this occasion we had a real family feel, with Brian Ellis as Conductor, Kerry Ellis and her sister Anne Marie as players along with Linda Smith on Tuba from Ballina Band and husband Peter as one of the Roadies, the other Roadie was Errol's brother in law Martin.

The Reunion in Launceston next year will be held over the days of 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the Veterans Band will be giving a recital on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> with a rehearsal on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>, more information will be forthcoming from Brian Ellis and David Hardstaff.

On the note of Reunions, the Management Committee has decided that the 2022 Reunion will be held in Adelaide.

Recently I had a request from Jan McKenzie if I could obtain music CDs with band music to play to John (Darby) who has dementia. I gathered up all I had and sent them off and they were very successful in getting John's attention. I had a thought that we must have members out there who are very ill and maybe some music may perk them up, so I contacted Director of Music and requested to be supplied with CDs of the Navy Band to send out and he wholeheartedly supported the idea. **So**, if there are any members out there who would like to use music to brighten up someone's life please contact me directly and I will send some out. (0405 380751 or 02 6585 7767)

Till next time,

Ralph Daines.



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**Mr Ralph Daines**  
President of the RAN Band Association  
1 Howell Avenue  
Port Macquarie  
NSW 2444

*Dear Ralph*

Thank you for the 'note' worthy letter, the Royal Australian Navy's Veterans Band is an important part of our broader Navy Community. Your organisation's involvement at key functions and activities across Australia brings credit to not only your Association but the entire Royal Australian Navy.

Most importantly, please pass on my appreciation to your Team for their kind donation. My staff will be truly 'trebled' with the sounds coming from my office.

I wish you all the very best for the future and thank you for all the positive work you do within the community.

Yours sincerely,

**Mike Noonan, AO**  
Vice Admiral, Royal Australian Navy  
Chief of Navy

/ August 2019

Hi Errol,

Thanks for a very informative newsletter which brought back many memories for me.

Bill Farrell's story about the 1969 collision between HMAS Melbourne & USS Frank E Evans was excellent giving details I had never known. Looking at the photo of the band it is sad to check out those no longer with us, namely Geoff 'Digga' Coutts, Phil Hopkins, Ron 'Petals' Carkeet, Peter Arrowsmith, Max Hassall & Ian White (those are the ones I know about). Also looking at the photo of Captain Stevens, I couldn't believe that there was no Navy Band at his funeral, according to reports I have read. The report said that the mourning party had trouble marching at the slow because "there was no band nor drummer".

Other photos in the newsletter reminded me of how important it is for us all to keep in contact. I hadn't seen Paul 'Mouse' Blankesteijn since the 2003 Anzac Day reunion in Ballina, and he lived only a few hours south of me. Because of my family situation it is impossible to 'hit the road' and say hello to people I served with, which saddens me when I read of their demise knowing that it is too late now.

Blue Newton used to come to Lismore for Anzac Day and helped out in a band I formed for the main ceremony 6 years ago. We also made up a trad jazz band and played at the Lismore Workers Club with Jeff McGuiness on drums plus civvies, and this defrayed the cost of Blue's trip. He lived for trad jazz and knew just about every tune/song ever written.

I lost contact with Jesse Watson towards the end of his caravanning around Australia. I suppose it was 5 years ago he phoned to say he and Bev were staying in Ballina, so I went down to see him ever so briefly because Bev was not well and they weren't able to come to lunch. He and I had some fun times in the 60's, and they lived at Heathcote in the 70's when we lived at Taren Point before they moved to the West. I think Jesse & Bev only came to one function during our 1998 Fremantle reunion.

The photos of the bar-b-que at the School of Music also reminded me of some great times we had as Juniors, then later as I went back there a little more senior. Mention was made that the cubicles were gone, and I recall one day a few of us were in class when an almighty scream pierced the air, and Ernie Pleaser came running down the hallway. He was playing his cello when a possum fell through the ceiling landing on top of Ernie who abandoned the cello and ran out of the building. This was the same Ernie who one night coming back on board when we lived at the school, heard something following him near the zoo fence, and when he stopped walking, the noise behind him stopped. He took off yelling his head off, and when we investigated, he had been followed by an emu which halted

when he did! Ernie is another Ex who hasn't kept in contact, even with his best mate Mick Wortham. I did speak to him when I was secretary and he wasn't very forthcoming about his life after the RAN and had no interest in joining. I could add Bob Breen to that list as he has disappeared off the radar.

I am thankful that John Lennon our secretary, is able and keen to attend as many get-togethers as possible, and this keeps us all in the loop.

See you all in the counter-march,

Jim Hawkins

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Passing of John West,

Sadly we have to report another member of our Association has passed away. John West passed away on the 23th of April 2019. Denis Mercer via Nick Clark provided the following information regarding John for those that did not know him.

John joined the Reserves in the late 1950's and gained his commission in 1968 and remained as Band Officer until 1978 when he transferred branches. In the interim he served time as Relief Band officer HMAS Penguin in 1977

During that time, he was also Director of the Sydney Concert Band. Since then, he was continually active with many music ventures, including band contest adjudications and was well known as a Music Director throughout the Musical Society scene. Most recently, he was a member of the NSW Ambulance Band. He was an accomplished Bassoonist and a relief player with the SSO but also a handy trombonist.

John battled dementia for the past few years and was wonderfully cared for by his wife Lynn.

Funeral was on Thursday 2nd May at 1300 at Palmdale Cemetery Palmdale on the Central Coast

Dennis Mercer

*Thanks Errol. I remember John, I think I met him around 1958 whilst we were still in the old rig. The reserve band may have amalgamated with HMAS Sydney or Penguin bands for ANZAC or Coral Sea commemorations. A tall polite man who certainly was a fine bassoonist. He and Norm Gullick got on very well with each other.*  
*Cheers, Gordon Crompton*

G'day Errol,

*Sad to hear about John [West]. I worked with him over quite a few years, while at PENGUIN. Although he was a serious musician, he was not serious; pushy, as a Band Master. RIP John.*

Mal Codling

Cynics like me told me that I was too old, but i am delighted to inform all you elderly gentlemen that i was, in fact, wrong. So your body has told you that your handicap doesn't have to get any higher - you could declare a truce with the courses and cease play - forever. Now to find something else to replace golf. I tried 'The Men's Shed', (the chisels were too sharp) U3A (Even commenced a Music Appreciation Group - 2 people attended). I was invited to join the community radio station -I had never thought of this,

But after induction and instruction, I shared a programme with the station President for a couple of weeks, and then went alone with a new programme, my choice of music and I named it 'The Cobweb Club'. As well as putting up content for the hour presentation twice weekly, I operated the panel (a couple of times speaking into a dead mic, until I got the routine correct) Have recently learned production,

so am now the complete package.

Some of you may know of SCMA (Southern Cross Media Association) It's the national association for Community Radio Stations. They also judge the best programmes in different categories annually. I am more than delighted to announce the 'The Cobweb Club' was awarded, as a finalist (top three in Australia) in the category - Best Locally Produced Music programme. I have now produced 68 programmes at two per week.

OKR FM 98.3 on Mon.2pm and Wed. 2pm if you are interested. It is broadcast worldwide on computer. I hope I have given a glint in the eye to at least one of you old buggers - with the thought - 'I can do that'.

Cheers, Yogi Soutar.

## **RANBA | Ex- RANR Band Members Annual Lunch**

On the 8th of May, EX- RANR Melbourne Band members met at the Wheelers Hill Hotel for their annual lunch. Though fewer in numbers this year it was still a relaxing afternoon reminiscing and enjoying a wonderful meal.

Those that could make it this year were, Rob & Diane Clarke ,Mick & Francis Reid, Frank Charles, Bernie Opperman, David & Nola Wright, Steve Jacobs, Shane Ladd, Ron & Jeanie Hobbs, & Shirley and Alan Hogg. This is our 3rd lunch get-together says Alan, who organises the event each year. We are still finding past members of the Reserve Band who have heard that the yearly event exists, it's just a matter of finding the right time for them to attend. As usual the day ended as quick as it started and all showed interest in attending at the same time next year.

Alan Hogg.





**THE 30th ANNIVERSARY  
Reunion Evening of the  
RAN Band Tasmania**

**Saturday the 7th of September  
Shambles Brewery  
HOBART  
6.00pm - 11.59pm**

**Tickets Include,  
Casual Dinner with Drinks  
available at the Bar.**

**Tickets through.  
dorianbroomhall@gmail.com  
All Welcome**

## **RANBA | QUEENSLAND REPORT: John Lennon**

My last Reps report mentioned the wild weather we had in Qld. Well not a lot has changed up here with the weather being mostly overcast and raining for the last few weeks. I did read recently in the news that our reunion venue for next year (Launceston) is having some serious problems with thick fog. Apparently the problem is twofold with the geographic location of Launceston being in a hole and people burning a lot of wood for heating. Before I make any smart remarks I guess if you read between the lines you could have a field day with both of those reasons. My only concern is Brian may need to send us GPS coordinates to find our way to the reunion venue. I'll quit while I am ahead for fear I might upset our most southern members. I'll make sure I get fog lights fitted to my car before I catch the ferry across for the reunion next year.

I did make the trip down to Ballina for Anzac Day and played with the Ballina shire concert band for both the dawn and main service. I had a wonderful time and it was great to catch up with the chairman of the board at Ballina RSL our own Blue McNally, who should be congratulated for the hard work and dedication he has given to the Ballina RSL and the veterans community generally over many years. In addition to catching up with Blue & Gail I also had a lot of social time with Ken & Sue McCallum, Leon & Sandy Stucus, Gary & Molly Krause and Glenda (Newham) Jacklin. Glenda now lives in Ballina and is enjoying life and working hard managing a medical facility. My only complaint for the weekend was I wished the poker machines had been a bit kinder to me.

We also had a visit to Qld from Dean & Elaine Butler who

were visiting friends on the Redcliffe peninsula. Both myself and Ken McCallum made the short trip out to the Scarborough caravan park where we caught up with the latest gossip over coffee. Thanks Dean for shouting the coffee.

Some members may be aware that I had been struggling with my right hip for the last few years. I have been in some serious pain over the last month or so and a visit to a specialist revealed that my hip joint is now bone on bone which explained why I was in so much pain. I am booked for hip joint replacement on the 10<sup>th</sup> Sept and will be out of action and circulation for a couple of months. This puts on hold my plans for trying to coordinate a Qld get together for which I apologise to our Qld members. I am looking forward to a successful outcome and a new lease on life. As I have stated many times before I don't consider myself Robinson Crusoe in suffering health issues but it does make me relate better to the health problems and issues affecting our members. One thing I do is remain positive whenever I am faced with health challenges. I am acutely aware that some of our members suffer from depression which can be triggered by both health and mental issues. I have included in my Secretary's report details of what is available through various programs that DVA now offer in supporting veterans with, in particular Depression PTSD & Suicide Prevention.

On a happy note have fun, enjoy life and start the countdown to our next reunion which I will be attending if they still let me after my previous comments about Launceston.

John Lennon.

There's really not too much news to write in this edition for the Victorian chapter. As previously said in earlier newsletters, several of the ex's are still actively playing in community orchestras, community bands and the smaller combo's of dixie and dance/big band ensembles.



After a such a sad start to the year that had so many announcements of members crossing the bar, I am only aware of 2 of our group that have had health issues - Len Nurse is doing well after a stay in hospital as well as Ray Mills who only very recently had some heart problems (now is the perfect opportunity to repad that flute in readiness for Tassie). To all that are not the best, no matter how small the problem may be, wishing you a speedy recovery.



We recently had a past mid year get together - past mid year so that those who say they are going away during the winter season, heading north etc for the warmer temperatures, could have the opportunity to attend. After a couple of days of strong, icy winds straight from the pole accompanied by bucket loads of rain, Melbourne, thankfully, allowed some sunshine to peek through the clouds for a few hours.



It was well attended as is usual for us Mexicans as the photos accompanying will attest to and we even had some local fauna entertainment for a short while. Outside the RSL atrium is a tree that is a diner for lorikeets.

Shortly after arriving, their feed and nectar was put out making the tree where they feed look like the local supermarket when the new batch of baby formula is put out on the shelf.



For our end of year get together, the plan is for either the last Sunday of November or the first Sunday of December - yet to be decided as it will depend on the availability of the venue, which might not be at our usual venue, and we are also mindful that Christmas is the time to be with the fami-

ly. Further details like date, time and place will be sent out as soon as they are finalised, which will hopefully be soonish, so pencil in both Sundays for now. Until the next time we meet, take care and it's your shout.

Terry Ekin



NEWS FROM THE WESTERN FRONT: The first thing that your correspondent must say is that winter has finally arrived in “the golden West?”, with strong winds and heavy rain, although by the time this is published, we might be back to drought conditions! As always, proceedings are commenced with “the sick parade.” although this information had to be received by making phone calls, not the other way around, phone calls being received by the writer!

“The Old Man of the Sea,” Ted Lincoln, is okay, according to his wife Shirley who insisted that he was okay! Bill Middleton, an over 20-year Reservist and percussionist of note on several overseas trips when his saxophone playing days were over, has been moved out of hospital into a care unit close to his home in Bassendean, making it easier for his wife Robyn to pay visits. According to Robyn, he is in good spirits. His address is AEGIS Care, Hamilton Street, Bassendean, 6984, WA. He can be contacted on his mobile, 0408 922 255, and he would be delighted to receive any calls.

There is no more news on the health front so it is hoped that the remainder of those over here in the West are hale, hearty and in good condition, if not this correspondent can only apologize because of the lack of information. Naturally, the dreaded flu bug is well and truly doing the rounds over here in the West, not really caring who it attacks, and it must be stated that even your correspondent was stricken, both in Malaysia and on return to Australia, with the symptoms still being present 4 weeks since his return. It definitely was virus worth having!

The Malaysian visit was very successful and thanks must go to our event coordinator Ralph Daines, who, assisted by wife Cheryl, put together a very busy few days. As more will be written concerning this venture by other members of the touring party, nothing more will be said in this column. However, it was great to catch up with some of the “oldies” again and I know that many members are looking forward to travelling to the Apple Isle in October next year for our next full-on Reunion. (Remember, it is just over 14 months away!)

Until the next Magazine or the next Reunion, remembering that a “phone call-less situation” from constituents makes for a smaller contribution, that’s all there is from The Western Front!

Bill Farrell

# **BALLINA ALLSHIPS REUNION**

## **November 15th -17th, 2019**



**RADM  
Bruce Kafar,  
AM,CSC, RAN**

### **Ballina RSL, All Welcome**



#### **RAN Navy Band Entertaining you**



**Contact: Merve Stevens**

**6681 5620 or Max Lewis 66280086**

**For more information.**

Greetings all,  
 No doubt our life in RAN and beyond has all been about travel. Many of us while retired or still working enjoy travelling here there and everywhere for enjoyment, holidays and relaxation. We travel to visit family and friends and I'm sure we enjoy the excitement of visiting new places whether it be for sport, musical performances, reunions, family reasons or just to get away. I'm one for flying, driving or cruising and relaxing when ever possible and while I can.

Many of us prefer the open road pulling a caravan commonly known as the Grey Nomad or Nomads plural. A retired person who travels independently and for an extended period within their own country, particularly in a caravan or motor home.



Well Nomads, if you haven't been there, I would like to mention and recommend my home town of Broken Hill. There is so much to see and do there, including out and around Broken Hill. So much history with the mines, museums, art, sculptures and of course pups and clubs. The Broken Hill Musician's Club to name one. You will find interesting the Line of Load Lookout Cafe and the Memorial to Miners who lost their lives while working on the mines. A dramatic iconic structure on the edge of the mullock heap that dissects Broken Hill.

Also visit Sturt Park to see the Rotunda and places to picnic and where kids can play etc.



Near the Rotunda stands a memorial to the Band of the ill-fated steam ship Titanic, who continued to play as the ship went down in a valiant effort to quell the passengers. The memorial was erected because of the feeling among Broken Hill bandsman that a lasting monument should be create to the ship's band.

Broken Hill has so much history to tell of famous people who were born in Broken Hill as well as the town bands that were prominent during the early days of Broken Hill especially during the 1950s and early 60s.

Lieutenant Commander Leon Verdi Goldsworthy, born at Broken Hill on 19 January 1909, became Australia's most decorated naval officer of the Second World War.



I've included photo's of Broken Hill, Line of Load lookout, Sturt Park Titanic Memorial and plaque, Lieut Goldsworthy and of course my dogs celebrating the win of Port Power over the Adelaide Crows at Sturt Park recently.

Best wishes to all,

Doug Drysdale.



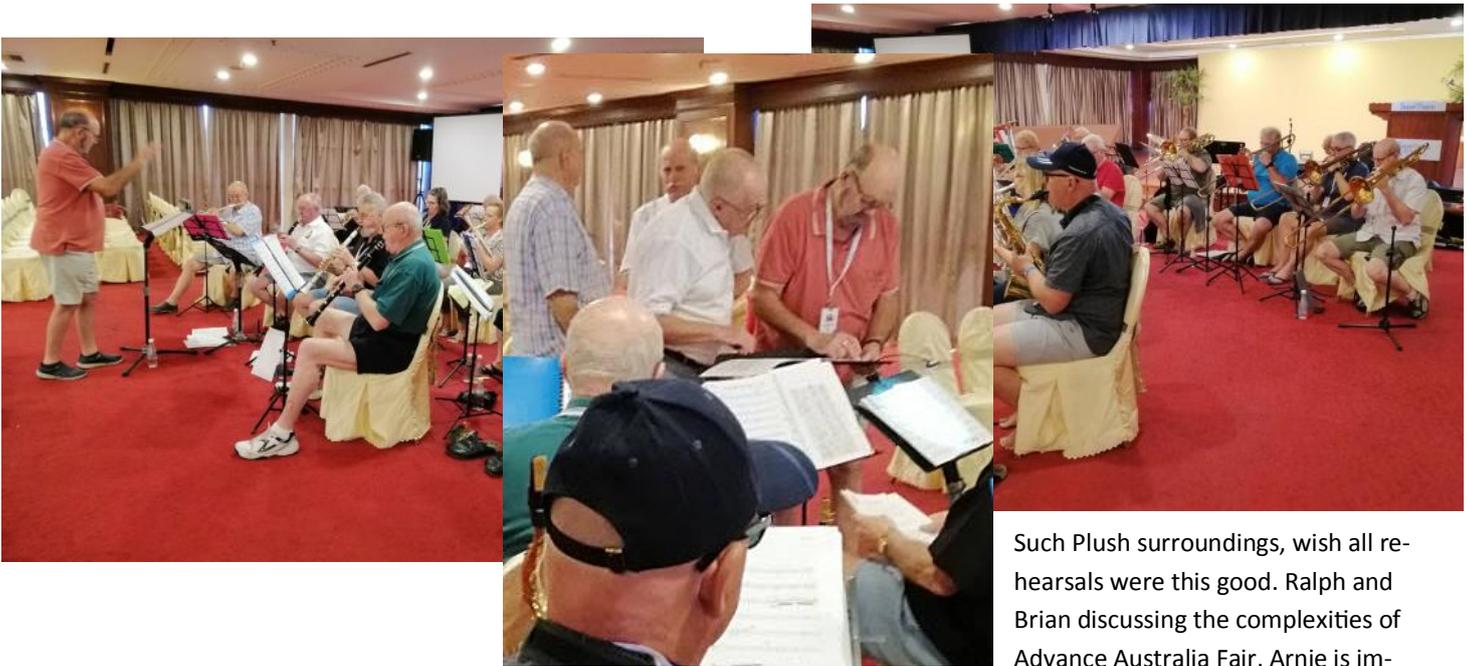
**Returning to IPOH was like Ground Hog Day,**

The Hotel Hadn't changed (except for the Bar), The building site next door hadn't changed (no construction in 3 years) the little shit was still letting of Fire Crackers at 3am in the morning down the alley beside the hotel and it was still hot and humid (Obviously).

This trip we travelled by train on the Tuesday from Kuala Lumpur with my sister and Brother in law in tow, (after selling them the great experience of going to Ipoh). Getting in about 4pm to the station we took well over 40 minutes to get a cab (Not knowing about GRAB, more on this later) after we sent Deb & Martin ahead in the first cab we flagged. It was mayhem with a fair few of the band members also travelling up on the same train. With Troms, Cymbals and other burly instruments in tow the cabs always were going to struggle to carry all our gear.

Arriving at the hotel it was good to feel the air conditioning doing its bit to cool us down. The hotel was just as we left it 3 years ago, Big, Majestic, but empty, especially as the Bar had moved from the foyer to the corner of the hotel where you wouldn't know it existed except for the dulcet tones of Geoff Bunce and the rest of the members who had already arrived and settled in.

Arriving on the 4th floor to our 2 bedroom apartment we struggled to get the aircon going until we realised that it was the good old switch next to the bed that turned it on or off not the insert the card in at the door unit. Once that was sorted we were in an settled and ready for the Ipoh experience.



Such Plush surroundings, wish all rehearsals were this good. Ralph and Brian discussing the complexities of Advance Australia Fair, Arnie is impressed.

**DAY 1 Wednesday the 12th**

Wednesday morning was our first and only rehearsal on the 10th floor of the hotel . Familiar faces were a welcome sight and the new faces were still adjusting to the relaxed atmosphere of our rehearsal location and willingness not to hurry into it. With a new conductor Brian Ellis from the apple isle, we progressed through the ceremonial aspect of the music with no problems and the band of 20 sounded very tight and all instruments were covered.

The dulcet tones of Kerry Ellis and her sister Anne Marie on Tenor horns added a new aspect to the band. With Christine on Alto, Arnie on Tenor and the Admiral on French Horn , the mid section were a strong combination. Ralph Daines was concerned that 3 trumpets were a bit light but that was squashed once, Allan Lanham, Peter Caldwell and Knobby Nielsen started knocking out the selections for our concerts. Again a great sounding group of musicians. As always our Trombone section was the dominant section led by Geoff Bunce, Bruce McCallum, Ralph Jones and Michael Dwight pumping out that fantastic Bass Trombone.

It was great to have Kevin (Red) Hillier on Eupho, It was Like the good old days (The 70's) with him sitting on my left side with Gary Sander beside him, but this time we had a confident Tuba player by the name of Linda Smith, She even had a roadie, her husband Peter who Looked after the lugging of the instrument over the next 4 days. Our woodwind section was small but again the professionalism of the players carried it off easily. Good to see with us on this tour was Jim Hawkins on Flute/Pic and stalwarts Ralph Daines, Ned Kellis and newcomer Bob Reuben, they held the top end together beautifully. The engine room was looked after with Don Buntine Back on Cowbell, Tambourine after a small absence and myself sculling around the back.

With a constant flow of hotel staff looking in we had a good indication that all was going OK. A wonderful lunch was provided and the afternoon saw the remainder of our program conclude. With a final promo photo with the Hotel manager and staff we rapped up the rehearsal and packed up ready for our first commitment the next morning. Most members made there way to the Bar now located in the back corner of the Hotel, as we all know Malaysia does not condone alcohol. It was a relaxing afternoon with the band members and the ladies then joined us after they returned from their lunch appointment



The Meet and Greet was a real entertaining evening and all enjoyed the atmosphere of the Long Bar until one of their patrons decided to have a smoke , we then we all vacated for the safety of the dining area.

The evening was our Meet and Greet at the now famous Royal Ipoh Club. If you didn't know (Those that did not get to read our last Ipoh visit of 2016) the only way to get fed or have a drink is with books of coupons issued at the reception counter. These books are hand stamped by the receptionist with a date and have different values in them.

Bill Farrell and a few others were first to arrive and Bill immediately asked for 10 books. Well the lady immediately had a heart attack because stamping 10 books plus the other 40 or so that rest of the first wave wanted was just too much. She shunted us off to the Long Bar and told us to tell the barman to run a tab. With another 30 or so still arriving it was bedlam at the reception for quite awhile. Even the Barmen couldn't cope because they kept running to reception to get books (Not Stamped) to put in their in tray to marry up with the docket they were printing.

We all managed to get a drink and make our way to the tables for dinner. Ralph did his welcome speech and gave the new members their honorary RANBA badge and welcomed them to the ever growing family of honorary members.

We were provided with a smorgasbord of Malaysian cuisine and entertained with backing music. The night concluded reasonably early (with an early start next morning) and members made their way back to the hotel using Taxi's or GRAB.

\*GRAB was introduced to us that evening as it is the Asian version of UBER. Booking through their app was painless and the variety of vehicles was amazing (more on that shortly). The price was indicated at the booking stage and was a lot cheaper than the 40 year old Taxi's that were in Ipoh.



It was even very warm and humid at the early morning service at the Kumunting Road Cemetery. Jim, Ralph, Bob and Ned in the front line. The Gurkha Buglers are at the back. Not very good now I've seen it, My Cymbal bag being held up by a Headstone.



### DAY 2 Thursday the 13th

All were up bright and early fighting for the opportunity to put a piece of toast through the automatic toaster in the restaurant before our 8.00am departure. We were lucky enough to acquire a roadie for the trip in the name of Martin Dewhurst (My Brother in law). He was accosted by Cheryle and Ralph to look after certain aspects of our tour, Hydration and getting things in and out from under the bus. Martin handled himself with distinction and we were sure by the end of our tour he would be fully qualified. Travelling to the Kumunting Road Cemetery in Taiping is quite a long trip but gives us a good look at the countryside. Arriving on time we setup in the cemetery on a 25% incline, chairs sinking into the ground and surrounded by headstones that offered some of us support from falling over.

Though a short service it is a moving one and is well represented by members from Australia, Britain and the National Malay & Borneo association. All goes to plan and we achieve our objective of supplying hymns and national Anthems with the Gurkhas playing the Last Post very well. Martin came through with Bottled water at the right time and we were on our way within an hour of arriving to our next destination.



The Concert was well received and there were plenty of photo's taken and Plaque's exchanged which was the first of many over the next couple of days.

Arriving at the NEW CLUB TAIPING we were warmly welcomed by the management and staff and members of the Veterans Association. After setting up for a concert we were ushered into a air conditioned room for an excellent lunch and a odd beer or three. The crowds were building in the concert area and school children and members were jockeying for the best position.

With lunch out the way and a visit to the most pristine early 20th century Royal Doulton porcelain latrines, all the way from United Kingdom we made our way to the stage with tremendous applause. The concert was well received by all and it was a pleasure to play to a appreciative audience. Once the concert concluded we had presentations of plaques to us and we to them before a series of photos that took a fair while.

We returned to the meals room for a bit of refreshment before hopping on the bus for our long trek back to Ipoh. Everybody was buoyant from the concert and the trip back was over before we knew it. The remainder of the afternoon was free and a fair few made their way back to the Ipoh Club for an evening meal and to see how the receptionist was coping.



The memorial Service was the climax of the engagements of the band. The photo on the right are all the dignitaries that attended. We were later to entertain them at a lunchtime concert.

### DAY 3 Friday the 14th

With an even earlier start than yesterday the toaster wasn't even warm when we got there, the chef wasn't out of bed to make eggs and the staff were still putting out condiments etc. I can't remember too much about breakfast but I think 3 times through the automatic toaster gave me something brown.

With the bus underway at 7.00am some were surprised that in less than 10 minutes we had arrived at our destination which was the Ipoh Memorial which was directly outside the Railway station. It took us longer to load the bus than to travel there. This is a big event in the Ipoh calendar and all the dignitaries from countries that were involved in the Malay emergency were on hand. The Choir from the Wesley Methodist school were rehearsing as we were setting up and the Australian Army catafalque party were pacing out the entry and exit to the memorial. As requested I provided a drum drill to slow march them on and drum solos to march them off. For me to see them and hear them I had to leave the Band and take my snare and stand up a series of stairs to get to them. Being conscious of the fact that I had to get there el pronto once the word was given I paced the path out to make sure there was no obstructions.

With the ceremony beginning the band was playing some incidental music and upon finishing I commenced to quickly make my way to the Catafalque party, BUT, my foot got caught in a slot in the concrete drain and I went over, WELL, what a racket a snare Drum makes in the dead silence of a memorial service. I was up like a flash and up the stairs with parts of my drum hanging off its stand and someone following me with my sticks. The Catafalque party marched on to my beat as though nothing had happened except for the blood all over the skin from the fall.

Well I had the medical team within a minute putting, or trying to put a dressing on my wrist and I was trying to tell them that a Band-Aid would be fine. The remainder of the ceremony went off without a hitch and the Catafalque party marched off to Drum solo's No 1 and 2. After that I was known as "You're the drummer that fell over" I now have the Ipoh scar to remember the whole trip by.



The school visit was a great success. Top left we have Kevin Hillier trying to explain what Bob Reuben is drawing with Ned Kellas and Ralph Jones looking on. Errol with his class of very informative students. The Nuclear boffin is next to the teacher. Ralph presenting a plaque to the School Principal. The Goanna is from a photo Cheryle is showing the kids on her phone that lives in her garden. Last is Brian trying to explain to a non responsive class that Tasmania is part of Australia.

Once we concluded the service we had a gunfire breakfast minus the Egg & Bacon but with Malaysian alternatives which was well received by the now hungry band. We later returned to the hotel and then some members visited the Wesley Methodist International School for a meet the students visit. The visit to the school turned out to be very rewarding experience for all those that attended. Once we arrived at the school members were broken up into groups and were taken to a classroom to meet the students.

Myself, Sharon, my sister Debbie and Martin were led into a classroom of senior students who were excited to see us. The aim of the exercise was to practice their English and ask a series of questions relating to our time in the Navy and about Australia. You could divide the class into 2 groups those that were reasonably interested and the others totally into it.

As I was the only one there with our uniform on I got the bulk of the questions. Explaining the Vietnam war was and our involvement as musicians was interesting to say the least, No I didn't kill any enemy, No we weren't ambushed, No Australia doesn't have Nuclear weapons and yes we did go by ship all the way from Australia just to play music.

Moving the subject away from war we got to Australia and drawing a big map on their white board (Looks like most of us did) we got to explain where we all come from and the relation to size of Australia to Malaysia. The session ended with photo's and a lunch after we did the session again but with the junior students.

We returned to the hotel better for the experience and I think the children were impressed with our teaching capabilities. With the remainder of the day free the 4 of us, Sharon, Debbie, Martin and myself decided to use a GRAB and drive up to the Bukit Merah Orang-utang Island sanctuary about 90 Kilometres north of Ipoh. The driver was impressed that we were travelling all that way and return the same day.

His Malaysian made Proton had the air conditioner on full pelt and we got there with the last boat over to the island for the day just about to leave. We were lucky as we were the last visitors so we got an extra special tour by the guide. It was great we made the effort to get there and see the work they are doing to protect and nurture this species. The whole trip cost us \$80.00 round trip and the driver waited around to bring us back to Ipoh arriving about 6.30pm.

Martin, Debbie, Sharon and myself in photogenic mode with a very large but to scale Orang-utang at the sanctuary.



The sanctuary had a total of 16 Orang-utang's of varying ages and sex. They move them to another island before releasing them back into the wild. Such passive animals, she was happy (didn't look it) to just sit there and watch us on the other side of the fence.

#### **DAY 4 Saturday 15th**

Well we didn't even try for breakfast as the bus was leaving a 5.30am to Batu Gaja where a Church service was being held as the band was setting up for the wreath laying service in Gods Little Acre. The guest list was the who's who of Consulate officials and Defence force personnel. The church service concluded and the congregation made there way to the cemetery with a lone piper leading. A guard was inspected and the band played incidental music as wreaths were laid by the dignitaries. The Gurkha's played the last post but missed the Revellie.



With the service concluded everybody made their way to the Kinta Golf Course for a Gunfire Breakfast again with a Malaysian influence. With all back on the bus we made our way back to the Royal Ipoh club for a Lunch followed by a concert for all the dignitaries and club members. An enthusiastic reception was given with a special mention by the Captain from the Australian Consulate LCDR Chris Watson mentioning in a despatch to the Chief Of Navy, Vice Admiral, Mike Noonan of our involvement in the Remembrance day proceedings.



With the wrapping up of the concert we had one more gig to do which was the Troops night at the Star Mansion (A party house basically) in the evening. With less formal dress (Polo Shirts) we again bussed just up the road to the Star Mansion. We were outside and they had plenty of evaporative coolers pushing cool humid air around and producing a lot of noise. The band setup as good as we could on the small stage and through the evening played to a very small group. I think the organisers were disappointed that more didn't show and the two MC's did their best to pump up the audience.



Talk about clash of colours. You think Ralph would have checked the décor of the Star Mansion before putting us in light blue T-Shirts. A pity a lot of tables were empty, so much food was available we were eating Satay sticks all night.



Ralph presenting/receiving another plaque from the Warriors Association.



What a colourful lot we were on our last commitment for the trip. Everybody thoroughly enjoy the 4 days and thanks must go to Ralph, Cheryle and Conductor Brian for a job well done.

With the conclusion of the evening we packed up once more and made our way back to the hotel. As this was our last commitment we all said our goodbye's as many were leaving early the next day by train back to KL and flights out. Another well organised adventure by Ralph and Cheryle had finished and they were glad that all had worked according to plan and the band performed well and sounded excellent. Thanks to all the participants and their partners and I hope you also enjoyed the experience.

The train trip the next morning was a relaxing experience but we had more experiences of a different kind when we reached the airport to fly to Vietnam for a continued holiday. Another long story.

Errol.

## Malay Borneo Memorial Ipoh

Whilst the Veteran's Band was in Ipoh Malaysia a copy of the Malay Borneo Memorial from the Australian War Memorial was unveiled at the Royal Ipoh Club.

The Malay Emergency commenced in 1948 with the Communist insurgents, Malayan National Liberation Army, decapitating plantation workers close to Ipoh and is the reason the Veteran's Band were in Ipoh again this year providing musical assistance to the Ipoh Week of Remembrance. The Band assisted the Warriors Association of Malaysia, Malay Borneo Association of Australia and the Malay Palm Oil Association of Perak (formerly Plantation Association)

Many of the RAN Band were involved in the various conflicts during the 20 odd years of unrest during the 1950s and 1960s serving on HMAS Melbourne and HMAS Sydney and as part of the Far East Strategic Reserve and the Indonesian Confrontation in 1965.



A few words on a wonderful and memorable 6 days in an ex-Navy Musician's life.

Earlier this year I was asked by our Association President Ralph if I'd be interested in conducting the RAN Veteran's Band in Ipoh, Malaysia in June. Knowing I was set to have a hip replacement done in April, I told Ralph that I would need a couple of days to think about it, although I think my mind was already made up by the end of that phone call - the opportunity to conduct a new group of musicians in a foreign country doesn't present itself every day. So, after a chat with my doctor about stronger painkillers and a rescheduled operation (which will now happen on the 28th August) I rang Ralph and said it was a big YES from me and a bigger one from Kerry.

The Itinerary was a busy one...

Wednesday morning:

Before I go any further, I would like to sincerely thank all those who put their hands up to be members of this band. I felt it an honour and privilege to be out the front of such a talented and easy-to-get-on-with group. The sound you guys and gals produced was extremely good, considering the fact that some sections were a bit light-on and also that you had never played together as a band before and some of you had never even met each other before! Combine that with a rehearsal of about 4 hours duration and a slightly nervous guy out the front, you amazed me and continued to amaze me in the days to come.

Wednesday evening: a Meet and Greet at the Royal Ipoh Club

Thursday morning 0930: Kumunting Road, Christian Cemetery, Taiping.

Ralph warned me that the Programme was a "guide" and to expect the unexpected. That advice came in handy on our first public commitment when the Ghurkha bugler forgot to play Reveille!

I quickly pointed to the trumpet section and Alan Lanham came to the rescue and did the job. Afterwards, there was a big thank you from a relieved Ian Holthouse, Liaison Officer for MMBVAA. Thursday afternoon: We got back on the bus and headed

to the Taiping New Club for lunch followed by a concert at 1400. We all spent a good deal of time having our photos taken with everyone from the local school kids to the WIRA (local Malayan Veterans) and just about everyone in the audience too! We couldn't say no. Probably the biggest celebrity amongst us was "the lady with the big thing", Linda and her tuba were an instant hit with the ladies in the audience who all had to have a photo taken with her and it.



Friday morning 0800: Ipoh Cenotaph Remembrance Ceremony

This was a well-attended ceremony and similar to our Anzac Day services. Bill Farrell laid a wreath on behalf of our Association and was presented with an enclosed plaque. One moment I won't forget is when the silence was broken by the clatter of a snare drum on a concrete path. I looked up to see Errol Hatch, who whilst quickly moving to a position to play for the Catafalque Party to march on, with snare drum and sticks in his hands tripped and did a double somersault, picked himself up, grabbed his gear and got on with the job. He said he was ok but knowing this humble bloke, I reckon he would have said that even if he'd broken his leg! Cheers Errol.

Many favourable comments were passed on the performance of the Band by senior Military Officers and High Commissioners from various countries, including Australia, India, Britain and Denmark.

In the afternoon, some of the Band members then opted to visit the Wesleyan Methodist International School where we split up into groups and went to classrooms to give talks and answer questions. At first the kids were very shy but they got bolder after one boy asked me which football team I liked. I didn't think they were talking about Aussie Rules, so I said Arsenal.

All except one boy groaned. Such well-mannered and polite and respectful young people, it was such a pleasure to talk to them. Some said they are even considering a career in the Navy now! The rest of the day was free and a suggestion was made to go to the Irish pub down the road for dinner. It was a good decision.

Saturday morning (stupid o'clock) Memorial Ceremony at Batu Gajah, God's Little Acre.

This is the final resting place for many who fought against the Communist regime. Australians, British, Indian and locals are interred there. More photo opportunities awaited us.

On completion of the ceremony, we set off for the Royal Ipoh Club and another concert. Again, lots of great comments from all attending, especially from the Danish Ambassador and Mr. Michael Crowder, the Deputy Australian High Commissioner. As we were packing up to go, Knobby Neilsen started playing a jazz rendition of When the Saints Go Marching In, I knew I liked him for some reason.

On Saturday evening we performed our final gig, 'Troops Night' dinner at the Star Mansion in Ipoh. Once again, we were well received by all those who attended. There was one heart-stopping moment when the 'over-enthusiastic' hostess decided to use Christina's sax as a prop for a photo and was told politely but firmly by Cheryle that we don't mess about with the instruments! More photos afterwards then on the bus for the trip back to the hotel.

Sunday was a free day and a few of us had a nice lie-in. After breakfast, which took a couple of hours, it was time for some shopping. That night, we met up with a few others for drinks and dinner at the Royal Ipoh Club. Ralph and Cheryle were presented with his and hers watches on behalf of the Band as a token of appreciation for all they've done over the years.

I want to again say a huge thank you to Ralph and Cheryle for organising these trips, no-one knows how much effort it takes to make sure everything runs smoothly. There are also a couple of others who came on this adventure with us and worked behind the scenes and I would like to personally thank them, Errol's brother-in-law Martin, and Peter Smith (husband of our tuba player Linda), thanks guys.

I want to thank all those in the Band for the trust you put in me. I felt honoured to have been given the privilege of being your conductor and I would do it again with you guys anywhere, anytime. Thank you all for making my job easy.

Cheers, Brian Ellis

### **Proposed Programme for Launceston 2020 RANBA Reunion**

<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Thursday 22 Oct	1300 - 1700	Rehearsal	Launceston City Band Rooms	
Friday 23 Oct	1300 - 1600	Rehearsal	Launceston City Band Rooms	
	1800	Meet & Greet	Launceston RSL	
Saturday 24 Oct	1000	AGM	Launceston RSL	
		Ladies: Bus trip*	TBA	
	1830 for 1900	Official dinner	TBA	
Sunday 25 Oct	1300 - 1500	Concert	TBA	
	1700 -	Farewell BBQ	Launceston RSL	

Second rehearsal will be only if needed. Afternoon tea will be provided.

Meet & Greet will be finger food

\* Ladies bus trip is proposed for either a wine tasting trip along the Tamar Valley Wine Route or a trip to the Ashgrove Cheese Factory, the House of Anvers Chocolate Factory, the Raspberry Farm Cafe and the Van Diemen's Land Ice Creamery.